

Shayla held the wet, warm, sticky fabric of her once white formal gown away from her body and lifted her head to glare at Lindsey. “My dress is ruined.”

“I don’t know,” Lindsey said, tilting her head while slipping her weapon into the thigh holster under her black gown. “I kinda like it. It makes a statement.”

“You’ve *got* to be kidding me.” Shayla wiped her bloody hands on her hips and ignored Wendy’s snicker from across the room where she stood by the door. The Governor’s Ball was in full swing and the other woman was looking out for unwanted witnesses.

Shayla glanced down her dress. She’d gone from elegance to resembling the main character in a slasher film in a matter of seconds—her front splattered with bits of gore, blood, and other... stuff... Mr. Platt, her miracle-worker dry cleaner, was going to charge her out the ass on this one—probably more than when he’d gotten those unfortunate stains out of her favorite silk blouse after the *Great Sewer Escapade*.

And what was... She grimaced and plucked off a large chunk of something stuck to her boob and tested the texture between her fingers.

*Hmm... brain matter.*

“So, *why* are you carrying the Harrison prototype?” Shayla asked Lindsey with some heat. “It’s not approved for field work.”

Wendy shut the door and leaned against it—a grin spreading over her face. “We should’ve known something was up when she said, *let’s cause a little trouble*.”

“It was only supposed to leave a small hole,” Lindsey interjected, her confused scowl going from Shayla to the body on the floor. “No muss, no fuss.” She shrugged. “I certainly didn’t expect his head to explode.”

“Well, it *did!*” Shayla frowned and flicked away what she’d been squishing between her fingers.

Wendy grimaced. “Brains?”

Shayla nodded.

“Yeah, that’s gross.” Wendy moved away from the door, sidestepping around the remains. “So is this.”

“Okay, so it got a little messy.” Lindsey—*Little Miss Understatement*.

“Ya think?” Wendy said, laughing.

“But the dress.” Lindsey stepped back, smiling—the toe of her shoe *just* missing what was left of the man’s scalp. “I mean look at it.” She waved a hand up and down Shayla’s body. “The blood and…” Lindsey crinkled her brow and peered at what Shayla assumed was a nostril. “Whatever that is gives it an artsy-fartsy vibe.”

Lindsey gave her and Wendy a wide-eyed *what* look when they just stared at her. “Go ahead. Scoff. People pay good money for this kind of shit.”

Wendy checked her watch. “Okay, chicks, we need to leave, and this…” she said, indicating Shayla’s clothes, “won’t do. We need to dispose of the dress and find you something else to wear.”

“What if we—”

“But here’s the biggest problem.” Shayla appreciated Wendy heading off another *Lindsey-ism* while she tentatively reached out a hand toward Shayla’s hair, then pulled it back.

“How are we going to get the rest of the ambassador off of you?”