

LUCK OF THE DRAW
(working title)

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an original work of fiction by Larissa Dahroug

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(925)320-1000
thekittypantsranch@gmail.com

dedicated to those with the wisdom to keep ancient knowledge and traditions

CHAPTER 8

Sucking Mafioso Schlong Now

Doug found himself checking the clock over Garrett's head more than once during the hour and a half session. He chastised himself internally. Normally he prided himself on being "one hundred percent present" with *and* for his clients. But the earlier meeting with officer Juno had him shook, even if he was relieved to learn Amy was alive and recovering. Doug was careful not to ask too many questions and Juno hadn't offered any additional information beyond the fact that Amy was OK. Juno asked a lot of questions and wanted to know all kinds of things Doug wasn't expecting. He had asked awkwardly if he and Eberly were romantically involved or just friends. He wanted to know how often he travelled and if any of his clients paid in cash. He wanted to know if he enjoyed going to drag clubs or if he partook in the "pageantry" of such establishments. "Lord, no!" was how Doug had responded to that one and thought to himself if this cop thought that about him, what would he think of DeeDee. Some of the older guys in the local community referred to DeeDee as "Klinger". DeeDee had, in fact, served in Korea. That was a fact not many knew of, and Doug only knew because he spoke once at the VA at a seminar for practitioners helping LGBT Vets living with PTSD and DeeDee had been one of the volunteers checking speakers in as they arrived. DeeDee was in his full witchy robe regalia except he was also wearing the jacket to his Air Force dress blues with a patch indicating he was a conflict Veteran of the Korean War. Doug was his regular shabby-chic self. That's how Eberly described Doug's personal style, Shabby-chic. Upon meeting over the check in table, the two men pretended they didn't know each other. It was easier for everyone and it worked. Doug mentioned DeeDee to Juno who took down some notes.

Now, in his chair in his position of authority, Doug counted the minutes as Garrett rambled on and on about yet another perceived slight visited upon him by his boss. Garrett was notorious for his joy in playing the victim and the story he was telling Doug was similar to so many of the other stories he told Doug. It took all of Doug's will power to not yawn while he was also ready to crawl out of his skin with his own anxiety over the past few days. Galeena had made it home safely, thank God. She called Doug Monday night to tell him how wonderful everything had been and they had dinner Tuesday evening at her favorite diner, so she could give Doug the matching T-shirts she bought for him and Eberly on the Santa Cruz Boardwalk. Eberly hadn't called Doug until Tuesday evening just after he got home from dinner with Galeena. He mentioned Galeena

had gotten home but didn't mention the T-shirts. Other than that, the conversation was short and mostly one-sided. Eberly said he was still pretty upset and needed more time to think. Doug was relieved. If he were honest with himself he had to admit that Eberly had been wearing his nerves thin for some time with his overly exaggerated effeminate mannerisms, particularly his propensity to infantilize those around him with baby talk nick names. It was one of the things Doug hated in particular about being gay — when men like Eberly epitomized that particular speech style stereotype. One time he had said something to Eb about it. It didn't go over well. The first time Doug heard Eb refer to Jack as "Jack-Jack" he told him that if he wanted to date a woman he would...couldn't Eb just own the fact that he was a man and talk like one? Eberly had flown into a fit demanding to know exactly what a man sounded like and wasn't that a dick in his mouth. Doug hadn't brought it up again, but it still bothered him.

Finally Garrett said, "Well, I don't know. I feel like this is the story of my life! It's always the same. Everything I tell you is the same."

Doug was shaken from his own inner dialogue and coughed a small cough as he replied, "I suppose life keeps giving us the same lessons until we get it. What do you think you are meant to learn from this situation?"

The truth was Doug hadn't really listened to what Garrett had been saying but Garrett seemed more than satisfied with this canned-food, self-help guru perspective.

"Dr. Spears you are absolutely right!"

Doug smiled and nodded telling him their time was up for the week. He was very relieved to be done for the day. That morning Doug had put a pork loin in his crockpot with a stick of butter, a couple small potatoes, carrots, garlic and an onion. It had been years since he had used the slow cooker but his mother used to do it all the time. Once a week they had pot roast or pork loin when he was growing up, and right now he was missing his mother sharply. Galeena was great as an aunt, but nothing was a replacement for the Love of a mother and all Doug wanted was a hug right now and to be told he was Anya's "best boy". He needed to be someone's best something. Garrett uncrossed his legs and got up from the chair across from Doug. Doug got up and followed him to the door. As he was turning to close the door behind Garrett, Eberly's orange VW caught his eye as it pulled into the parking lot. Doug's stomach sunk. He really wasn't in the mood. He had also left Stewart at home in the townhouse sleeping on the back of the sofa and was anxious to get home and see his trusty companion was safe. Doug closed and locked the door and stood quietly by the window watching through the slightly open blinds as

Eberly took off his driving gloves and exited the car with what looked like a bag of take out. "Great," he thought. "Just what I need." Doug started to gather his things and prepared to leave out the back door but heard Maggie in the hallway yammering about something to Andrew, the newest tenant in the building. So, he was trapped.

Eberly attempted to open the door. Finding it locked he knocked loudly.

"Doug. Doug-Doug! I know you're in there. I can smell your cologne. Open up. I have yum-yums." Eberly said trying to entice Doug. Doug rolled his eyes.

"Hold on, Eb. I was just getting ready to leave."

Doug unlocked and opened the door to Eberly and the aroma of pungent Indian food. Eb held the bag up triumphantly.

"I got you Spice Hut!" Eberly announced cheerily. Doug looked from Eb's forced grin to the heavy laden plastic bag and frowned.

"I wish you would have called and asked, Eb. I have dinner plans." Doug stated without moving away from the door to allow Eberly entrance to the office. Eberly's face fell at the news.

"Since when do you have dinner plans on Hump-day that don't involve me? Are you dating already? Sucking mafioso schlong now?" Eberly laughed at his joke. Doug glared sullenly at him.

"It's none of your business, schlong or no schlong...but no. I'm not."

"Well, maybe you've gotten a taste for pussy then? Is the old baby-clock ticking?" Eberly poked Doug's slight bulge just below the belt. Doug was now at his limit.

"Look, my day has been long and I have plans that I've been looking forward to since I got up this morning. So if you don't mind, take your stinking bag and gobble elsewhere." It wasn't often that Doug used double entendre and Eberly was actually offended.

"Well, if that's how it is, Lover, I guess I'll take my stinking bag and go gobble with someone who loves me. Make sure you get a good look at my cheeks as I walk away because it just might be the last time you get to gaze upon them. I wasn't here to eat with you anyway, by the way. I was just being nice and bringing you dinner. I have other plans too." Eberly turned on his heel and sashayed down the stairs and back to his car taking the food with him. Doug closed and locked the door and headed home to eat his slow cooked pork and be with Stewart.

In his car, Eberly sat the bag of unwanted samosas, dahl and rice on the back seat with the other two bags of food, See's chocolates and his briefcase. Tears stung at the corners of his eyes. He looked himself in the eye in the rear view mirror and said, "Girl, he is not worth the loss

of moisture.” Then he pulled the driving gloves over his graceful hands and started the old diesel engine. Just as he was preparing to back out of the parking space he saw the maintenance man, unlocking the door of his truck while holding a box and a vase of what appeared to be Jack’s sunflowers. He started to roll his window down to inquire about the flowers but thought better of it. He’d just ask Jack about it over dinner when he got there. Tubbs didn’t look like he was in a good mood and Eberly didn’t have the energy to deal with cranky old breeders any more than he had the energy to deal with bitchy fags and he wanted to get to Palo Alto while dinner was still at least warm, if not hot.

When he got to Stephanie and Jack’s the Bronco was nowhere to be seen and he was a little concerned Stephanie had forgotten their plans. He pulled out his cell phone and rang his niece. “Hello? Uncle Eb?”

“Oh! Steph-Steph! It’s so good to hear your voice. I’m here but where are you? Where’s the Bronco?”

“Oh, Uncle Eb, Jack took it to work today. He’s just not home yet. He said he had a lot of orders today and was going to need to help Jeffie with deliveries. He just called. He should be here any minute. Come on in.”

“OK. See you in a jiffy.”

Eberly stuffed the phone in his bag and turned over the center console stretching his long arms into the back seat to reach the bags of food, chocolates and his brief case. He had learned the hard way not to leave anything too tempting in the car on the campus, even in front of Stephanie’s apartment. He lost his last briefcase that way — a beautiful vintage PRADA thing he had found stuffed in a back corner of a shop in BC. It was in questionable shape when he bought it but it was a real quality piece and after he had it fixed was told he could probably get two thousand or more for it. He Loved that bag and always looked twice when he saw someone carrying one similar. Once, in the City, he thought he saw it in the window of a shop on Haight Street. There was a small patch that had been made in the interior of his bag that was a give away detail. But the owner of the shop said it was already paid for and on hold and wouldn’t let Eb see the inside. It probably was his bag. He didn’t say anything but he never went back to that store again and a few months later it closed it’s doors and became some other junk shop, the way so many store fronts turn over on Haight Street.

By the time Eberly locked up his car Stephanie was standing at the front door of the building holding it open for her uncle. Eberly approached excitedly giving his niece air kisses on either cheek exaggerating the load in his arms. Stephanie smiled and took two bags of food and the box of chocolates from him.

“Oh! You remembered! Jack will be so happy. Thank you, Uncle Eb.”

“No problem, Steph-Steph. I have some extra food here. I got something to drop off for Doug, but found out he has dinner plans.”

“That’s fine Uncle Eb. I’m sure it will get eaten.”

Stephanie ushered Eberly into the lobby of the building and closed the door behind them. The front door of Stephanie’s apartment was open. Eberly walked in and sat the rest of the items in his hands on a side table.

“Steph-Steph, did Jack have a delivery over at Doug’s office today?”

Stephanie looked at Eberly quizzically.

“Not that I know of. He doesn’t usually take orders that far from the shop unless it’s a big one and he didn’t mention any big deliveries today...just that he had a lot of deliveries today. Why?”

“Oh, it’s probably nothing. Maybe even someone copying Jack’s work. I don’t know. Like I said, I stopped by Doug’s office to take him some dinner...” Eberly stopped briefly as Stephanie handed him a glass of chardonnay. The two raised their glasses in cheers and took a sip before Eberly continued. “As I was saying...when I stopped by Doug’s, as I was leaving I saw the maintenance guy leaving with a big vase of sunflowers and it looked like one of Jack’s Deluxe Van Gogh orders. I thought it was strange and was wondering. That’s all.” Eberly took another sip of chardonnay and started to open the bags and take out each container placing them on the small farm-style dining table.

“I don’t know Uncle Eb. That is strange. We can ask Jack when he gets here.” Stephanie was saying as Jack opened the front door.

“Ask Jack what?” he said as he closed the door behind him and took off his shoes from the back using his big toe and leaving the laces tied.

“Uncle Eb was just saying he saw someone with one of your arrangements at Doug’s office today. Did you have a delivery over there?” Stephanie asked innocently. Jack blushed.

“Um...yeah. Sort of. I felt bad about Amy and tried to deliver an arrangement to her office, but she wasn’t there. I left them with the maintenance guy.”

Eberly raised his eyebrows. “Why, Jack-Jack, that was very thoughtful. But also kind of dangerous don’t you think. Did you see the Doug-monster?” Eberly asked as he extended the

box of chocolates to Jack using both hands. Jack looked at the box and smiled taking it from Eberly.

“Um, no. I didn’t, thank God. Thanks for the chocolates, Eb. You know these are my favorite?”

“A little birdie told me, and I thought if I had been through what you’ve been through I sure could use a box of chocolate to sweeten things up.”

Jack opened the box and offered the candies to Eberly and Stephanie before pulling out a dark chocolate bottom dipped walnut caramel square and stuffing the whole thing in his mouth. It broke the moment and distracted Eberly from the vase of flowers for the time being.

“Let’s stop hovering at the door and get in here you guys. I’m famished!” Stephanie said to her two favorite men who both followed her back over to the table where she had already placed three dinner plates and sets of flatware and cloth napkins and opened all of the containers. Jack picked up his mango lassi and took a sip. Eberly made a face.

“I don’t know how you can drink that stuff, Jack. It might be as thick as cum, but cum tastes better.” Eb chided playfully. Jack rolled his eyes and Stephanie giggled.

“You forgot my iced chai!” Stephanie exclaimed suddenly realizing it was missing from the table. Eberly struck his thigh with his palm.

“Oh! Steph-Steph, I’m so sorry!”

“It’s OK. I don’t need it. I’d rather drink wine anyway.”

“Oh, I’m with you on that, Sweetie.” Eberly turned to Jack. “There’s extra samosas and I also got some dahl if you’re interested, Jack.”

Jack was filling his plate. “Yeah. I saw. That’s what Doug orders, right? Were you missing him?” Jack asked flatly.

“Not exactly. I told you, I was over at his office. I thought I’d take him some dinner and just see where things stood between us.”

“And? Where do they stand, Eb?” Jack asked dipping a piece of naan in the buttery sauce of the chicken mahkini and stuffing it in his mouth.

“On the San Andreas fault, evidently. He told me he had plans and to take my stinking sack and go gobble elsewhere.”

Jack made a sound of disgust at the top of his throat. “What a schmuck.”

“Jack!” Stephanie reprimanded.

“No Stephanie. I’ve had it with him. He’s rude, and arrogant, and mean to me. And these days he’s not so svelte himself and after what Eb said he did to that poor woman, I hope some

mobster gives him a Columbian neck tie. He has it coming.” Jack said, uncharacteristically cruelly.

“Jack!” Stephanie began but Eberly stopped her with a single motion of her hand.

“It’s OK, Steph-Steph. I understand where Jack is coming from. Let’s just enjoy dinner and watch some Antique Roadshow. Did you learn anything about Amy, Jack?”

Jack sat his plate on the coffee table and sat down in his favorite spot on the floor in front of the love seat and hesitated for a moment before he replied.

“Yeah. She’s alive and recovering.”

“Well praise the sweet baby Jesus for that!” Eberly said. Stephanie laughed. With the exception of one aunt who married into the family, the Gettlemons were Jews.

“And...” Jack trailed off.

“And what, Honeybear?” Stephanie coaxed.

“And I told that guy Tubbs what I knew about Doug.” Jack finished in a whisper.

Eberly’s eyes got wide. Stephanie spoke.

“You did what?”

“I told him. I told him everything.”

“And what did he say?” Eberly was almost frantic. It was a combination of terrified, comforted, and jealous that he hadn’t been the one to tell Tubbs.

“He said he was going to tell the police.”

Stephanie slumped back in her chair in resignation to the truth. Eberly laughed a strange high pitch cackle that somehow felt out of place. It made Jack nervous.

“I’m sorry, Eb.”

“For what? I’m just jealous I wasn’t the one who tattled. Well, we will see where the papadums fall, won’t we.” Eberly replied pressing a papadum chip into his mouth and crunching it.

“Yeah. I guess we will.” Stephanie said, and turned on the TV.

Back in Mountain View Doug sat at his table alone slumped over a bowl of comfort food, sharing a piece of pork every now and then with Stewart, listening to a Dan Savage podcast about some forty something guy finally coming out and leaving his wife for her yoga instructor. “What a dumb bitch.” he thought to himself. “All that time and she never had a clue he was gay?”