License to Kiss

A Story

By Maryanne Peters

Scene 1

It was not the first time that he had been in this position. Nor was it something that happened with alarming regularity. It seemed to be a hazard of his profession: To recover consciousness and find himself a captive to a bitter enemy.

Every time it did happen he had a simple mantra: “I am not dead and I easily could be. So I live and I will live on.” It seemed to be behind the legendary courage of Jonathan Poole, Great Britain’s finest intelligence operative, although as often as not, it was just plain good luck.

“Ah, Mr Poole, you are back with us?” Jon recognized the voice. It was Cornelius Van Heerden, the criminal mastermind who had replaced all state actors as MI6’s key target. He was a man Poole had encountered before in the casino’s and grand international parties that he frequented, building his web of villainy.

“I can’t say that I am pleased to see you,” Jon said dryly, reminding himself that his mouth was just that dry.

“Well, well Mr Poole. We took the liberty of stripping you while you were unconscious. We have learned to do that to look for those wonderful little devices that you Q Branch so lovingly builds. So imagine my surprise when we discovered your underwear!”

The villain held up the matching apricot and white lace slip and French knickers that Jon had fallen in love with only a few weeks before. Deliciously comfortable and simply gorgeous.

“What a gentlemen wears under his bespoke suit should be his own business,” Jon said.

“A gentleman on the surface, perhaps, but maybe a lady beneath.” The dastardly man let the slip rub against his cheek. The finest silk that only a body plucked free of hair neck to knee could fully appreciate. Now it seemed soiled by contact with this monster.

Jon Poole moved but felt ties on his wrists and ankles restraining him. He could not seize his things from the hands of the beast, his captor.

“It has made me look at you in a new light, Mr Poole, or perhaps I should call you Miss Poole?”

“You’ll find no weapon in those items, I assure you,” said John. “Perhaps you should put those aside and examine my suit.”

“Oh, don’t worry. We have thrown that in the furnace. There were a couple of explosions so who knows what traps were in there. But after finding what lay beneath it occurs to me that you won’t be needing a suit anymore.”

“My tailor will be very upset. I don’t relish facing him with this news,” said Jon, although the truth is that while he liked the tailor, he did not care for his suits. His tastes were elsewhere.

“Oh, you won’t be going back there, I can assure you,” Van Heerden sneered. I have other plans for you. Perhaps they reflect your hidden desires, now revealed to me.”

“I had rather hoped that we might be talking about you,” said Jon. “With me captive and at your mercy you should feel free to explain to me in detail your latest plans and my inability to stop them.”

“As I say, we learn from our mistakes,” said Poole’s nemesis. “So I was simply going to kill you, until I started to wonder what kind of woman you might be, under this brash male exterior.”

If one thing had kept Jonathan Poole alive through all incidences just like this, it was to see the opportunity for buying time and turn that into survival and then escape.

“Wouldn’t you like to know,” he said.

“I would indeed,” said Van Heerden. “I have arranged for a surgeon. He will be here shortly. Recovery may be slow, but I have time. I have some bad deeds to do, but I will wait to see after you next awake before I attend to your future, if I decide there will be one.”

“Next awake?”

But Van Heerden was gone and the room was empty for the better part on hour. It was windowless and gave no clue as to its location. The chair he was in was steel and heavy. The ties plastic and tight. A simple calculus showed that there was nothing that could be done. He would need to wait.

And after that hour a man entered wearing a white coat. He heard the dock lock behind him.

“Have you eaten in the last 10 hours? Are you allergic to anything?” The man asked questions. But Jon judged him of no importance so he simply did not reply.

Charm was his skill. But he had immediately judged this man as a scientist or doctor, and a man impervious to fear, flattery or humor. It was better to stay silent. How could he use this man to get free? Could he use his head or his teeth to overpower the man? But then the person outside the door would need to open it.

But thinking through such things takes precious time. In the man’s pocket was a syringe. Once again Jonathan Poole lost consciousness, perhaps for the last time.

Scene 2

This had happened before – more than a few times. He knew not to jump up or even open his eyes. He should recover his wits slowly, to give himself time to understand his surroundings. It may be advantageous to appear to be still unconscious. He needed to lie still, and just sense what he could.

There was pain – that much was clear. He had been tortured was his guess. They must have used drugs as he could not remember the torture, but it seemed that it was the crude “twist his nuts and burn his cock” method, because that was the seat of the pain. There was other discomfort too, around his face and on his chest. They may have slapped him around a little.

He was lying on his back and covered by a soft sheet. He was not restrained. He could flex the muscles in his legs without being seen to have come too. He felt weak, but the muscles appeared to be working. He could jump to his feet if necessary. He just needed to tighten the muscles in his arms and clench his fists under the sheets.

His eyes opened in surprise. Something completely unexpected. He could not make a fist.

But he was alone. It was a bedroom, not a torture chamber. Not even a cell, as the light was coming through a window and there were furnishings. Just a normal bedroom, somewhat luxurious but not large.

He pulled his hand out from under the sheet to see why he could not make a fist. What he saw was not his hand. It was pale and smooth and soft, and it had long manicured nails painted pink. It was a woman’s hand. It was his hand, but a woman’s hand.

Suddenly the words that he had heard Van Heerden speak the day before entered his head: “I started to wonder what kind of woman you might be, under this brash male exterior.” Could it be? He pulled down the sheet. There were breasts on his chest. And below that was his groin.

“Oh no!” he said out loud. His manicured hand was fumbling to confirm his worst nightmare.

He threw the sheet off completely and swung his legs out of the bed. They were not his – smooth and soft, but also weak. He had not used them for days – even weeks. It would have to be weeks. There were no bandages on his breasts or in his groin, and he could feel that there had been surgery of his face too, and that was uncovered and with any cuts well healed. He needed to find a mirror.

There was a dressing table, with some items on it, and a large mirror inclined away from him. On unsteady legs he moved slowly towards it, concentrating on his footing rather than the reflection, until he was standing in front of it.

There was no sign of Jonathan Poole. There was a woman standing where he should have been. She was naked, her body perfectly shaped with breasts full and round, in perfect proportion to the rest of her. Her face was pretty, but confused, her shoulder length chestnut brown hair full and glossy. And beneath her belly, between her thighs, was the genitals of a woman. Pubic hair had been shaved but had grown back into a soft bush above a pink vulva. She could feel it. And opening and … she needed to pee.

She could see a door second door and an ensuite bathroom. She walked over to the door, still unsteady, and into the room, over the bowl. She paused for a moment – she knew exactly what to do, no matter how strange it might be. She turned and sat, and let the stream flow from the place it now came from.

She considered how long she had been unconscious. A significant time. The long locks might have been added, but the healing of the wounds and the pubic hair would have taken the better part of a month. Radical changes like this would be hard to reverse. He could never father children, but then early in his career he had accepted that.

Before she stood she remembered that toilet paper was needed, although quite how to use it was an unknown. As she wiped she made contact with a small lump that made her jump slightly. She knew what it was. Somehow she had a clitoris.

She went back into the bedroom. She noticed beside the bed closer to the window something she had missed. Some clothes were laid out. There was a dress, but on top of it was something familiar – his matching apricot and white lace slip and French knickers, washed and ready and a matching . She was naked and needed no further invitation. She slipped them on and immediately felt the way that she always felt in feminine underwear – happy.

But this time there were breasts to fill the bra, and the French knickers looked so much better without an ugly bulge.

Under those was a patterned dress with some petti slips sewn in to make the skirts full. She held it up. It was simply gorgeous. The extra skirts would be needed to give volume, but the bodice was tailored and tight, and pulled in the waist and would display the breasts wonderfully. A little old-fashioned perhaps, but just the style Jonathan liked to wear in his private moments.

With hands shaking with anticipation, she put it on. She stood in front of the dressing table mirror at a distance to see full length. She gave herself a twirl.

The door beckoned. It was time to leave. But yet there was a hairbrush and makeup on the dressing table. Jonathan had experimented in the past. Now seemed the moment. It was all there, and a lipstick in just the right color.

“Hey you, Miss!” No sooner than she had stepped into the hallway there was a voice behind her. She knew that this person was addressing her, and because they could not see her face he allowed himself a smile. Miss. She was a Miss. Strangely, despite everything, she felt good about that.

She turned. Two men had their weapons drawn and aimed to him. One caid: You not going anywhere. You are coming with us.”

“If you are taking me to see Cornelius Van Heerden,” she said in a higher voice than she was accustomed to using. “You can put your guns away. That is exactly where I want to go. He has some explaining to do.”

Scene 3

“Ah, Miss Poole, or may I call you Joanna?” Cornelius Van Heerden sat behind a very large desk in a very large office, set on a pedestal overlooking comfortable chair like the one he was pointing to. “Would you please sit down over here. I want to admire you.”

Joanna? It seemed an acceptable name. In all the circumstances the facts had to be faced. Things were not as they once were. If Jonathan Poole had one defining feature it was a cool head in outrageous circumstances. It seemed that Joanna Poole might be just the same. Her eyes scanned the room for opportunities.

“I must say that you are startlingly beautiful, Joannna,” Van Heerden said. “Better than I could ever have imagined. Perhaps better than you might have dreamed. I am assuming that you had dreams of looking the way you do?”

“A gentleman is entitled to his fantasies,” Joanna said. It was what Jonathan would have said.

“Now you would appear to one of them,” Van Heerden quickly remarked with a smile.

“A fantasy is not quite the same when it has become fact,” she said – Jonathan was still there.

“You’re disappointed? Clearly not. You are so well presented. You have dressed yourself and I think applied makeup and brushed that lovely hair of yours. That is not the action of a man. I feel that I have opened your gilded cage and set you free.”

Was that true? The woman inside him was now made real. Jonathan had been a transvestite and a part of that person loved this. But surely Joanna still had a job to do.

“The outfit is a little old-fashioned?” she said. It was just while he collected his thoughts.

“We are both old-fashioned,” he said. “Jonathan Poole was a relic of the past. A risk-taking womanizing adventurer. Such people no longer exists. Jonathan no longer exists. The world belongs to women like you these days, Joanna – beautiful, intelligent and resourceful women who fear nothing.”

“We you might be in danger then,” she said.

“Not from you I hope,” he said. “And the fact is that you may realize that you have been out of action for some weeks. We looked after you in your coma as we could, and you seem to be moving well.”

Weeks had gone by.

“My plans have been well advanced,” the villain continued. “Jonathan Poole has failed. It maybe that now it would be inappropriate to show his face in the offices of British Intelligence. But he doesn’t ever have to be seen again.”

“So what have you been able to achieve while I lay on your operating table?” She crossed her legs suggestively and rearranged the hem of her dress to improve his view. She could see him leering. She still needed to know what his plans were. Who could know the power of sexuality better – now it was just the other way around.

“I have closed my deal. The money is in the bank. Governments have been paid off and I am sure that the file on Cornelius Van Heerden has been shelved. I said the last time you plumbed me for information, I don’t do that anymore, but the truth is that there is nothing to tell but history. You have always seemed to get away with secret before. But this time, I don’t care. There is no secret.”

“Are you saying that I can leave?”

“I was hoping that you would stay,” he said with a look of genuine disappointment. “I am sure that you know that I am collector of beautiful things. Exotic things – it would seem that the new you might qualify. Why don’t you stay? You could live well. Jonathan Poole is dead. Bury him. Be Joanna. Stay with me.”

“We will always be on opposite sides, Kees – if I can call you that?”

“Please do,” he said. “Let me get you a drink.”

“Vodka martini, shaken, not stirred,” she said. But then she added: “Could you put something in it to make it a little sweet and pink.”

He walked to the fully equipped bar and set to work.

“There is no secret because the answer is always money, and that is no secret. Perhaps in their old-fashioned way British Intelligence thinks that every man with power wants more, and every rich man wants to be even richer, but it is not true. The fact is that priorities change. The evidence is everywhere. Wealth becomes tiresome.”

He stopped talking to noisily shake the flask before pouring her drink into a large cocktail glass.

“I use the system. Governments have realized that the threat is people outside the system, not people like me. I think you know that too. What I want is a comfortable life that I can shre with somebody I respect; somebody intelligent but exciting; somebody who shares my taste for fine thing – expensive things; and somebody who truly understands the joys of sex.”

He stared at Joanna as he placed the drink in front of her. She was close enough to take him. The glass was something that had been used before – just held by the rim and struck against the table at the right angle and it could be a razor that would open his carotid artery in seconds.” But she took it by the stem.

“Are you telling me that I now have fully functioning sex organs,” she said. For some reason there was a smile on her face – perhaps ironic, but it might just be something else.

“So I am told, but I would love to confirm that it is true,” he said.

“That would seem presumptuous of you, Kees,” she said coyly.

“It is the kind of thing Jonathan Poole might say. I might have picked up some bad habits.”

“I think that he always wondered what it might be like on the other side,” she said. “Are you offering to show me?”

“Dear lady,” he said, a phrase which she basked in for a moment. “If you will let me?”

The End

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*Erin suggested a spy story with a plot very different to this, but I liked her title which casts the mind back to Fleming’s James Bond…*