

**LUCK OF THE DRAW**  
(working title)

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**an original work of fiction by Larissa Dahroug**

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*dedicated to keepers of ancient knowledge and traditions*

## CHAPTER 2

### More Than She Could Offer

Doug guided Stewart, his giant marmalade colored cat, into the carrying crate and closed the front latch. Stewart exhaled a half hearted meow and purred rubbing his head against the grate of the door as Doug pulled his hand away.

“What a good boy. When we get to work you can have some kitty-crack and fish flakes.” Doug checked his bag to be sure the new jar of catnip was in there. It was. With some actual effort he picked up the crate with the ample cat, slung his bag over his other shoulder and swiped his keys off the kitchen table. Saturdays were usually his day to hike Shoreline or have lunch with Galeena his late mother’s best friend. But Galeena had called earlier in the week to say she was taking a weekend trip with a “gentleman friend” and Doug hadn’t asked any questions. He was more than happy to be off the hook. His mother had been one of twelve children, but his remaining Aunt and Uncles had never left Ukraine and he had only met them once or twice in his entire life. Galeena and his mother had immigrated around the same time and met while both doing temp work for a small agency before Anya had met Doug’s father, Dennis. Anya and Galeena were fast friends and had even been roommates until Dennis had bought a ring. Doug now had that ring in a box in the back of his kitchen junk drawer, but Eberly, his boyfriend of the past six years, didn’t like the ring and besides, Doug had no intentions of asking Eberly to marry him no matter what the law now said he could do.

“It’s just gonna be you and me at the office today Stewie. Daddy has some paperwork to catchup on.” Doug explained to the cat as he secured the crate to the front passenger seat of his Escape. Stewart just meowed apathetically.

“Well, don’t sound so excited. It’s not like I enjoy this part either. It’s just, well, Daddy’s a sucker. Crazy people don’t know how to fill out paperwork.”

Doug didn’t bring his files home. He had a strict personal policy of separation of work and home. Part of him was concerned that “the crazy” might start rubbing off on him if he let anything of his clients touch anything of his life outside of his office. One time a couple years ago he had unexpectedly run into a client at el Rio in The City. It was Cinco de Mayo. He and Eberly had been drinking and were dancing suggestively to the cross-dressing mariachi band when he was shaken

from his sloppy sweaty bubble to the sound of someone yelling: “Dr. Spears! Dr. Spears!” A young trans girl was flagging him with a lipstick stained hanky from across the back courtyard. Doug had grabbed Eberly by the shoulder and pulled him out through the bar next-door without explanation. Once on the street he ran almost dragging poor Eberly on the pavement until they were three blocks away and around the corner looking for a cab. It wasn’t that Doug was trying to hide that he was gay...he just thought the majority of the LGBTQ community was crazy and wanted nothing to do with them unless they were sucking his dick or paying him to fix their broken lives. He had made Eberly submit to a barrage of psychological evaluations before he invited him to come up for a drink. Eberly had only humored him because the blow job in the truck stop restroom where they met had been that good. Neither man had been with another man since that first fateful meeting and neither had been back to any Bay Area clubs since the el Rio incident. They kept their social activities limited mostly to each other, Stewart, Galeena, or Stephanie and Jack, Eberly’s favorite niece and her husband. Eberly did free lance copy editing for a couple technical magazines and rarely actually had to meet with *co-workers* face to face. Three times a year they took trips to go antiquing in BC, New England, or along the Mendocino Coast. Once a year Doug took a week to travel alone, usually to a silent retreat center or a professional conference. For that week Eberly brought his cat, Micah, over to Dougs and stayed; mostly because Doug had a lot of house plants that needed care but also because Doug liked a good fuck as soon as he got home and Eberly was an obliging bottom. When the two men travelled together Stephanie took care of the cats and the plants. Doug knew nothing about Stephanie’s sex life and he didn’t care to. Jack was quite fat and Doug couldn’t imagine his dick could possibly be long enough to reach out from under his belly to pee standing up let alone reach anyone’s vagina.

It was quarter after one as Doug pulled into his parking space behind the office building. With any luck he was there in time to see DeeDee, the old faggot that was what’s-her-face-Amy’s regular Saturday client, arrive. DeeDee was a well known fixture in the local gay community. He had survived San Fran in the 70’s and 80’s without getting HIV and without using condoms. DeeDee was known to flaunt this horrendous fact openly...and claimed his ability to “avoid having the HIV” was wrapped up in always knowing the right astrologer to read his palm or some such nonsense. Doug wasn’t sure exactly what Amy did out of her office, but he did know he had a number of regular clients because of her referrals, and she didn’t seem to care that he didn’t reciprocate referrals. After the last couple referrals she sent his way, however, he was reconsidering the arrangement. Maybe it was time to repay the favor, so to speak. Over the years he had a couple

clients that became something of a stalker but they had all been easily taken care of with the threat of a restraining order. But about six months back Amy had referred a trans guy, Alex, to Doug. Alex told Doug that Amy had no idea he was trans, and Doug believed it. Alex had none of the physical tell-tale signs. Alex looked 100% natural unless you got his pants off. Then the lack of outdoor plumbing gave it away. Alex became convinced Doug needed a “real man” in his life and began following him around and leaving messages on his voicemail daily. When Doug turned down Alex’s advances he had broken in and left six dead rats at the back door of his office...or rather, Doug believed Alex did it. After the rat incident, Doug had called Alex and referred him to another therapist, a friend from college who specialized in people going through gender transition. Alex hadn’t taken it well and Doug caught him trying to break in with a bobby pin. Alex was arrested. What Doug didn’t know yet was Alex had nothing to do with the rats.

Stewart knew they were getting close to the office and began to meow excitedly as Doug parked the Escape. Doug heaved the cat in his carrier out of the vehicle and shut the door using his right foot then clicked the doors locked with his fob. He saw Amy’s car and Maggie’s moped parked opposite his space. There was only one car in the client lot out front when he pulled in so he was excited at the prospect of seeing DeeDee arrive and what ridiculous get up he would be wearing. DeeDee was a very masculine looking male, but insisted on dressing like a menopausal woman in flowing kaftans, scarves and hoop earrings and the like. The bald patch on the top of his head shined as if he buffed it and it was not unusual to see him with pink foam rollers securing all the stringy fluff circling the friar patch. It was the only thing that made a Saturday afternoon of insurance paperwork worth it. Doug believed himself above such displays faggotry. He gathered himself and scurried up the back stairwell and in the back door of his office. Stewart meowed in anticipation of catnip and benito flakes.

Doug sat the carrier on the floor inside the door and opened the latch as Stewart bounded out into the sparse office.

“Stewart! No scarf and barf, OK buddy? I’m gonna give you some fish flakes here in your bowl and then I’ll put the crack on your beddy-bed, OK?”

Stewart meowed loudly and wrapped himself back and forth around Doug’s feet as he hung his bag on the hook on the back of the door and fluffed the kitty cushion in the basket hanging from the window sill.

“Danm it Stewie! You’re gonna trip me. If I break my neck, who’s gonna give you crack and flakes?”

Stewart sat and looked at Doug thoughtfully as he placed a generous pinch of benito flakes in a small dish and sprinkled catnip straight from the jar onto the cushion. Stewart darted to the benito flakes and Doug flipped the light switch. Then he picked up a small remote and turned on the surround sound system. The sound of ocean waves crashed in the room as if they were out at Bodega Bay and not in the stuffy little Mountain View office. Doug grabbed the stack of files from the past week from a receptacle on a shelf and a stack of insurance forms from a shelf on the opposite side of the room and flopped onto his overstuffed chair. The clock on the wall above the front door said 1:28. Stewart licked benito flakes from his whiskers and proceeded to have a small freak-out, running in small circles, then darted out the cat door installed in the front door.

“DeeDee must be here!” Doug said out loud and stood up to peek out the blinds. As he moved past his desk he knocked the book IDC-9 codes on the floor and bent over to pick it up. As he stood up Stewart ran back in the office and out the cat door installed on the back door.

“Crazy cat. You haven’t even touched the kitty-crack yet.” he called after the cat. Then using his right index and middle finger he pulled open the blinds just enough for him to look out onto the parking lot. A car had just pulled in, but it wasn’t DeeDee in his purple dragon Art Car. It was a black four door Mercedes with tinted windows. Two men got out of the front and third person, Doug couldn’t see other than their legs in black slacks, in the back seat.

“Well, Amy’s clientele is coming up these days.” he said to no one as the two men mounted the stairs. But they didn’t pass Doug’s door. Instead, the one who had been driving knocked. Doug pulled his fingers from the blinds and held his breath. The sound of the ocean waves crashed over him as if he were drowning. He didn’t know why, but all of a sudden he was frightened and the room felt too hot and small. He was glad Stewart had run off. The driver knocked again.

“Hey. We know you’re in there. I saw you looking out go the blinds and we can hear the radio on in there, man. Open the door and we can be done with this fast and easy.” one of the men said from the other side of the door.

Doug was frozen. He didn’t know what to do or say. He didn’t know who these men were or why they would be knocking on his door.

“I’m with a client. Please take a card and call to make an appointment.” Doug had a business card holder mounted just to the right of his door. Most of the offices in the building did.

“Look man, we know you’re in there alone. Now open the door. I just want to have a conversation.” one of the men said.

“Hey. I get it, but I only have conversations by appointment and with a referral.” Doug replied.

“Hey. Put your faggoty face up to the window for a second.”

Doug pulled the blinds open as he had before when he was hoping to spy DeeDee in a muumuu. One of the men held a pistol up to the glass. Doug let the blinds snap back together.

“Now open the door or we’ll shoot it open. We don’t want to have to do that. We just want to talk. Got it?”

Doug opened the door and the two men pushed in and past him, the gun now holstered. Doug wasn’t sure which one was holding it or if they both were carrying.

“How’d you know I’d be here? I don’t usually keep Saturday hours.” he asked bravely.

“We didn’t know. We just got lucky. We’re not really here to see you today anyway...but it’s lucky. Maybe we can take care of two birds with one, you know.” the man who had been driving said while looking around the sparsely filled room.

“No. I don’t know. Who are you and what do you want from me?”

The man who had been in the passenger seat looked at Doug intently before he spoke. His houndstooth blazer was well tailored. His jeans were expensive and the fine gauge silk v-neck pull over was in good taste. Doug noticed he wasn’t wearing any socks with his Prada loafers. Doug had a pair of the same loafers in faux crocodile, but this man’s were classic black. Very LA...or Berlin...or New York...or anywhere but Mountain View.

“You know Casey Ann Dovessa.” It was a statement, not a question. In fact, Doug did know Casey. She was a relatively new client referred to him by Amy.

“I can neither confirm or deny any of my patients. I am a medical professional you understand.”

Doug said carefully. The man looked unimpressed. The other man, the one who had been driving started to feign thumbing through a stack of client paperwork on a shelf. Doug saw the holster under his charcoal grey blazer.

“It wasn’t a question. She’s my...” The man stumbled on his words for a moment. Doug couldn’t quite tell if he was looking for the right word to use because he hadn’t thought things through or because English was not his first language. Doug thought he detected some faint accent but couldn’t be sure.

“...my kin, and I understand she has been coming to see you once a week to talk about her private life. What do you know about Amaranth Gonder?” the man finished, running his index inter over the edge of Doug’s desk closest to him, rubbed the dust and inspected his fingers. Doug swallowed before answering him. He wasn’t sure whether he should be relieved or more alarmed.

“A-amaranth Gonder? Not much. Sh—sh—she has an office down the hall and sometimes refers clients to me.” Doug stuttered nervously.

“Down the hall, huh? Refers clients sometimes? Like, how many times? How long?” The man ran his right hand over the right lapel of his blazer and inhaled sharply without making any expression with his face. Doug looked over to the other man who was standing leaning on the book case with one elbow and the opposite knee bent over the opposing leg resting the ball of the foot of the bent leg on the top of the other foot. The gun could be seen poking out from below his blazer. Doug looked back to the other man.

“Um, yeah. Um, maybe six or seven clients over the past four years?” Doug offered turning his cheek towards the man in front of him. The man looked satisfied with Doug’s answer but still had other questions.

“Four years? She been here that long?”

Doug was a little surprised. Amy had never given him any reason to think she had anything to do with the unsavory type of individuals standing in front of him right now and Casey was a little odd, but all of his clients were. He wondered what this guy meant by the term “kin”. Casey said her parents lived back East and her biggest problem seemed to be home sickness as far as Doug had seen so far, but he had only met with her three times up to now. Hardly enough time to figure out a human being...particularly one voluntarily seeking therapy. But, Amy, wow. Doug wasn’t interested in having his cards read, but he understood why other people did. Really, the job Amy did wasn’t much different than his, and their clients had many similar issues and concerns. The truth was, Doug respected Amy for knowing when people needed “professional help” and not just something vague to get by.

“At least. But I don’t know exactly how long she’s been here. I’ve been here four years and she was here before me.” This wasn’t entirely true. Doug knew Amy had been here four and half years because they met for the first time the day he moved his stuff into his office and she told him she had been there for six months already and really liked it. A couple days after that they had chatted over lunch in the shared kitchen. After that, Amy started referring clients that needed *more than she could offer*, as she had explained it, to Doug. The man bought it turning down the corners of his mouth and nodding his head up and down slightly.

“Alright. Now tell me everything you know about her and her clients and her business right now and if I think you’re lying to me I’ll go find your cat and kill him. A trust he enjoyed the rats we left for him last week?” The man spoke without blinking or moving his eyes from Doug, even as he moved towards the chair where Doug’s clients usually sat during session. “Feel free to sit down. I’m willing to wait as long as it takes to hear what you know.” The man smoothed his hands over his pant legs before crossing his right ankle to his left knee. Doug saw a small inscription style tattoo on the



inside of the man's ankle but didn't understand the language it was written in. He stumbled backward nearly tripping looking for his chair. He found it and sat down grabbing the arm rests first. "Um. I really don't know her much. We see each other in the kitchen from time to time and one time we had a drink together at The Whitewash, but I don't even know where she lives, other than to say somewhere around town."

"Come now, Mr. Spears. You are a clinical psychologist, sir. Are you asking me to believe you have absolutely no other knowledge or understanding of Miss Gonder?" the man chuckled lightly. The other man echoed his chuckle. Doug was becoming increasingly nervous and passed gas. At this the other two men broke out in hilarious laughter. Once they settled themselves the man opposite Doug in the chair continued.

"But seriously now, Mr. Spears. What else can you tell me about Amy?"

Doug spent the next half an hour going over in minutia every conversation he had ever had with Amy. None of it was anything much interesting...she likes chocolate covered orange candies but hates marshmallow...keeps office hours Tuesday through Saturday but only by appointment...reads tarot and does some New Age therapy or some such thing called Reiki...not married...no kids...no family he knew of...likes music and dry rose wine. She had referred Casey to him for therapy because she thought the girl was homesick and needed to deal with growing up, not get her cards read every week. Doug had agreed with her. Finally Stewart came back in the back door and broke the awkward energy in the room rubbing up against Doug's legs before jumping up in the strange man's lap and into the cat nip lined basket in the window and licking himself. The man wiped invisible cat fur from his lap and stood up, seemingly satisfied with what Doug had told him about Amy.

"Well, Mr. Spears. I would now like you to suck my dick." he said as if he had just as simply said, "Nice to meet you." Doug instinctively got on his knees, scared for his life. He'd had his dick sucked by strangers and sucked enough stranger's dicks in truck stops that this would only be a mild violation as far as those things go. The man laughed and smacked him lightly on his cheek with his palm.

"Fuck you. I don't actually want you to suck my dick. I just wanted to see if you would."

With that the man motioned to the other who had driven the car and then left out the front door and headed toward Amy's office. Doug scooped up Stewart and his bag, quickly locked the front door and left out the back the way he had come in. He didn't know what they wanted with Amy, but he didn't want to stick around to find out either. Stewart meowed softly, placated by catnip.