

The background of the cover is a photograph of a woman with long dark hair and blue eyes, wearing a black mesh top and black gloves. She is surrounded by bright blue lightning bolts that appear to be emanating from her hands. The setting is a grand, gothic-style hallway with high ceilings and arched doorways.

Succubus Unleashed

An Urban Fantasy/Paranormal Romance

B. R. Kingsolver

Book 2 of the Telepathic Clans Saga

Succubus Unleashed
An Urban Fantasy / Paranormal Romance

By B.R. Kingsolver

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Look for the further adventures of Brenna O'Donnell in Book 3 of the Telepathic Clans Saga.

In Succubus We Trust,
An Urban Fantasy / Paranormal Romance

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Praise for ***The Succubus Gift***, Book 1 of the Telepathic Clans:

The novel itself is expertly written and an utter joy to read. The characters are all delightful. There were times while I was reading this that I laughed out loud, and other times when I held my breath in anticipation of what might occur. 4.5/5 stars – *Night Owl Reviews*

This book had it all; lots of action, romance, suspense and humor. Loaded with intrigue and drama ... 5/5 quills – *Mel's Book Blog*

Let me just start by saying WOW, because this book completely blew my expectations out of the water and then some. The initial synopsis plot struck me as interesting, but it didn't prepare me for the utterly heart stopping onslaught of sex, violence and paranormal abilities ... a great unique addition to the paranormal/urban fantasy genre and I'd definitely recommend this to fans of the genre! It had everything I could ask for, love, sex, violence, witty banter, supernatural abilities. I am so excited to see what Kingsolver does next! 5/5 HOT steaming cups - *Tea and Text*

Well written, a story that kept me turning the pages and wanting to know more... I can't give a higher rating save to add that you really should buy this book and follow this series... I would never have missed this for the world... A full five out of five pitchforks.  
- *Succubus.net*

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To Valentina and the kids. It's all for you.

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### Pronunciation Guide to Names

Some of the names in this book have been Anglicized, for others:

Aine: aw-nya – delight or pleasure

Aislinn: awsh-leen – dream or vision

Aoife: eef-ya – beautiful or radiant

Beltane: bel-tane – May Day, the beginning of the summer season, a springtime festival of optimism

Brenna: bran-na – raven, often referring to hair

Caylin: kay-lin – slender, fair

Irina: ee-ree-na – Russian form of Irene

Mairead: mah-rayd – Gaelic form of Margaret

Morrighan: mor-ri-gan – Celtic goddess

Poitin: po-teen – Irish moonshine

Rhiannon: ree-an-on – Welsh for maiden

Samhain: so-ween – The harvest festival, now called Halloween

Seamus: shay-mus – the supplanter

Sean: shawn – Gaelic form of John

Sinead: shi-nayd – Irish version of Jeanne

Siobhan: shee-vawn – Variation of Jeanne

Slainte: slayn-cheh – ‘Health’ in Gaelic, a toast

Tuatha De Danann: tu-a-tha de dan-an – The people of the Goddess Danu - The original pre-Celtic inhabitants of Ireland

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A full list and description of the Telepathic Gifts appears at the end of the book.

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### Forward

Brenna Morgan had always considered herself a ‘good girl.’ Her experiences with men and sex were limited, and not very encouraging. It wasn’t that she didn’t enjoy sex. Quite to the contrary, she enjoyed it immensely, but the same thing would happen every time she went to bed with a man. They made love and then he rolled over and went to sleep while she was still in the midst of her orgasm. She wouldn’t hear from him for at least a week or two afterward.

Convinced something was wrong with her, she spent her time alone and never allowed herself to hope for a relationship. She threw herself into her studies, finishing her PhD in Neuroscience at twenty-two. As a telepath, she hoped that studying the brain and how it worked might shed some light on her abilities. In the deepest recesses of her mind, she hoped someday to find another telepath.

Orphaned at eight, she was lost to her family, who thought she had died in the plane crash that killed her parents. Bounced from one foster home to another, always hiding her telepathic abilities, she earned scholarships to a prestigious university. She worked whatever jobs she had to, going hungry and living frugally, so she could graduate without debt.

After all this, it was a shock when she tripped over her cousin one evening. At the time, all she knew was that he was another telepath. As she was welcomed into the



O'Donnell Clan by the grandfather and aunt she'd never known, the revelation that an entire telepathic society lived hidden in society's shadows turned her life upside down.

An even bigger shock was discovering she was possibly the strongest telepath in history. No one in history had ever inherited more than fifteen Gifts, but she had all twenty-five. One of those Gifts completely changed her self-perception. She had the Kashani Gift, commonly called the Succubus Gift. Her spectacular physical beauty combined with certain physiological and mental traits to made her different from normal women.

While she had an enhanced ability to attract and pleasure men, the downside was that she drained three quarters of a man's life energy when he climaxed inside her. It wasn't something she could control or prevent. It made morning sex with any man impossible. One and done, then he had to sleep for two or three days and spend days of recuperation to recharge his energy.

Any attempt at a relationship was difficult, to say the least.

She would have despaired if not for tall, handsome Collin Doyle, a powerful telepath himself. He knew what she was, but professed to be in love with her. He told her he didn't care if she slept with other men and even after she took him to bed and drained him, he showed her his mind and convinced her.

Naturally, this homecoming wasn't enough chaos in her life. She soon learned that telepaths from rival Clans were hunting succubi, torturing and killing them. When the succubus Cindy Nelson, her mentor, was captured, Brenna volunteered herself as bait. An elaborate mental construct, like a stage set, was implanted in her mind. With a physical makeover, she was transformed into the predatory redheaded succubus Samantha.

Things didn't go as planned. Brenna ended up being captured and locked in a basement with a monster named Manfred Gless. Gless was a strong telepath with the O'Donnell Gift of mental-shield-shattering Domination that gave him the ability to control people. But Brenna also had this Gift and proved to be stronger. She captured his mind, killed his associates and escaped, but not before being brutalized herself.

Cindy was grievously injured but survived due to the Talents of the Clan's Healers.

While the characteristics of the Succubus Gift seemed evil when she first learned of them, the Clan's history and mythology told a different story. Long before the Romans, the Clans ruled Europe. They worshiped the Mother Goddess, and their priestly class, the Druids, were succubi. The energy drain was an offering to the Goddess through Her priestesses. As she learned about the Gifts, it was easy to see how her ancestors were seen as witches and sorcerers. It was easy to understand why the Clans created myths to hide themselves.

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Succubus Unleashed

Chapter 1

You have to have the kind of body that doesn't need a girdle in order to get to pose in one. - Carolyn Kenmore

They noticed him when he walked in. Six feet tall and very good looking, he stopped just inside the door to let his eyes adjust. Walking to the bar, he ordered a beer and turned

to survey the room, his eyes stopping when he saw them watching him. A smile spread across his face.

Sitting in a booth across the room, they scanned his mind, as they did with every man who caught their attention.

“Ick,” Rebecca said, her mouth crooking in an expression of distaste.

“Prey,” Brenna said with a bright smile.

He was arrogant, conceited, misogynistic, and self-centered. Brenna was sure she could come up with an unflattering word to match every letter in the alphabet to describe him. The bulge in his pants, of which he was so proud, wasn’t really that great, but did promise a fulfilling encounter.

Rebecca chuckled, taking a long pull at her beer. “I’ll look for someone a little more palatable while you’re gone.”

“Try to find one with a friend,” Brenna replied. “I don’t plan on spending much time on him.”

Exerting Influence, Brenna smiled seductively when she caught his eyes. Soon he drifted over to their table.

“Are you going to ask me to dance?” Brenna purred, looking at him through lowered eyelashes.

He nodded. She waited.

“Oh. Do you want to dance?”

“Sure. I thought you’d never ask,” she smiled, kicking her Glam up a couple of notches.

He wasn’t a bad dancer, and when the band played a slow song next, she flowed into his arms. Dribbling pheromones until his eyes glazed and his erection pressing against her stomach was rock hard, she blurred the minds of everyone around them. No one noticed when she broke away. Taking him by the hand, she led him to a dark corner near the restrooms.

Unzipping his pants, she freed his erection and lifting her skirt, fitted him into her. She sighed as he slid into her, filling her. Her back against the wall, she put her arms around his neck and wrapped her legs around his waist. A soft puff of pheromones ensured his cooperation. She leaned back to enjoy the ride.

His life energy flowed into her when he climaxed, triggering a delicious orgasm. As he began to wilt, she put her feet back on the floor. She stood for a few moments reveling in his energy flowing through her, shuddering with pleasure, and watched him slump to the floor unconscious. Adjusting her clothes, she went into the restroom to freshen up, a smile tugging at her lips as she brushed a stray hair back. With one last approving look in the mirror, she headed back to her table.

Two young men awaited her with Rebecca. A quick mental scan told her they were nice guys. Tom and Dave invited them to a party and paid their tab on the way out. Rebecca exerted a bit of influence to ensure they left the waitress a nice tip.

Six months earlier, such behavior would have appalled Brenna Morgan.

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Brenna had been told her parents were wealthy. Until her recuperation from the injuries suffered when she was captured by the succubi hunters, she hadn’t found time to get together with her Aunt Callie to get the details.

O'Donnell Group was a multinational forty billion dollar corporation owned by the Clan. It only employed telepaths. The official corporate headquarters was in Washington, DC, but the actual center of operations was located in a hidden valley in West Virginia. The sprawling manor house was connected to a modern three-story office building where over a thousand people worked.

"You said to come see you and we'd take care of the financial garbage. Well, I'm bored, so I guess even finances will be an improvement," Brenna said from the door of her Aunt Callie's office in West Virginia.

Callie laughed. "You caught me at a good time. I have everything finished, and your name change from Morgan back to O'Donnell will be finalized in a week or two. Let's take this to my parlor, order some tea and biscuits, and go through it."

Callista O'Donnell Wilkins was the President of O'Donnell Group, the Clan's business interests. She had been Brenna's mother's best friend and now served as surrogate mother, mentor, and friend to her niece.

Callie sat several fat files down on the end of the table, and opened one as a woman from the kitchen came in and set a tray with a pot of tea and a plate of cookies on the other end. Callie thanked her and Brenna poured tea for both of them.

"Okay, let's start with an overview." Callie pointed to a sheet of paper. "I would call this a balance sheet, but since you don't have any debts, there's nothing to balance.

"Your major assets are O'Donnell Group stock, O'Donnell Development stock, a hoard of gold your father bought in the seventies, your mother's estate in Ireland, your father's estate in Ireland, investments and other holdings, which include stocks, bonds, real estate such as the Baltimore house, and cash.

"The Clan and O'Donnell Group used a number of land parcels your father owned through O'Donnell Development to build some office buildings and shopping centers, and we owe you rent for that land. We had to recover the profit from O'Donnell Development and your dividend payments from O'Donnell Group for the past fifteen years. Your other grandfather was able to tally up the profits from your mother's horse stables, and those went into the mix."

The list had Brenna's head spinning.

Callie continued. "Basically, your father held five thousand shares of O'Donnell Group as his birth gift. You also have two hundred shares as your own birth gift, giving you five thousand two hundred shares total. The stock isn't publicly traded, and Seamus owns seventy-five percent, so this is really only money on paper, understand?"

Brenna nodded, already a bit lost.

"The Group's assets are currently valued at about forty billion dollars, so your share is worth about two hundred million. The annual dividend has been running a thousand dollars a year, so the dividend you'll receive in January will be around five million."

Brenna sat straighter, looking at the paper. "Five million dollars?"

"That's before tax, of course. Now, you own all the stock in O'Donnell Development, and we've determined its value is about two hundred eighty million. Your income figured on twenty-five percent of the profits will come to about seven million this year."

"Seven million dollars?"

"Yes, that's right. Before taxes of course."

"Of course."

Callie, lost in her explanation, didn't notice Brenna was now paying very close attention, her eyes big as saucers.

"The gold your father bought back in 1975 has appreciated substantially, but provides no income. It's readily disposable however. The market value is currently about one hundred twenty million.

"Your mother had the house in Ireland and substantial investments of her own when she married your father. Likewise, your father's personal investments and the castle and estate in Ireland are valued at forty million. Then there were their joint assets after they married."

"Castle?"

"Yes, when Seamus made his first life change, he left the family estate to your father. That includes two thousand acres and the castle that was the traditional O'Donnell Clan seat.

Callie tapped the paper with her pencil. "All told, the assets total eight hundred thirty-eight million dollars and your income this year will be almost twenty-one million. I figure after taxes you'll net around thirteen to fifteen million. Seventy-five million of your assets are in cash and short-term notes."

She turned to look at Brenna, and realized she should have taken things a little slower. The young woman was staring at her, eyes wide, face pale, clenching the arms of her chair as if the building was being shaken by an earthquake.

Speaking slowly, Brenna asked, "I have seventy-five million dollars in cash?" Callie nodded. "My income this year will be thirteen million dollars?" Again Callie nodded. "My net worth is twice that of the Queen of England?"

"Well, yes, approximately."

"Holy shit."

"I told you it was real wealth. That's why it's taken so long to put it all together. It's complicated."

"Callie, why did you order tea instead of whiskey?"

Callie laughed. "Should I ask for a bottle to be sent in?"

"No, don't bother." A bottle of Middleton's appeared on the table with a shot glass, teleported from Brenna's room upstairs. She leaned forward and poured the glass full, tossed it down, and sat back in her chair.

"I think this news is as disturbing as being told I'm a succubus."

Taking a deep breath, she poured whiskey in the glass again and downed it, then looked at Callie, "Oh, I'm sorry, how rude. Would you like some?"

It started with a soft chuckle and built to a whole-hearted belly laugh. "I wish you could see your face," Callie sputtered, "it's priceless."

Brenna stared at her then looked around the room. The West Virginia manor house was almost twice as large as the White House, nestled in a private twelve thousand acre valley. "How much is Seamus worth?" she barely whispered the question.

Seamus O'Donnell, Brenna's grandfather, had come to the United States in 1890 with about a third of the three thousand members of the O'Donnell Clan. The Clan now had over forty thousand members, more than half in the U.S., and was the strongest telepathic Clan in the world.

“Let’s put it this way, if the financial magazines knew he existed, they wouldn’t be calling that software guy the richest man in the world. Although, to be fair, Seamus had a century’s head start on him.”

“And all of that will go to you as the heir when he dies?”

Callie sobered, “Yes, unless the Clan decides someone else is better qualified. The challenge is to maintain his legacy and take us into the next century. So far, no one has impressed us that much. Your father was far more qualified than I am. I ended up designated by default when he died and I really don’t want it.”

She studied Brenna. “Seamus probably will continue to run things for the next thirty or forty years, though he may decide to step down while he still has his health. I think this thing with Cindy has shaken him. She might actually be able to talk him into the children she wants, and spending more time with her.”

Callie chuckled, “Now that you know you’re a multi-millionaire, what’s the first thing you’re going to do?”

Brenna thought about it, then brightened. “Go shopping, with you and Rebecca and Irina.” Excitement crept into her voice. “Let’s go to New York and buy clothes and have a week on the town. How does that sound? Siobhan, too. And we’ll get a list and her sizes and get some stuff for Cindy, so she’ll have some new clothes when she gets better. I mean, aren’t we going into the winter social season? That’s what someone told me. Aren’t there going to be balls and parties and Thanksgiving and Christmas and New Year and all that?”

“Is that all you want to do,” Callie laughed, “buy new clothes?”

Brenna blushed. “You know what I wear. Nothing fits.”

Callie had to admit that was true. Nothing off the rack would fit a body with Brenna’s outrageous curves. The girl had spent her life wearing whatever she could find, clothing that sometimes came close to fitting.

Smiling softly, Callie nodded. “Anything else?”

“I own a company with architects and building engineers?”

“Yes, one of the best.”

“Who do I contact there to get something built?”

“Jack Calhoun is the president. What do you want to build?” Callie asked cautiously.

“An indoor swimming pool, or at least enclose the pool you have so we can use it during the winter.”

Relieved, Callie smiled, “Yes, contact Jack. I’ll get you his phone number and email address. You might also consider making an appointment with him to introduce yourself as his new boss. Seamus is resigning as chairman of that company, so you’ll be assuming the position.”

“I will?” Confusion reasserted itself. “Is that how it’s done? Callie, I haven’t had a single business class. I’m a scientist. I don’t know squat about running a business, or investing or stocks or anything.” She sat back in her chair, and Callie could see her considering the implications of her newfound wealth.

“Callie, you and Seamus will help me, won’t you? You won’t abandon me?”

Callie’s eyes got a little blurry, “No, Brenna, we won’t abandon you. Any help or advice you need, we’ll be here for you.”

“Good, thank you. Oh, and you’ll figure out what I owe you for rent and stuff?”

“Huh?”

“I’ve been living here and in Baltimore rent free, eating your food, getting free security services, transportation, all that stuff. If I have my own money, then I should be paying my fair share, not leeching off everyone else. This little jaunt I’m proposing to New York will require a fairly large security force, won’t it? It’s my personal travel, not business. So figure out if you want to bill me on a pay as you go basis, or a flat monthly fee. Set up a special account you can draw on.”

“Brenna, members of the O’Donnell family don’t pay for their living expenses, Seamus does. And security isn’t something you pay for either. All of our family and the top executives are assigned a security force.”

“And you pay me rent for the Baltimore house, rent for the land you developed, and all kinds of other stuff? Fair is fair, Callie. I don’t expect people to support me in this extravagant lifestyle for free, especially when I’m not contributing and have money. I’ve been supporting myself since I was sixteen years old, and I’m not going to start taking charity now that I’m rich. That doesn’t make any sense.”

~~~

Collin Doyle was the Clan’s Director of Security. In his mid-thirties, he was young for such an important position. Tall, devastatingly handsome with a reputation as a ladies’ man, he and Brenna had been drawn to each other from the first moment they met.

Their relationship had been strained since the time of Cindy’s kidnapping, when an ill-conceived jest had angered Brenna. They hadn’t slept together since, although she had gone to see him as Samantha, the persona she assumed under a mental construct in an effort to trap the succubus hunters. She’d made love to him in a fierce, predatory way that she’d never done before, riding him to exhaustion and draining him.

After she escaped from her captors, he’d been loving and tender, cradling her like a child and making her feel safe. Until he held her that day, she hadn’t truly felt safe since her parents’ deaths.

Collin was lying in bed reading when there was a knock on the door. “Come in,” he called.

The door opened and Brenna walked in, crawled up on the bed and sat facing him cross-legged. “Can we talk?”

“Sure, we haven’t done much of that lately.”

“Collin, can you please try not to say things that piss me off? Especially in public?”

“Brenna, I meant that as a joke.”

“Yeah, I figured that out. It wasn’t very funny, though. Yes, I’m young, but to say that I’m barely out of diapers in front of a bunch of people ... it was demeaning. I know when I came here people thought it was funny that someone with the O’Neill super shielding Gift didn’t even know something as simple as filtering, but honey, you need a filter between your brain and your mouth.”

He chuckled softly, “Kallen said almost exactly the same thing that day. I apologize.”

“Accepted, although I’ve already forgiven you. You know, sometimes I want to kill you, and other times ... that day at the gas station, you didn’t fuss, or bitch at me, you gave me exactly what I needed. You were strong and caring and everything that I love about you. Do you know why Samantha came to see you that day before she went to New York?”

“I have to admit, that’s puzzled me.”

“Rebecca warned me that if I assumed that role, had a construct implanted in my mind that turned me into a fully-functioning succubus, it would change me. She told me I would either become a succubus or be sick to my stomach afterward at what I’d done as Samantha. Well, as soon as they triggered the construct, I knew which one it would be. Even though I was someone else, I’ve never felt as comfortable with myself as I did at that moment. I knew the first man I was with would get the ride of his life, the best that I had ever given anyone. At that moment, you were the only one I wanted.”

Brenna shook her head. “You know I wasn’t sure if I could handle being a succubus. But when I played one as bait, I felt as though all the pieces had finally fallen into place.”

A soft smile touched her lips. “Sometimes I want to kill you, and other times, I hope you’ll be with me until I die. When I escaped those monsters, you gave me exactly what I needed. You didn’t nag or be weird.”

She leaned toward him, capturing him with her eyes. “I know I need one man in my life, a special man, one who will love me no matter what. I’ll give that man all of me and make him glad I did. I hope it will be you.”

Reaching out, she touched his cheek and drew her hand down his bare chest. “Cindy and Siobhan have told me how lonely they are. I’ve been lonely all my life, and I don’t want to be lonely for the rest of it. My mother found a secret, a way to keep the man she loved, a way to defeat the loneliness, and I think the way she did it was to always give the man she loved her best.”

Collin captured her hand, holding it over his heart. His eyes misted, the look on his face one of tenderness and yearning.

Taking a deep breath, she said, “I want you to move in with me. I can’t change what I am. I can’t promise you sexual fidelity, but I can promise I’ll always give you me at my best, in bed or out.”

He raised an eyebrow, “The best of your anger, too?”

She chuckled, “I’m good at a lot of things, and I do have a temper. I’m good at being exasperated at you, too. At least you can’t complain you didn’t know what you were getting into.”

“I’ve never been good at relationships, it always falls apart.”

“Because you can’t keep it in your pants?” He nodded. “I’m not asking you to be a saint while I sleep around, Collin. I just want to be your first choice. If we’re in the same town, I want you in my bed, if we’re not, then as long as you’re honest with me, and with your other women, I’m okay. I don’t want my showing up on your doorstep to be a surprise to anyone.”

“When do you need an answer?”

“If you’re not in my bed tonight, I’ll have my answer.” She leaned forward and kissed him deeply and passionately, then stood and walked to the door.

~~~

## Chapter 2

*Whoever said money can't buy happiness simply didn't know where to go shopping. - Bo Derek*

Rebecca Healy was a wilder, someone who had grown up outside a Clan, not knowing why she could read minds or knowing there were others like her. With fifteen Gifts, she had the potential to be one of the strongest telepaths in the world.

Rebecca opened the door, strode into Brenna's room, and sat with a bounce on the bed. "Hey, sleepyhead, wake up. You're going to be late for breakfast."

Collin raised his head from beneath the covers. "Damn, Healy, don't you know how to knock?" A giggle filtered up from somewhere around his chest.

"Oops. Sorry." She jumped up and headed for the door.

"Collin's moving in," she heard Brenna say as she shut the door behind her. She stepped back into the room.

"Are you both completely clueless?" Rebecca asked with a grin.

"I guess so," Collin said with a smile.

"Well, I guess that's a good foundation for a relationship. When you finish, perhaps you can let me in on the little road trip Callie mentioned this morning."

"Oh." Brenna emerged from the covers, "Yeah, I want to go shopping in New York. Want to come along?"

Rebecca always marveled at how good Brenna looked first thing in the morning.

"Right, as if I have a choice, seeing as I'm assigned to your security detail."

"Well, Miss Pissy, we can fix that. Collin, fire her."

Wide-eyed, Collin's head swung back and forth between them. "Huh?"

"Fire her, then I can hire her, and I won't have to listen to all this garbage because I'll be the one signing her paycheck," Brenna said brightly. "As if she ever turned down an opportunity to go shopping in her life. Rebecca, guess what? I'm rich."

Rebecca regarded her with a sorrowful expression then turned to Collin, "This is news? Is she really that oblivious?" She looked back at Brenna, "If you didn't know that before now, you're the only one. Shit. I thought you were the smart one."

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In her mind, Brenna envisioned an orgy of shopping and partying in New York, the sort of thing she'd never done before. The first obstacle to her fantasy occurred when she sat down with Callie, Irina and Rebecca to plan out their trip.

Irina Moore was a twenty-one year-old succubus, a wilder, who had been rescued from a succubus hunting team in New York a few weeks earlier. Barely five feet tall, with blonde hair, a beautiful face and voluptuous body, she looked like a vision of a wanton angel. A prodigy, speaking eight languages, her sweet personality and innocent blue eyes beguiled everyone she met.

Although her mother was a telepath and a succubus, her father was a normal human. They had been hiding all of her life, though Irina wasn't sure exactly why. All she knew was that they feared being found by other telepaths.

"No, I'm not going to allow you to buy me a new wardrobe. I'm not some rich girl's remora. I have a job. I make enough money to pay for my own clothes." Rebecca crossed her arms, leaned back in her chair and shook her head.

"I feel the same way," Irina said. "If you want to loan me some money until I can pay you back, that's one thing, but as a gift? No."

Everyone's eyes widened as the room grew noticeably cooler. Brenna sat back in her chair, her enthusiasm from moments before replaced with a stony expression.

"Let me explain something to everyone. I don't have a wardrobe, I have clothes. Mostly clothes that don't fit and look like shit. I want to look nice for a change. There are only two women I know who are anywhere close to my own age. I'd like to go out occasionally, go clubbing. You know, go to nice places, not just a student bar. And I'm

not going to go out looking like a million dollars with a couple of ragamuffins wearing clothes off the rack from Wal-Mart.

“You, Miss Protector, cannot wear jeans to a nice restaurant, they won’t let you in, and I’ll be without security and you’ll get fired. And you,” she said, turning to Irina, “do you really think your boss wants you showing up for an important dinner meeting wearing an Ohio State sweat shirt?”

Her friends both opened their mouths but Brenna cut them off, raising her voice, “I’m not finished!”

She held out her hands in a placating gesture. “I’m not talking about outfitting you for the rest of your lives. I’ll pay for you to establish a basic wardrobe. One so that Seamus won’t be ashamed to have you sit at the table with him for the Solstice Festival. After that, you make enough to enhance and maintain it. I want to do this. But if you won’t let me, I’m going to pout, and sulk, and make everyone miserable, and believe me, I know how to do it.”

Callie burst out laughing. “Damn, that’s the worst threat I’ve heard in a long time.”

Brenna winked at her. “I’ll tell you what, I promise not to spend more than one week’s income on the three of us, okay?”

Rebecca eyed her warily, “How much is that?”

“None of your business. You’re my protector, not my financial advisor. Oh, come on, I’ve been unwell, don’t you want to make me feel better?”

Both young women’s faces relaxed and they began to nod.

“Oh, Brenna, that’s beyond the pale,” Callie exclaimed. “I knew you could be a manipulative bitch, but that’s going too far.”

The other two women looked at her in confusion.

“She’s using Influence on you. Succubus Influence.”

“It’s in the interest of a good cause,” Brenna said softly, looking down at her lap, her cheeks coloring.

“What?” Rebecca surged to her feet. “You’re using your womanly wiles on me? Jesus, Brenna, I, I feel so used.”

They all broke out in laughter.

In the end, she managed to convince them, and the trip was set for the week before Thanksgiving.

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Brenna’s shopping trip set off alarms throughout O’Donnell’s security organization, starting with Collin. Listening to Brenna and Rebecca plan set his teeth on edge. He immediately went to Seamus, Brenna’s grandfather and patriarch of the Clan, who blew sky high and sent for Callie.

“What the bloody hell does that girl think she’s doing? Didn’t getting kidnapped and almost killed by that monster teach her anything?” Seamus stormed around his office. “I know she didn’t grow up in our world, but she needs to understand we have enemies.”

Callie calmly let him blow off steam, watching him with a slight grin.

“Do you plan to bundle her in bubble wrap and store her away until there’s no danger in the world?” Callie asked.

He stopped and turned to her. An alert triggered in the back of his mind, but he wasn’t sure exactly to what he was being alerted. Callie was much too calm, much too amused. Cautiously, he moved to the front of his desk and sat on the corner, watching her warily.

“You knew about this,” he accused.

“Oh, yes, I’m the first one she mentioned it to. Despite what you might think, she doesn’t take off in a vacuum and do things just to upset you and Collin. If I thought it was a bad idea, I’d have put a stop to it immediately. Father, you’re being over-protective again. You have a charming, but unnecessary, tendency to do that with women.”

“You think it’s a good idea?” Seamus’ eyes almost popped out of his head.

“Yes, I do. She’s had a number of shocks over the past six months since we found her, and this will be cathartic.” She held up her hand, forestalling his protest. “Do I think going to New York when there are still succubi hunters prowling around is a great idea? No. Do I think we can use it to our advantage strategically? Yes. Besides, she understands she’ll be blanketed by security.”

Seamus goggled at her, then whirled away and started pacing.

“Father, if you wanted to go hunting people, people who don’t have an O’Donnell Gift on their side, what kind of team would you send?”

He wheeled about and studied her with narrowed eyes.

“Daughter, your devious mind is at work. Why do I feel as though I’m in London in 1966 again?”

Callie laughed with unfettered glee. “Does that still bother you?”

“The parallels are too striking to ignore.”

Chuckling, Callie stood and walked to his sideboard. Pouring two drinks, she said, “Amazing you still remember that. And now that you mention it, it is somewhat similar.” She handed him his drink. “Shall we explore our options?”

Shaking his head, he took a sip. “She’s not her mother. Maureen had been trained in her Gifts since birth.”

“No, she’s more powerful than her mother, even as powerful as Maureen was. She’s not much younger than Maureen was in 1966. Combine her with Rebecca, using Irina as bait, with Collin, Kallen and Jeremy to back them up, and we have a formidable team. I’ll be there along with Siobhan and Caroline. I really can’t imagine anyone being able to stand against us. Hopefully we can resolve this problem.”

“Callie, my dear, you have an evil mind.” He took a deep breath. “Okay, let’s explore our options. Please remember I’m an old man. Try to spare my poor, weak heart.”

Callie laughed.

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“What do you mean I’m being reassigned? I’m not going to be one of Brenna’s Protectors anymore?” Rebecca had been called to Collin’s office. Totally bewildered, she stared at him, trying to make sense of what he was telling her. It felt as though she’d been kicked in the stomach.

“Rebecca, a member of the family has asked to have you reassigned, and after careful consideration Kallen and I have agreed.”

“Does Brenna know about this?”

“Brenna was the one who requested your reassignment.”

Her face fell and she slumped in her chair.

“I can’t pay you as much as she requested, but I can give you a fifty percent raise now, and if your performance warrants it, and Kallen agrees you’ve progressed far enough in your training, you’ll get the other fifty percent in six months.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

Collin couldn't keep a straight face any longer. “You're being promoted to Team Leader over Brenna's security detail with thirty Protectors assigned to you. She said a low-level Protector shouldn't be telling her what to do all the time, and if you wanted to be in charge of everything, I should give you your wish and put you in charge. You'll need to go through Small Tactics School and Operations Planning, so figure out what her schedule is going to be and fit them in.”

“I've been through Small Tactics.”

“Not the Team Leader course.”

“And I report directly to her?”

He nodded, smiling.

“That manipulative bitch!” Rebecca stormed out of the office.

~~~

Rebecca was ready to go back to waiting tables. She was sure she'd never worked so hard in her life. The logistics of two members of the family traveling were daunting. Kallen helped because Callie was going, and made sure she didn't miss any details, but mostly he watched.

Kallen O'Reilly was the most senior Protector and known as “Callie's Shadow.” He and Callie grew up together and were lovers when they were young. He headed Callie's protection team and was single-mindedly focused on her wellbeing. He took the lead in mentoring and training Rebecca when she first joined the Protectors.

Brenna didn't want to stay at the New York compound, so they made reservations at a small luxury hotel in Midtown owned by O'Donnell Group. All the employees were Clan, and Caroline had reserved the top two floors for them. It was a favorite of telepaths, especially those visiting from Europe. Rebecca had to go through the background profiles of everyone who already had reservations for the time of their stay. Any new reservation requests were forwarded to her before the reservations were confirmed.

She also had to coordinate security with the New York office. They would supply additional manpower, boosting security at their hotel as well as at the hotel next door, which Siobhan told Brenna was a good succubus hunting ground.

One bright spot was that Collin allowed Rebecca free rein in picking her team. They were all much older than she, experienced, and she'd worked with them before. She picked ten women, and Brenna insisted all thirty Protectors be given a thousand dollars each to go into DC and buy new clothes. Considering the amount Rebecca had spent on outfits for a two-day operation the previous summer, it wasn't overly extravagant. She was surprised that Brenna was funding the entire expedition, but Callie had explained the arrangement that she'd made with the Clan.

“So she's really paying my salary? She wasn't just kidding?”

“She's paying for all of her security, now and in the future. She and Seamus had an interesting discussion on the subject. It all comes out in the wash. She's funneling all the rents that the Clan owes her into a fund to pay for her living expenses. It was the best compromise they could reach.”

Callie was impressed at how creatively the young woman could curse.

Rather than deal with the logistics of busing everyone to an airport and flying to New York, Rebecca rented two buses and requisitioned two vans. Kallen added a stretch limo in the city to chauffeur their charges around. The New York office would supply any additional vehicles that might be needed.

After almost two weeks of preparations, she ushered the shoppers onto the bus. With several bottles of wine and a lavish picnic, they were on their way. After her first glass of wine, Rebecca fell asleep and didn't wake up until they reached Philadelphia.

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It was a circus when they checked in. Kallen stood off to the side and laughed at Rebecca until she turned to him, frustrated half out of her mind, "Am I really in charge of this clusterfuck? I mean, really in charge?" He agreed she was, and she put him in charge of moving the luggage to their rooms. His smile died. "I am, or I'm not. Take the luggage, or take charge of this mess, your choice." He looked at forty people milling around the small lobby trying to check in and took charge of the luggage.

The four women had two connecting two-bedroom suites on the top floor. The rooms were sumptuously appointed in a style that would have made Seamus comfortable, with antique furniture, oil paintings on the walls and down comforters on the beds.

Siobhan O'Conner was originally from a small village in northwest Ireland and her voice still carried a soft Irish lilt. Now fifty-five, she looked to be in her early thirties and was the Clan's main intelligence operative in New York's financial and political circles. She showed up about an hour after they checked in to take them to dinner. Assuming they would be tired from their trip, she hadn't arranged any, as she called it, "entertainment" that evening.

Rebecca had been especially frazzled when she got to the suite she shared with Brenna. She pulled a Protector named Robbie into her room and closed the door. Shortly after Siobhan arrived, she emerged freshly showered, smiling and relaxed. Robbie trailed after her, also freshly showered and smiling. Brenna looked at her questioningly and Rebecca said, "I needed a little stress relief."

Siobhan took them to a famous old steakhouse in Midtown, a place of dark wood with tobacco stained single-use clay pipes hung on the wall, signed by celebrities such as Winston Churchill. Looking at the prices on the menu, Rebecca was reminded again about the cost of this trip. In addition to their party, Kallen and three other Protectors sat at a table nearby, and Brenna insisted that takeout dinners be sent to the six Protectors waiting outside.

Afterward they returned to their hotel and peered into the hotel bar. A quick scan showed a few occupants, but only Callie saw someone interesting. She greeted a man at the bar by name in French, and he invited her for a drink.

"You kids run along," Callie said. "I haven't seen Francois in years." The smile on her face told them she was staying.

The rest of them went to the hotel next door, much larger and more contemporary in decoration. On a Monday evening, it was full of business travelers. Siobhan coached the younger succubi as to their Glam and gave them some pointers on the judicious use of Influence and their pheromones as they took a table near the center of the room.

She raised an eyebrow and grinned as Rebecca projected Charisma, simulating the succubi's Glamour. "Nice. Callie's been teaching you?"

"Callie and Cindy," Rebecca said. "Cindy taught me techniques for simulating the succubus Talents."

Siobhan studied her, then said something that surprised the three young women. "You have the soul of a succubus. Are you a half?"

"I don't know. What's a half?"

“A carrier of the succubus gene.”

“Yes.”

Siobhan nodded but didn't say anything else. Rebecca looked at Brenna who shrugged.

Brenna knew from Rebecca that their Protectors hated having to deal with succubi on the hunt, but in a bar full of norms the available men were transparent. Tiny Irina scored almost immediately, using strong Influence to lure a tall, muscular man in his early forties and giving him a pheromone burst that glazed his eyes.

Watching them leave, Siobhan said, “Need to teach that girl some subtlety. You don't need to use that kind of blast in a place like this. Brenna, just dribble your pheromones, let a small amount leak out, but don't blast the room unless you're looking for group sex.”

Brenna flushed, “I've never done anything like that. I, I don't even know what I think about that.”

Siobhan looked at Rebecca, “You've done some of that, haven't you?” Rebecca colored, but nodded. Siobhan cocked her head, obviously studying her with more than her eyes. “That's a very nice lust you're projecting, and, hmmm, strong pheromones for a non-succubus. My, my, Cindy did teach you nicely. You could fool someone that's never met one of us.”

The waitress approached, telling them that various gentlemen had offered to buy them their next round of drinks. Soon they had company, and shortly thereafter all three retired upstairs. Rebecca's choice was a very tall black man who told them he had been a basketball player in college.

Brenna's partner was an enthusiastic lover, but without much stamina. She drained him and went back down to the bar with a nice Glow but feeling unsatisfied. Irina was sitting at the bar alone. The bartender came over to take her order, and in a chiding voice asked, “You ladies aren't charging for it, are you? Because if you are, I'll have to ask you to leave.”

Gaily, Irina told him, “Oh, no, just on holiday and trying to have a good time.”

Brenna entered his mind, and while steering his thoughts away from any suspicion of prostitution, told him, “We just graduated, and we're having a last fling before we get married.” He laughed and gave them a conspiratorial wink.

After he served their drinks and went off to tend to other customers, Brenna commented, “Not that there's anything wrong with charging for it. I've been told most of the independent succubi make their livings as courtesans. It's considered an honorable profession in telepathic society, just another way of using their Gifts. Siobhan takes escort gigs sometimes.” She looked around. “I'm sure that's a bit more high class than trolling in a hotel bar.”

She showed Irina how to dribble her pheromones. They chatted for a while, deciding on their next targets. Another very tall man approached Irina. After a short conversation and an extra puff, he invited her to his room.

Like them big, do you? Brenna asked.

It gives me a nice full feeling <laugh>, although my real preference is a well put together guy around five six. I like kissing during sex.

As they left, Brenna's attention was drawn to the companion of the man Rebecca had taken upstairs. He was even taller and more muscular than his friend. Catching his eye,

she smiled at him and exerted a bit of Influence. He came over to the bar and struck up a conversation. He was taller close up, at least six foot ten, and told her he was a rookie with the New York Knicks. He had played earlier that evening, then met his friend, a teammate from college. He had three days off until he played again.

“You must be very good, to play professionally,” Brenna said.

“Honey, I’m *very* good,” he said with a flirtatious laugh.

“I don’t suppose you’d like to prove that, would you?” Brenna flirted back.

She implanted a suggestion in his mind, and he called the bartender over, asking if the hotel had any vacancies. The bartender made a call, and told him that he could pick up his room key at the front desk.

In the room, Brenna turned up her Glam and gave him a burst of pheromones. Turning, she lifted her hair over one shoulder, baring her zipper. He moved behind her and pulled it down, slipping his hands inside and peeling her dress down her arms. His hands slid around her and his huge hands cupped her breasts, squeezing them hard, just short of pain. She gasped, throwing her head back against his chest. One of his hands moved down across her stomach, lower, inside her panties, cupping her and spreading her legs. One long finger pierced her and he lifted her almost off her feet. Pleasure flooded her, radiating from his hand throughout her body and setting off fireworks in her head. Her knees gave way and only his hands kept her upright.

When she finished shaking, she moved away from him and turning, finished undressing. Watching him, she eyed the largest male organ she had ever seen, even in a porno movie. Standing in front of him, her eyes were on the level of his nipples.

She reached her arms out and said, “Pick me up.”

He cradled her bottom in his huge hands and lifted her without effort. She wrapped her arms around his neck and her legs around his waist. He bent his head to kiss her, their mouths meeting, savoring, exploring. The soft skin of his hard shaft rubbed against her slick folds. Writhing, she managed to sheath him in her to the hilt and they let out a simultaneous moan, “Ohhh. My. God.”

He moved, stretching her and she felt her heat rising as his deep, strong thrusts sent her soaring over the edge, then before she came down, he lifted her again, driving her to an even higher peak. Her world narrowed to the feel of him inside her. Lowering her to the bed, he drove into her harder and faster, filling her as no one ever had. He plunged into her until he was close, but not wanting to lose him, she pushed him away and worked him to his climax with her hands and mouth. In return, he pleased her with his mouth, deftly licking and sucking, driving her into a frenzy and twice bringing her to orgasm.

Very pleased, they exchanged cell phone numbers. They stroked each other, kissing and chatting, until he slipped his hand between her legs and kindled the coals of her desire into a raging bonfire.

Blasting him with pheromones, she aroused his attention again, mounting and sheathing him with a cry of joy. In her experience, men were much slower the second time and she rode him for over an hour, his mouth feasting on her breasts and her lips, his hands teasing her nipples, her clit, clenching her buttocks. Twice during that time, she received spears from her Protectors checking to see if she was all right, the first time from Jeremy, then later from Rebecca.

Oh, yeah, I’m doing just fine <smile>, she told her friend, and in a burst of exhibitionistic enthusiasm invited Rebecca into her mind.

My God, he's as big as a horse!

<smile> Yes he is.

Rebecca started to withdraw, but Brenna invited her to stay. She felt Rebecca's hesitation, but her curiosity won out. When he finally reached his climax, spilling into her, Brenna discovered that a man that big, an athlete in his prime, held a very large reservoir of life energy. It poured into her, escalating her orgasm to tremendous heights. She felt Rebecca jolt, sharing her orgasm and the Glow his energy created.

She cleaned up, dressed, and met Jeremy in the hall.

"That's quite a Glow," he grinned. "Have a good time?"

Suddenly self-conscious, Brenna blushed. On the elevator down, she asked him, "Do you think I'm a slut? Honestly, Jeremy, what do you think of what we're doing?"

"Only a man of low quality would use such a word. If a man can't appreciate a woman who is willing to share herself, her pleasure with him, then he's an idiot," Jeremy said.

"Brenna, I've known succubi all my life, and enjoyed spending time with both Siobhan and Cindy on occasion. It's who you are, and speaking for myself, I think you're wonderful. You bring joy to people, and there's far too little of that in the world."

She digested that. "What do you think of Rebecca?"

He reached out and hit the stop button. With an intense look on his face, he said, "Rebecca is one of the finest women I've ever met. She's smart, brave, and loyal." He smiled, "And damned good looking, too. I don't know what she's told you about herself or what you've heard, but her problem isn't a problem to the people she works with."

He punched the button to start the elevator again. "Women such as you and Rebecca and Callie deserve to be put on pedestals. A woman who's willing to share her affection happily and freely is a treasure."

They were joined in the lobby by his team and Rebecca. Brenna shot a sharp glance at her friend, who appeared to be Glowing. When they reached their room, Rebecca gushed, "Jesus, that was awesome. I've never had an orgasm like that in my life."

"You had an orgasm?"

"Oh, hell yes. You kicked me over and the boyos I was with in the bar thought I was having an epileptic seizure." She shook her head in mock sorrow, "But I'm afraid you've ruined me. Sex will never be the same again."

"You're Glowing."

Rebecca's smile widened, "Am I? Well, thank you very much. I feel like I'm walking on air."

"Rebecca, you know you can talk to me about any kind of problems, don't you?"

Stiffening and looking away, Rebecca said, "I don't have any problems, except trying to coordinate everyone tomorrow. Well, good night."

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When Siobhan came to take them to breakfast the next morning, she took one look at Rebecca, then turned to Brenna.

"You're taking on hitchhikers?" She shook her head, "Brenna, don't do that, you'll ruin her."

After breakfast, they piled into the limo and drove uptown to the design shop owned and run by Alice Callaghan for the past hundred years. Although Alice had 'died' twice, and the shop was now officially owned by her granddaughter, there was no doubt among



the knowledgeable as to who was still in charge. She had sewn most of Brenna's mother's clothes.

As their appearance changed so slowly, telepaths had to change their identities several times during their long lives. Many changed careers, or in Seamus' case dropped out of the world entirely. At one hundred thirty years of age, Alice was an attractive, vivacious middle-aged woman whose brown hair was streaked with gray.

Things had changed in the custom clothing design industry in the hundred years since she first opened the shop, and Alice had not stayed behind. The first thing she had the three young women do was strip to the skin and stand on a platform where an electronic scan was made of their bodies. Feeding their measurements into a computer, Alice explained she could generate the patterns for any kind of clothing they might order.

She also scanned Callie, as her measurements were three years old. "You haven't been to see me in a while, Miss Callista. I was beginning to wonder if you'd found another dressmaker."

Siobhan was a regular customer, and that day was in for a final fitting for her Solstice gown, formfitting, strapless and fire engine red.

Alice read off their measurements. "Almost exactly your mother's measurements," she told Brenna. "About half an inch larger in the bust and half an inch wider in the hips."

"See? I'm a fat ass," Brenna told Callie.

There was a sharp smacking noise, and Brenna jumped, turning around to stare wide-eyed at Alice, holding the part of her anatomy that had been slapped.

"That's not fat, and that's not where you're bigger," Alice told her. "You're half an inch wider between the pelvic crests, and watch your language, young lady."

Irina stared wide-eyed, Rebecca was choking, trying not to laugh, and Callie and Siobhan were chuckling.

*That could have been you, Miss Potty-mouth,* Brenna told Rebecca through a directed mental thread.

*Yeah, but it wasn't, and you can bet I'll be watching my language.*

"Young lady," Alice told Irina, "you have been able to get away with not exercising because of your age and being a succubus, but unless you want that nice, soft figure to degenerate into cellulite and mush, you need to spend more time in the gym."

She praised Rebecca, "My dear, you have the most incredible body. It's obvious you take good care of yourself. If you ever want to model, I'm sure I can get you some work here in New York." Rebecca beamed. "I do hope, though, that you'll do something with that hair before you appear in public in one of my dresses. I would call it a crime, but that would be too flattering."

Brenna smirked at Rebecca.

Alice sat down with each of them and discussed colors, both their preferences and what she thought would look best on them. An assistant took each of the women aside and showed them computer-generated pictures of women with bodies similar to theirs, wearing different kinds of clothes, different colors, and asking them to rate the clothing on a scale of one to three. They also showed them different fabrics, asking if they liked how the fabric looked and how it felt, not just how it felt on their hands, but against their arms, legs, breasts and cheeks.

After two hours, the girls, clothed again, sat down with Alice. “All right, we have your measurements, your preferences. We know what we think looks good on you, and what you think looks good on you. So, what are we doing?”

Brenna leaned forward, “We each want six evening dresses, six cocktail dresses for nice occasions, six club dresses, at least two of those LBDs, foundation garments, and a line of upscale casual clothing for both indoors and out. We also each need a dozen business suits, half for warm and half for cold weather. Two of mine for each season should be pantsuits, but you’ll have to ask them about their preferences. I think Rebecca probably wants more pants than skirts, but that’s up to her. Blouses, of course, and accessories. I’d also appreciate recommendations of what to buy, and where, for things you don’t carry.”

Gasps came from the two young women sitting beside her. “And don’t listen to them as far as cutting back. I’m paying, and I’m not going to argue with anyone about it. I’ve worn hand-me-downs and garbage my whole life, and I’m not going to be ashamed of how I look anymore.”

“Do you know what that’s going to cost?” Alice studied her.

“Yes, ma’am, I do. Alice, we all just graduated from college. We’re starting out in our professional lives, our social lives, and all we have is stuff that keeps us from being arrested, clothes off the rack from the cheapest stores. You know how hard I am to fit, and I can’t imagine Irina’s much easier, all those curves and tiny as an elf. And Rebecca, well, she’d look good in a gunny sack, but I don’t want to be seen with her in one.”

Alice answered her with peals of laughter.

“Well, Brenna O’Donnell, you definitely know your mind as well as Maureen did. I’ll take your money. For foundation garments, will you take what I think is appropriate, style and quantity?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Two of you are succubi. Do you want these clothes to reflect that, or be more conservative?”

“For me, about two-thirds succubi wear, one-third more conservative,” she looked at Rebecca, “Conservative or ...?”

“Brenna? You said you weren’t going to do this,” Rebecca pleaded.

“I said I’d spend one week’s income. That’s what I promised.”

“Jesus, how much do you make?”

“I told you, none of your business. Now, do you want to dress sexy or not?”

Callie sent Brenna a thread, *Before or after taxes?*

*I don’t think I got that specific.*

Callie chuckled.

The rest of the week, in between stops at Alice’s shop to make decisions on fabrics, colors, and styles, they went shopping for shoes, boots, purses, coats, makeup, and other things. Brenna also spent an afternoon with Alice learning more about her O’Neill shielding Gift which they shared.

They took Rebecca to a fancy hair salon and had her hair done to Alice’s specifications. Tossing her head and letting her hair settle back into place, her smile lit up the room. The others agreed Rebecca had never looked better.

But the highlight of the week for everyone was Brenna taking her mother’s jewelry to the appraiser’s. Prior to leaving on the trip resulting in their deaths, Brenna’s parents

left an ornately-carved box with her. They told her that if anything ever happened to them, to sell the jewelry to pay for her college education. Through several foster homes, she had hidden the box, and had qualified for scholarships and grants to pay for college. Surprised to discover Brenna still had it, Callie insisted the jewelry be appraised for insurance purposes, but even she was stunned at the final number.

Her friends watched in awe as the appraiser pulled incredible piece after incredible piece from the box.

“Twenty-seven point five million dollars?” Brenna’s eyes were big as saucers.

“Twenty-seven million, five hundred seventeen thousand dollars, yes,” the old man replied. “It’s a rather remarkable collection, with some very unique pieces.”

The signature piece, a sapphire, diamond and platinum necklace and earrings had appraised at ten and a half million dollars, “I have never seen a matched set of sapphires this large that are this perfect.” A ruby and gold necklace was valued at two and a half million, “A truly incredible piece.”

He estimated a collar necklace with five rows of diamonds she had loaned Rebecca for her first dinner with the family at seven hundred fifty thousand, the matching bracelet one hundred fifty thousand, and the earrings at fifty thousand.

“I was wearing a million dollars’ worth of diamonds?” Rebecca breathed.

The pearls were judged to be of the highest quality. More than two dozen pieces were valued at six figures.

“You hid this in the back of your closet under the laundry hamper?” Rebecca asked.

Numb and clutching the box to her chest, Brenna stumbled out of his shop into the limo. “I need a drink.”

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Chapter 3

We are all ready to be savage in some cause. The difference between a good man and a bad one is the choice of the cause. - William James

Taking advantage of the opportunity Brenna’s shopping trip afforded them, Collin and his security forces scheduled an operation to take out the succubi hunting teams in New York.

Six weeks before, Irina Moore had come to New York to interview for a job as an interpreter at the UN. A man she met there gave her an invitation to a charity event. When she attended it, a team of succubi hunters tried to intercept her.

Their plans had been derailed by Siobhan O’Conner and Brenna’s redheaded alter ego, Samantha. They spirited her out of the trap. When Caroline O’Connell, the Senior Vice President of O’Donnell Group in New York, went to Irina’s hotel to retrieve her luggage, the hunters ambushed them. Subsequently, a deadly succubi hunting team in DC had been dealt with, but the leaders in New York were still operating.

Jayson O’Rourke, O’Donnell’s Director of Operations, had promised Irina he would ensure she got another shot at the position she’d applied for at the UN. Having now taken a job with the Clan, she was no longer interested in the UN job, but the groundwork had been laid for her to resume the interview process if she chose. With Irina’s help, they reactivated her application and scheduled interviews.

During her previous trip, she completed her initial interviews and had a second day of interviews scheduled. Of the people she interviewed with the first time, only one

wanted to meet with her again. It was the man who gave her the invitation to the charity event. Irina told the O'Donnell strike team that he originally wasn't on her interview list, but was added after her first three interviews.

"Are you comfortable with this?" Callie asked Irina, carefully watching her face. The young succubus looked as though she should still be in high school.

"Well, I won't say I'm not scared, but I want to do it," Irina said, twisting a long strand of blonde hair around her finger.

Shaking her head, Callie pressed, "You've told me you're not a brave person. You know what happened when we used Brenna as bait for these people."

"Yeah, I know," Irina's voice softened and she dropped her gaze. She stared at her lap for a full minute, then lifted her cornflower blue eyes. "All my life, my Mom has been afraid, hiding. She and Dad don't have much of a life. I guess I made a decision that I don't want to live that way when I approached Siobhan and Samantha."

Her eyes focused and the blue seemed to grow darker. "Callie, I'm always going to be small. Rebecca calls me a mini-succubus. She doesn't say it to be mean, but I get tired of people treating me like a child. I want what she has, what Brenna has. People's respect." Her expression grew intense. "The only way people are going to respect me is if I earn it. I know there are a lot of different ways to do that, but doing something even though I'm scared is one way to earn respect from myself. And that's where I have to start."

With Irina's help, Rebecca built and implanted a construct in the young succubus' mind. She explained it to Irina as being a stage set, intended to fool another telepath. Constructs were often used to create false identities. In this case, it recreated the Irina that existed prior to her meeting the Clan. The construct didn't contain her knowledge of the Clan and reinstated her leaky shields. The real Irina still existed as a watcher underneath. Only she or someone with the Lindstrom Gift could see the construct or collapse it.

With Brenna hitchhiking in her mind underneath the construct, Irina met with the UN official for her interview.

"I hope you're feeling better," Konrad Rosenberg smiled at the diminutive girl sitting nervously in his office.

"Oh, yes sir," Irina smiled nervously, "I think it must have been some sort of food poisoning. I felt fine when I met with you, but that evening I became deathly ill. I'm fine now."

"It's too bad you didn't have the opportunity to attend the party I gave you the invitation for," he said.

"Oh, no, I went," Irina assured him. "I don't know if it was what I ate before I went, but I got sick while I was there."

"Well, I'm glad you're feeling better." What followed was a perfunctory repeat of their earlier interview. At the end, he made sure to find out where she was staying while in New York.

The hotel name she gave was a setup. That night, when Irina returned to the sham hotel, over a hundred Protectors were waiting, inside and out.

Irina rode the elevator to the third floor. When she emerged, room keycard in hand, a man was waiting. Irina nodded at him and turned to go down the hall. A hand closed around her upper arm.

"Hey," she said as he tried to pull her to him, "what the hell?"

Another man stepped out of the alcove where the ice machine was located. As he approached, she saw a syringe in his hand. She kicked the man holding her in the shin and wrenched her arm away. Backing down the hall away from them, she started draining their energy.

Doors opened on both sides of the hallway on both sides of the elevator. O'Donnell Protectors poured out of the rooms and captured the men inside an air shield.

Hauled into Irina's hotel room, Brenna smashed their shields and turned their minds over to Collin and his Protectors. Rebecca collapsed Irina's construct.

"We did it," Irina squealed, bouncing up and down and laughing in exultation. "That was the most amazing thing I've ever done."

She hugged Rebecca. "You were right. It was like watching a performance. I was so nervous, but the Irina in the construct was cool as a cucumber. I never would have been able to pull it off." She beamed as various people congratulated her on playing her part so well.

Protectors appropriated the hunters' clothing, and Caroline, almost a hundred years older than Irina but short and blonde, took Irina's place.

Taking their captives' car, Jeremy and Kallen drove to the rendezvous site at a brownstone on the upper west side and hauled Caroline to the front door. Kallen knocked, and when a man answered the door, hit him in the face and bulled his way inside.

All three were extremely powerful telepaths with the Gifts for Air Shielding and Neural Disruption. Covered in air shields, they charged into the house, Jeremy taking the stairs two at a time while Kallen and Caroline split up and fought their way through the ground floor. Five more Protectors followed them in.

Caroline confronted two men and a woman in the living room. One discharged a bolt of electrical energy at her, but her air shield deflected it. She returned a stream of disruptive neural energy. Her assailant jerked, convulsed, and fell to the floor twitching as his nerves discharged randomly and commands from his brain ceased to make proper connections.

"Give it up or I'll do the same to you," she said to the other two people. The man pulled a gun, but was too slow. A silenced pistol spat over Caroline's shoulder as the Protector following her was faster.

One man tried to flee out the back door, but the team waiting there captured him and thanked him for opening the door.

On the third floor, a woman fired a gun at the Protectors coming up the stairs. The bullet bounced off Jeremy's air shield, and when he charged into her, she slipped and tumbled over the railing, hitting the bannister below, and bouncing down to the first floor.

Within five minutes, they subdued and captured the men and women in the house.

They rounded up seventeen telepaths. The woman who fell from the third floor was dead of a broken back, and the man Caroline burned out was euthanized. Four others, including one with a bullet in his shoulder, were hurt and taken to the healers at the New York compound.

Interrogations ensued immediately. Some of them had knowledge of CBW personnel at the UN and other operations in New York. Protectors were dispatched to apprehend three more operatives associated with the succubi hunters. The captives were transported to the Clan's compound to have their minds thoroughly ransacked. Once the O'Donnell

Clan was through with them, their Gifts would be burned out and their minds would be stripped of their memories.

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The next day, the most important operation commenced.

The Center for a Better World, CBW, was the most powerful European rival to the O'Donnell Clan. Based in Berlin, it presented itself as a philanthropic organization. In reality, it served as a front for a consortium of German, Austrian, Italian and Eastern European Clans.

Philosophically, the consortium was the polar opposite of O'Donnell. Their basic unifying belief was that telepaths were a superior race whose rightful place in the world was to rule, and normal humans should serve them. During World War II, those Clans backed the Nazis and Fascists. During the Silent War of the late 1940s and 1950s, they fought to control Europe. O'Donnell and its allies were victorious, forestalling those plans.

CBW had a small U.S. headquarters in Washington, DC, that Seamus tolerated, and a larger contingent in New York operating out of the UN. Most of the foreign Clans had some presence in DC and at the UN. The UN actually served the same function for the Clans as it did for national governments, giving them a neutral ground to meet and communicate.

The operations against succubi in New York were not within the boundaries Seamus was willing to tolerate. Reports of succubi and other young telepathic women disappearing had become more numerous, and at least two succubi had been killed.

Several teams entered UN headquarters using various guises. Some entered wearing UN security uniforms, some as tourists, others as credentialed national representatives or UN employees. Collin and a team of four computer experts took control of the security center, disabling cameras throughout the building and crashing the servers.

Brenna, Rebecca and three Protectors, all dressed in conservative business suits, went to Rosenberg's office, blurring their presence in the minds of everyone they passed.

When they entered his office, his secretary jumped to her feet, lashing out with a bolt of mental energy. The attack was deflected as Brenna had her team covered by her O'Neill mental shields. Rebecca walked up to the secretary and punched her in the nose. The secretary fell back in her chair, blood gushing over her blouse. Battering through her shields, Rebecca captured her mind.

"Did that feel good?" Brenna grinned.

"That was for Irina. She told me his secretary was creepy," Rebecca said, rubbing her knuckles.

Opening the door to the inner office, Brenna said, "Good morning, Herr Rosenberg." She smashed his shields and took control of his mind. The Protectors plundered his thoughts, discovering the entire structure of CBW operations and personnel at the UN and throughout New York City.

Rosenberg reported to three different people. A member of Siegfried von Ebersberg's Clan, his superior in that regard was another important official of the UN. Rosenberg also reported to CBW intelligence in Berlin and to Lord John Gordon in London. It was Gordon who was running the succubi hunters, though most of the personnel were supplied by von Ebersberg. Young succubi such as Irina and Brenna were

delivered to von Ebersberg. Older ones such as Cindy had been delivered to Manfred Gless before his death.

He knew that those delivered to Gless, the monster Brenna had run into near DC, were destined for murder. The fates of those sent to von Ebersberg weren't as clear to him, though he did know his Clan dealt in prostitution.

One piece of information that came as a surprise was that they were also hunting women who only carried the succubus genes. The Kashani Gift, usually called the Succubus Gift, was the result of a sex-linked gene complex. Brenna inherited it from both parents, while Rebecca had inherited it from only one of her parents. Brenna was a succubus and Rebecca wasn't. Von Ebersberg was collecting both, the younger the better.

When they finished, eyes blazing with rage, Rebecca placed her finger against Rosenberg's head and sent a stream of Neural Disruption energy into his brain. His body stiffened then slumped.

Shocked, Brenna asked, "Did you kill him?"

"No, I burned out his Gifts. He's head blind."

Leaving Rosenberg's office, they went searching for his superior in von Ebersberg's Clan.

*How's our time?* Rebecca sent to Collin. *We know who the kingpin is. Do we want to take him out of here?*

*No, too risky. We can give you another fifteen minutes, but that's it.*

*We won't have time to do a thorough interrogation.*

Collin was silent and Rebecca waited for instructions. In the meantime, Collin opened a secure elevator for them. They rode it to another floor.

*I wish we could capture his mind, the way Brenna did Gless,* Collin finally answered Rebecca.

*We're not letting the bastard into Brenna's mind,* Rebecca responded.

*No, I'm not suggesting that, just wishing.* The tone of his mental thread carried the same revulsion Rebecca felt, remembering how dangerously close Brenna had come to being killed.

Arriving at Johan Karlson's office, Rebecca took the lead. All of the strike team members, including Brenna, wore bulletproof vests under their clothes, but she wasn't taking any risks with Brenna's safety. CBW operatives had proven quite willing to use conventional weapons.

"We have an appointment with Mr. Karlson," Rebecca said, battering through his secretary's shields. Brenna shattered the shields of the other three telepaths in the office and the Protectors blurred everything from the minds of the two norms present.

Pushing through the door to Karlson's private office, they were met with bolts of electrical energy and spears of neural disruption. Karlson was a powerful telepath and he didn't intend to let them capture him. Brenna's shields blocked the neural disruption while Rebecca's air shield deflected the electrical energy. The lights went out. Because Karlson had an office with windows across one wall, they could see in his office, but the outer office where his staff was located was plunged into darkness. One of the Protectors kindled a small ball of fire on his palm to provide light.

Brenna smashed Karlson's shields and took control of his mind. He screamed, sinking into his chair, holding his head in his hands.

*I have notification of a power failure in your area,* Collin sent.



*Karlson used electrokinesis, Rebecca told him.*

The women rifled through his mind.

*There's an intelligence gold mine here, Rebecca told Brenna. Isn't there some way to take his mind with us?*

*I don't know.* Brenna enfolded his soul with her mind and attempted to pull it out of him. It didn't budge.

Rebecca reached into him, grabbed his soul and pulled it into her mind. Karlson shuddered and his body slumped.

"Shit," Brenna said, turning frantically to Rebecca, "he's dead. Put it back."

Rebecca pushed Karlson's soul back into him. Brenna stimulated his heart and he took a shuddering breath.

The women looked at each other, relief in both their faces.

*Karlson had a heart attack. Can we get him out of here in an ambulance?* Brenna sent a spear to Collin.

*Hell yeah, that works. I'll have people there in a few minutes.*

A doctor and two EMTs soon appeared. Within half an hour, Karlson was loaded into an ambulance driven by an O'Donnell Protector. With Karlson safely sedated in the O'Donnell infirmary, a team went to work mining his knowledge. The succubi hunting in New York and Washington was over.

Twelve more CBW operatives were rounded up and the rival Clans' communication network was compromised. Not only had they disrupted the succubus hunting operations, but CBW's U.S. operations as a whole.

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Alice had told Brenna and her friends that she could have some clothes ready for them the end of the week. The rest would be shipped to West Virginia where her sister Elise could make any final adjustments that might be necessary. Wanting to see the best first, Brenna asked her to make the Solstice dresses so they could try them on before their trip ended. On Thursday morning, they went to a fitting, discovering Alice also had a second dress ready for each of them. They would have new dresses for Thanksgiving.

Callie felt as proud and happy as a new mother watching the wonder on the girls' faces as they looked at themselves in the mirror. She remembered how she felt the first time she put on one of Alice's creations, seeing the tall, awkward girl she had always thought of herself turned into a beautiful swan. It changed her self-perception and her life. For the first time, she had seen the beauty her father had always praised.

Before they left the shop, Brenna and Alice went off alone, and when she came back Callie asked, "So, did you keep your promise?"

"Of course, before taxes."

After the fitting, Brenna insisted they go to Tiffany's. All of the female protectors were with them that day, and as everyone wandered around the store, Callie began to wonder if that was an accident. Brenna wandered about, talking to everyone, looking at the pieces people showed her, and in the end bought a rather plain jade choker necklace that fanned across her upper chest, pointing to her ample bosom, a nice watch, and a ring for Collin.

Callie watched her speaking at some length to a manager when she went to pay.

"Forgive me for being suspicious, but is there a reason we came here?" she asked Brenna. "And how much was that receipt you just signed?"

“Why, Callie, how could you possibly suspect me of manipulating something for my own selfish purposes?” Brenna asked, her eyes artificially wide.

“Perhaps because I know you.”

Brenna smiled and looked around at her party gazing into the cases, some purchasing things. “I’m just doing a little Christmas shopping.”

Callie remembered Brenna standing with each of the women, looking at jewelry they pointed out, most then reluctantly turning away because they couldn’t afford it. She remembered her own longing look at an exquisite choker of yellow diamonds, and talking herself out of the hundred fifty thousand dollar price tag.

“You didn’t.”

“Of course not,” Brenna scoffed, “you’re a hundred-millionaire yourself. If you really wanted that necklace, you’d have bought it. I only really went overboard for one person and a little overboard for another.”

Callie didn’t bother to ask whom. “She’ll yell at you.”

“No she won’t,” Brenna told her with a chuckle. “She’ll be speechless.”

“So what are you giving me?”

Brenna chuckled, “Nice try. You’ll know when you pull the end of the bow.”

“You didn’t see anything you really wanted?”

“Get real. I’ve got over a hundred pieces in that box, and I haven’t worn a fraction of it yet. I need more jewelry like I need another hole in the head.”

The group was getting ready to go, gathering near the entrance, when Callie made a mad decision. She crossed to the showcase where the yellow diamonds were displayed, and motioned the saleswoman over. “I’ll take that,” she said, pointing. Turning, she met Brenna’s smiling eyes.

That evening, Siobhan took them to her favorite club. There was a live band, and the crowd was a little older than in some of the places she’d taken them earlier in the week. With a small bribe to the door screener, she arranged for the Protectors to be able to rotate in and out of the club freely. Since telepaths were able to clear their systems of alcohol at will, Kallen had acquiesced with allowing them to party freely.

Everyone was having a good time, dancing and flirting. Callie danced with the same man several times and then disappeared. Worried after a while, Rebecca checked the restrooms. *Brenna, have you seen Callie? I can’t find her.*

She was dancing with that blonde guy, but I don’t see him either.

I’m going to check outside.

Okay, I’ll come with you.

They went outside, the late fall evening rather chilly, but didn’t see Callie or the man. Increasingly worried, they walked around the building. In the alley, they saw a man standing in front of a woman who was backed against the wall. She had her arms around his neck and one leg around his waist, high heel and panties hanging from the end of her foot. What they were doing wasn’t in question.

“My God, that’s Callie!” Rebecca was scandalized.

A voice behind them made them jump, “And I’m sure she’d appreciate some privacy. I know my men would appreciate you going back inside so they can go with you and get warm,” Kallen said in a droll voice.

“You love her, doesn’t that bother you?” Rebecca asked.

“Yes, I love her enough to want her to be happy. I don’t make her happy, not that way. Aren’t you the wrong one to be talking about someone having sex in an alley?”

Rebecca’s face flamed so bright Brenna could see it in the dark.

“Go back inside, she’s safe, and she’s doing what she enjoys doing,” Kallen said. Chastised, they went.

When they sat down at their table, Siobhan asked, “You do know what the primary purpose of panties is, don’t you?”

“Uh, what?” Brenna asked.

“To keep your ankles warm, silly. Don’t worry about Callie. Kallen takes care of her.”

Sunday morning, after a riotous evening out on the town ending in a bacchanalia in their hotel, they loaded up the buses. Dropping by Alice’s shop, they picked up the clothes that were ready, and headed for West Virginia.

“Ok,” Brenna turned to Irina, “what’s the final score?”

Pulling out her smartphone, Irina punched a few buttons, “Rebecca fifteen, Brenna twelve, Irina nine.”

“Whoo hoo! I won!” Rebecca raised her arms in the air and did a little dance in her seat.

“What are you talking about?” Callie had a very perplexed look on her face.

“Modeling offers,” Irina explained.

“How many runway offers?” Brenna asked.

“Rebecca twelve, Brenna and I, none.”

“It’s the legs,” Brenna pronounced.

“Yep, the legs,” Irina agreed.

“How many lingerie or nude?” Rebecca asked.

“Brenna nine, Irina six, Rebecca none.”

“The boobs,” Rebecca said. “And who knows if those were really legitimate offers or if they just wanted to see them.”

Brenna stuck her tongue out at Rebecca.

“What were the others?” Callie asked.

“Mostly modeling makeup,” Irina said. “Brenna had one for shampoo, and Rebecca had one offer to do dish soap commercials. He thought she had pretty hands.”

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