

PARTNER PURSUIT by Kathy Strobos

EXCERPT

Water bugs were at the top of the short list of things she hated about summer in New York. She grabbed the vacuum cleaner and rubber gloves from the closet. She pulled her socks up over her work pants so the bug couldn't crawl up her legs. She pulled her hair into a ponytail and wrapped a scarf around her hair. She didn't want it flying into her hair. She pulled on the rubber gloves. [skipped section]

She carried the vacuum cleaner across the bedroom to the sliding door and put it down. She wanted her weapon at hand should the bug escape into the bedroom. She went outside into her garden and peeked over the fence. The light was on. Jake was up. She slipped through the hole in the fence and, with the dim light peeking through the curtained windows, carefully followed the path to his sliding door. She banged loudly on the glass. Biscuit barked.

Jake, pulling back the curtain and opening the sliding door, looked shocked. Jake was bare-chested. All hard muscle. She flushed.

"Wow, is this like a 1960s cleaning visit fantasy?" he asked. "Not that I ever had that dream, but you know, I do like the James Bonds from that period—especially the headscarves. I'm not sure about the socks over the pants though."

"Very funny. A giant water bug has invaded my bathroom, and I need you to kill it."

"You look pretty equipped to do the job yourself."

"Yes, well it's up in a corner I can't reach."

"Okay. But I'm not particularly fond of them myself."

"It's tough being a boy," she said.

"I thought you were one of those women who could do it all."

"No one can do it all. And I especially can't do water bugs."

He grabbed his t-shirt from the couch and pulled it on. He started to put on his sandals and stopped. "Do I need to add the socks?"

"I'd recommend it unless you don't mind if it crawls on your foot. You might want to put on long pants as well."

“Too hot. But I’ll add the socks in case I try to step on it. I’d better get a heavy shoe as well. C’mon, Biscuit, we’re going to battle a bug.”

They walked back through the two gardens in the warm night air. Audrey opened the sliding door and picked up the vacuum cleaner, slinging the hose over her shoulder.

He said, “You know, it’s the vacuum cleaner slung over your shoulder that really adds that flair.”

“You’re just jealous because you’ve only got a shoe.”