

LUCK OF THE DRAW
(working title)

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an original work of fiction by Larissa Dahroug

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

CHAPTER 5

Believe It Or Not, I Married A Rocket Scientist!

It was nearing dinner time and Amy was still in the ER. A social worker had interviewed Amy both before and after the rape kit was administered and the doctor had ordered an extensive list of tests to try to figure out what Amy had been given. She had been informed she was very lucky to be alive. So far they had identified fentanyl, Percocet, and methamphetamine in her system. The doctor also suspected MDMA, but it was impossible to know for sure since the assault happened on Saturday and it was now Tuesday. The amount of drugs that were still in her system was more than enough to kill a person Amy's size, especially someone who wasn't accustomed to taking such drugs. Amy told the doctor she was sure Reiki had saved her, Reiki and the Hand of God. In reality, Amy didn't see much difference between the two. In her fifteen plus years that she had been practicing the ancient healing Art, she had come to understand it as a gift from God. The doctor was skeptical but acquiesced she had no better explanation. After examination it was found that she had a head contusion, two broken ribs, a sprained right wrist, and had been both vaginally and anally penetrated. The cut along her labia and arm had been made most likely by a knife of some sort and the hair on her vulva was oddly removed with a depilatory cream. That is what was on the back of her shirt. They had used the her shirt to wipe the hair from her vulva. No semen was detected. The doctor explained to Amy that it wasn't uncommon that a sexual predator did not ejaculate. It was also possible that a woman had assaulted Amy, though it was unlikely given the other facts and events of the past few days. The social worker had told Amy that sometimes survivors of such attacks would have some type of flashbacks with images or sounds or smells in the weeks or months following an attack and suggested she keep a notebook close by to write down anything she might remember. The last thing Amy could remember before waking up on Tuesday was locking her office door. After that everything was just blank. They, of course, had also checked for STDs. There was no indication of exposure to HIV, so at least there was that, but the full panel results were going to take a day or two to get back.

Tubbs wasn't allowed in the room for the exam or meeting with the social worker, but he had stayed at the hospital anyway, coming back in the room to sit with Amy whenever he was permitted to do so. Amy was grateful. Her parents were both still living but they lived back East and they rarely spoke. Not even on Christmas. Amy's brother had joined the Marines and was

over seas somewhere as far as she knew, but she hadn't spoken with Dale since before he left for boot camp and he was career military now, not just a recruit. Amy didn't really know any of the rest of her family and most of them that she knew of lived in Canada, France, and one in Turkey. But she wouldn't know them even if she was shown a photo. She didn't do social media and her work was her life. When she wasn't with clients she was reading, doing research, writing or hanging out with Liza. It wasn't that Amy didn't like people, it's just that she preferred being alone and working at her own pace on her own terms. Once every two years she took a one month trip. When she traveled DeeDee took care of Liza for her. DeeDee was her longest standing client. They had been working together for almost twenty years. He was the one who told her about Reiki and the two of them had done their Reiki I training together. DeeDee hadn't been interested in continuing any further Reiki training. He was happy to be able to do Reiki for himself and had never wanted the responsibility of working on others. DeeDee was probably the closest thing Amy had to a friend. When people found out what she did for a living they either were fascinated or total disbelievers and both ends of that spectrum caused problems. So, she kept the majority of her relationships on a professional level. DeeDee was the only exception, but even so, he wasn't the type of friend she was willing to call in this situation. Tubbs was practical and helpful and treated her the way she wished her own father would. She hadn't actually thought of Tubbs as a friend until this moment, while she was sitting in the over-lighted ER — beaten, bruised, and scared. Tubbs just sat quietly holding her purse on his lap and smiling at her from time to time.

Officer Juno had stuck around to brief the social worker and waited to get a report after the examination, but after that he had left. Amy mentioned she had seen her car was parked in her apartment's parking lot and he wanted to go back and have a look at it and then he had other work to do. She wasn't the only one who required police attention in the South Bay that day, but he said he would check in with her in the morning. Besides, if there was anything else that he needed to know the social worker or the doctor would let him know. Tubbs was more than happy to sit with Amy, but it was getting late and both of them were getting hungry. The thought of food felt strange to Amy, and while she was hungry, she also wanted to take a shower. Tubbs had called Ed Shuppe and explained what was going on and where he was. Ed had been very sympathetic and had even agreed to go over to Amy's office himself to put a sign on the door for her clients. She didn't keep client numbers in her phone as personal policy, so she couldn't call anyone to cancel or reschedule appointments, and even if she did have the numbers in her

phone, she wasn't sure who all was scheduled for the week. She kept all of that information in her client appointment book, and they had stolen that. Amy and Tubbs were sitting silently when a woman whom they had not met yet came in and introduced herself.

"Ms. Gonder, my name is Naomi Sondheim. I am the director of social work for this hospital. Please let me begin by offering you my complete sympathy and condolences for the horrendous experience you have had. We see a number of rape cases here every day, but this is one of the most brutal attacks I have ever encountered. I can not pretend to know everything you must be feeling and thinking right now. I can tell you things are going to be difficult for some time, but eventually they can get better. Is this your father?" Naomi nodded towards Tubbs who had tears welling up in his eyes.

"No. I'm not her father, but if I were I'd be very proud." Tubbs answered her. Amy began to cry. Naomi pulled a small packet of tissues from her pocket and extended it to Amy.

"Ms. Gonder..."

"Please. Call me Amy."

"Amy, I have been in contact with officer Juno. Your tablet was recovered from your car but the other personal item was not there. Due to the nature of the crime it is the recommendation of both myself and officer Juno that you not stay in your apartment for a while, until there is more information. Harold, I mean, officer Juno is looking for a suspect for questioning and I understand this suspect is known to be a dangerous man. Do you have a friend or family member you can stay with for a while? Even if the situation were different, I understand you live alone and being alone at a time like this can be very challenging." Naomi's expression was sincere. Amy began to cry harder. Tubbs answered for her.

"Yes. She has some place to stay." Tubbs wrapped his arm around Amy's shoulder and pulled the woman close to his side protectively.

"Thank you. Amy, are you comfortable staying with Mr. Tubbs?" Naomi asked.

"Yes. Thank you." Amy replied.

"Because if you do not have somewhere to stay, I have a referral for a safe house but it's in Contra Costa County and they do not accept pets." Naomi continued.

“No. It will be fine. I have a spare room in my home and my wife can take some Zyrtec.” Tubbs declared definitively. Amy leaned into the largeness of the kind man beside her. Naomi extended her hand toward Amy with a white linen business card.

“This is my direct line. Please call me tomorrow morning to check in, or any time you feel the need to call. They are preparing discharge papers for you right now and if you decide you need the safe house for any reason, do not hesitate to tell me. We can arrange transport for you.”

“No. That’s OK. I’m fine to stay with Tubbs.” Amy said, drying her tears with one of Naomi’s tissues. Naomi smiled weakly.

“It was nice to meet you Mr. Tubbs. Amy, I’m so sorry for what was done to you. No one deserves that.”

“Thank you.”

Naomi turned and left the room. Tubbs held Amy by the shoulders and bent his head to look her in the eye as he spoke. “Amy, my wife and I have an extra bedroom in our home that was once my daughter’s room. You are welcome to stay as long as you need to. Plus, your kitty will be very happy because it’s an Eichler so she can go outside anytime she wants without really going outside. You’ll both be safe. I think you and my wife will get on quite well. Maddy’s been doing charts for people as a hobby for years. She’ll like having someone to talk to. I’ve already talked to her about it earlier. The room is ready for you.”

Amy smiled through her tears and hugged Tubbs. “Thanks, Leon. I can’t tell you how much I appreciate it.” Tubbs smiled and hugged her back. No one but Maddy called him Leon, but somehow he didn’t mind it. A young orderly entered the room with a clipboard full of paperwork for Amy to sign, then she was free to go.

Walking out into the parking lot to Tubbs’ Silverado they passed a black four door Mercedes with a Cockapoo barking in the front seat. Amy froze and began to shake.

“What’s wrong, Amy?” Tubbs asked gently guiding her past the car and toward his truck a few spaces away.

“I don’t know. That car. The sight of that car makes my feel sick.”

“Let’s just go get Liza and your things and go home. Maddy’s making a pot of chicken soup tonight and some homemade bread.”

“That sounds great, Leon. Thank you so much.”

“It’s truly my pleasure. I hope they find the animal who did this to you. They better find him before I do!” Tubbs opened the passenger side door and helped Amy into the seat and closed the door once she was buckled in.

Back at Amy’s apartment complex things were more busy than they had been before. There were kids in the parking lot playing hopscotch with sidewalk chalk and stones, and a number of older residents were out and about chatting over the BBQ pit. The smell of hot dogs and hamburgers made Amy’s stomach growl. First Leon walked with her over to her car. Amy looked in the window and saw a blood stain on the back seat. The seat was pushed back farther than when she drove the car she noticed. The carpet that was usually hidden under the seat still looked new in contrast to the regularly trampled portion, and there was a cigarette in the cup holder. Amy didn’t smoke. She didn’t open the car, just looked through the window. Tubbs guided her from the vehicle compassionately.

“It’s OK. Juno will figure it out. Let’s just go get Liza and your things.” Amy nodded and followed him up the three flights of stairs. Widow Dwyer was waiting.

“Oh! My! Amaranth. Well how are you, dear? Been partying a bit?” she quizzed Amy. Tubbs couldn’t believe anyone could be so crass and cruel.

“Madame, I suggest you mind your business, and Amy is none of your business.” he told the bitchy old busy-body.

“I don’t remember speaking to you.” widow Dwyer replied bringing her hand to her throat in a melodramatic gesture.

“Back off. I think I hear a bottle of vodka calling your name.” Tubbs said bringing himself between the old woman and Amy as Amy turned the key in her door. Widow Dwyer made a sound like she was surprised but scuttled back in her unit. Tubbs turned and followed Amy into the apartment. Liza was standing on the chair where Tubbs had been sitting earlier in the day. He went to the kitty and rubbed her ears while Amy started picking things up in the living room.

“Amy, leave that. Go pack your bag and get what you need for Liza. I’m pretty sure we have a litter box in the garage and I can pick up some litter on our way to the house. Just get your things and Liza’s food and toys and I’ll clean up the TV in here. Where’s your broom?”

Amy nodded and pointed to a closet next to the front door then disappeared into her bedroom. She could hear Tubbs talking to Liza and moving things around. First she pulled the sheets and

blankets from her bed and stuffed them in the hamper against the wall. It was a good thing she had recently done laundry. The hamper was empty except for a night gown and pair of panties. She pulled some clean sheets from a shelf in her walk in closet and made the bed up fresh. Then she pulled her suitcase out from under the bed and sat it on top of the freshly arranged bedspread. From her drawers and closet she packed two weeks worth of clothes. She didn't know how long she'd be staying with Leon and his wife but it was early October and the weather was anyone's guess, so she needed options. Most of her clothes were black, so at least everything matched. Then she went in the bathroom and got her toiletries case from under the sink and filled it with her necessities. There was just enough room in her suitcase to squeeze the toiletries case. She closed the suitcase then placed her pillow on top and went back into the living room to gather Liza's tiny kitty things, the books she was using for research currently and her notebooks. Tubbs had the broken TV standing up on the TV stand and all the broken pieces swept up. He was arranging the curtain rod back over the sliding glass door. He turned around and smiled at Amy.

"Well, they didn't pull the rod out of the wall. It just needed to be put back in place. The TV is toast but other than that things in here are A-OK again. Liza approves."

Liza was trotting back and forth over Tubbs toes meowing happily. Amy smiled and shrugged her shoulders.

"I just need to grab Liza's things and a few books and I'm ready to go."

"Where's your bag?"

"In on my bed."

"OK. I'll go get that and take it down to the truck. You get the rest of your things together and I'll come back up to meet you. I don't want that nasty old coot getting at you again. What's her problem anyway? I have trouble believing you do much partying."

"Oh, her husband died last year and everyone in the building thinks she did it. They said it was a heart attack, but she's been nosey and rude since the day I moved in six years ago. I think she needs a good roll in the sheets...or maybe a sedative. Who knows what her problem is." Amy answered. Tubbs laughed and passed Amy to go get her suitcase.

When Tubbs came back upstairs Amy had Liza in a carrier and all the other items in a medium sized blue Rubbermaid container. Tubbs picked up the container and Amy lifted the cat in her carrier and purse and followed Tubbs down to the truck after locking the door. Widow Dwyer watched through open blinds as the two made their way down the stairs.

Turned out Amy and Tubbs were practically neighbors. His Eichler home was located just a couple neighborhoods away from Amy in the Birdland neighborhood. Tubbs explained, “Maddy is retired from Ames. Believe it or not, I married a rocket scientist! I was a stay at home Dad. I started working for Ed years ago after Celia moved away.”

Amy was surprised. She would never have guessed. Celia was Tubbs’ daughter.

“Celia and I never saw eye to eye on things. I wanted her to follow her passion and go to school for music, but she insisted on agricultural science. Maddy didn’t care either way, but I thought it a waste of exceptional talent to not study music. She really was something. Could have been a concert pianist! The last time we spoke, well, it was more yelling than speaking...she had taken a job tracking rainforest insects in agricultural communities in Brazil. I didn’t want her to go. It’s dangerous down there. But she went anyway. And we haven’t spoken since. Maddy talks to her on her birthday and Christmas and sometimes gets a letter, but evidently I’m too over bearing and oppressive. Who knows. Maybe I am. Later tonight or maybe tomorrow I’ll show you my workshop. You’ll see.” Tubbs finished as they pulled in the driveway.

A woman about the same height and build as Amy but with shoulder length white hair and glasses was waiting for them at the door. Amy assumed correctly that it was Maddy. She was smiling and wearing a floor length kaftan with a tropical flower print and had three cold bottles of Trumer in her hands. Tubbs smiled back at her and said to Amy while still looking at Maddy, “That’s my girl there. Isn’t she pretty?” Amy agreed. Maddy was pretty. Tubbs maneuvered Amy’s bag from the truck and headed toward the door. Amy followed with Liza in her crate meowing.

“You must be Amy!” Maddy said sweetly as they approached the door. “Please, come in and make yourself at home.”

Amy sighed in relief and smiled back. “Thank you.” She could smell chicken soup cooking on the stove inside just beyond the center courtyard. “Dinner smells wonderful, but if you don’t mind, I’d really like to shower before dinner.”

“Certainly. I still need to boil the noodles and the bread is still too warm to cut just yet. Your room is ready with fresh sheets and towels and even has it’s own bathroom. Leon will show you. This must be Liza.” Maddy peeked at Liza in the crate. “Hello there Miss Kitty! You can go wherever you want, but please don’t be offended if you make me sneeze.” Maddy said to the cat.

“Maddy’s allergic, but Celia always had cats growing up.” Tubbs explained.

“Oh, well, I think Liza will probably want to spend most of her time in this lovely courtyard anyway.” Amy said.

“Probably. All of ours always did. Does she like watching birds? I have a feeder over there and we get a good number of finches throughout the day. Plus, the parrots are known to fly by and perch in the neighbors tree over there.” Maddy replied. Amy had heard of the flock of Sunnyvale parrots but had never actually seen them herself. She was looking forward to it.

“Follow me!” Leon said to Amy. “I’ll bring the other box in and leave it at your door for when you’re done with the shower. Why don’t you let Liza look around here in the courtyard until I get the litter box set up for her?”

Amy just nodded and placed the cat carrier on the ground and opened the latch. Liza stuck her head out and looked around before deciding it was safe to come out. She walked the perimeter of the enclosed courtyard then settled down next to a small koi pond at took a bath. Maddy laughed.

“That’s a good idea, Liza. Mummy needs a good bath too.” Amy said to the kitty.

“Oh, well, if you’re going to take a bath, the stopper for the tub is in the medicine cabinet over the sink. Leon will show you.” Maddy smiled again and disappeared into the kitchen. Amy followed Leon around through the house to the back left corner and graciously accepted her accommodations.