

Excerpts

Hidden Mask Excerpt

I replaced the mask in the void, bolted the tire back in place, and activated the alarm. With a quick glance over each shoulder, I hustled back into the cottage. That was a great snap decision to hide it this morning before leaving for the gym. Normally, my snap decisions are not the best. Things were on the upswing. Although now I had a smuggling ring after me.

Stained Fashion Wear Excerpt

With the sudden onslaught of authority blasting my senses, I jolted upward and fell into the rack of cute blouses. My hand lost its grip on the huge cup. The other hand instinctively shot out to catch the falling soda, at the same time ejecting my phone deep into clothes-rack oblivion. An unhealthy, protracted clatter indicated the landing didn't go too well. I caught my balance halfway into the colorful summer collection of what appeared to be very fun tops. At least I saved the soda from making me the proud owner of a complete summer collection of stained fashion wear.

I nonchalantly edged my body around, fighting off multiple tendrils of fabric clutching and grabbing at my head and shoulders. I popped my head out of the blouses, and after clearing disheveled hair from my eyes, was confronted with the no-nonsense visage of—a mall cop. On a motorized two-wheeled scooter.

From within my inner sanctum of the clothes rack, I laid on him all the cool innocence and southern sweetness I could muster. “No, but thank you for asking. Everything is okay, officer.”

It's Time to Go Excerpt

I waited another ten seconds, straining to hear anything that would give away the intruder's location.

Still nothing.

I forged ahead, the snail's pace turning my ankles into jelly.

One more step to go.

I stopped and crouched up against the inside wall of the staircase. Just earsplitting silence. Gathering myself, I summoned whatever semblance of courage remained in my trembling body.

A second later, my brain issued the command. *Okay—it's go time.*

I lunged up toward the last stair, propelling myself into the loft.

At least that was the plan.

My leading foot caught the lip of the top stair, sending me crashing down. The pepper spray sailed across the room as the elbow of my outstretched arm slammed into the wood floor. I didn't hear the dispenser hit anything, so either the killer caught it, or it landed in the pile of clean clothes on the floor. Either way, not good. Worse yet, the raised bat fell backward, its barrel cracking me on the back of the head before bouncing and rolling down the stairs.

Disarmed and face down, I lay sprawled between the top step and the floor of the room. Before the killer could react, I scrambled to my feet and hit the light switch.

And there he was, his intensity palpable.

I stared into his piercing eyes.