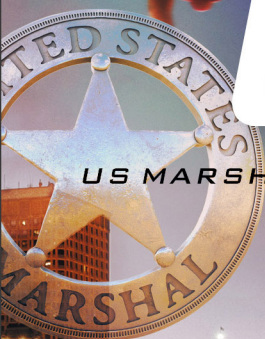




THE CHASE



US MARSHALS

LISA
HARRIS

Praise for *The Escape*

“An excellent thriller with well-drawn characters and the suspenseful start to Harris’s new US Marshals series.”

Booklist

“There are so many unexpected twists and turns that I was engaged from beginning until end. I can’t wait for the next book in the series.”

Relz Reviewz

“This story gripped me from the very beginning and didn’t let go. Of all the Lisa Harris books I have read, I would easily say this is my favorite and one I recommend to readers who like a high-thrill ride with characters they can relate to and a story that will keep them on the edge of their seat late into the night.”

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Interviews & Reviews

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US MARSHALS

The Escape

The Chase

US MARSHALS • 2



THE CHASE

LISA
HARRIS



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Lisa Harris, *The Chase*

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Madison James burned through the final sixty seconds of her workout on the stationary bike, then released a slow breath. Rain had kept her inside this morning, but the forecast was calling for a break in the bad weather later today. It felt good to have things back to normal again.

She headed to the bathroom, then stopped at the dresser where she'd set her Deputy US Marshal badge and picked it up. Today was her first day back on the job. It had been twelve weeks since she'd been shot.

And she still had no idea who'd pulled the trigger.

The doorbell rang, and she hesitated for a moment before grabbing her Glock off the bedside table and heading to the front door. She looked through the peephole, then smiled.

She unlocked the bolt and the handle before opening the door. "You're early."

Her partner, Deputy US Marshal Jonas Quinn, held up a paper bag. "I thought you might appreciate breakfast on your first day back. And since I didn't know what you might be in

the mood for, I brought you a bit of everything.” He headed to the kitchen, set the bag and two coffees on the counter, then turned back to her.

“Okay.” She let out a low laugh. “My interest is piqued. What did you bring?”

“Let’s see . . . raspberry vanilla croissants, an apple Danish, and *pain au chocolat*.” Madison’s stomach rumbled as he pulled the baked goods out of the bag one at a time. “Or if you’d prefer something savory,” Jonas continued, “I’ve got a couple smoked salmon croissants, two more with bacon, and one with spinach.”

“I don’t recognize the name of the bakery on the bag.” She grabbed a couple plates from the cupboard and set them on the counter. “Where did you find this place?”

“Apparently they just opened a couple weeks ago. Michaels recommended them to me.”

She wasn’t surprised. Their boss, Chief Deputy Carl Michaels, and his wife, Glenda, were always searching for the best places to eat in Seattle.

She glanced at the options, then picked a raspberry croissant. “Not that I’m complaining, but it looks like you were expecting to feed an army.”

Jonas laughed. “No, but I did assume anything that didn’t get eaten here, we could always take into the office.”

She took a large bite of her croissant, savoring the flavor. “Nice way to win brownie points with the boss.”

He winked. “Oh, and there is one more thing.” He pulled a little box from the bottom of the bag and held it up. “Chocolate mocha cheesecake.”

“It’s six thirty in the morning.”

“This is for later. I know it’s not Friday, but I thought we

might need to celebrate your first day over dinner. Unless you're busy tonight."

"No. I'd like that."

Somehow over the past three months, they'd made Friday nights a standing "date" between the two of them. Though she'd never officially call it a date. It started with Jonas coming by with takeout as an excuse to check on her after she got out of the hospital. She'd tell him the boring details of what she'd done that day in physical therapy, then she'd probe for details on whatever case he was working. Eventually, they ended up starting one of the DIY projects in the house she'd bought after the attack. With his help, they'd managed to paint her bedroom, redo the floors in the living room and kitchen, and update the tiles in the guest bathroom.

Once, instead of their normal takeout fare, he'd made her shrimp linguine that was so good, she told him he might have gone into the wrong business. Boy, the man could cook. Their time together was something she'd come to look forward to, like Sunday dinners with her father and her sister's family. Except with Jonas, she could talk about things she couldn't talk about with them.

Her sister had teased her that there was more going on between her and her partner than just friendship, but Madison ignored the not-so-subtle hints. They'd only officially worked together two times. The first time was five years ago when she trained under him at a shoot house in Nashville, and the second was just before her accident. The two of them had tracked an escaped felon across the country. But the bottom line was that they were friends, nothing more, and that's how things were going to stay.

"This is delicious." She took another bite of the croissant.

“You can feel free to stop by with breakfast any morning of the week. I promise I won’t complain.”

He laughed at the comment and picked up one of the bacon croissants. He took a bite. “Did you run this morning?”

She glanced out the window, not surprised it was still raining. “I chose to bike indoors over getting soaked.”

“I don’t blame you.” He wiped his mouth. “How was your last day in physical therapy?”

She turned back to him. “Worried about my overdoing it?”

“Maybe.” He took another few bites of his croissant, finishing it off quickly.

“I passed, Jonas. I even did a ten-minute mile.”

“Not bad. You’ve worked hard these past couple months.” Jonas grabbed a second croissant. “How are you sleeping?”

She avoided his gaze, focusing instead on her breakfast. “Why the twenty questions?”

“Just making conversation.”

Right.

“I know I slept, because I dreamed a lot.” She kept her voice even, not wanting him to worry about the nightmares that woke her up most nights. Or the memories that refused to surface.

“The memories will come back eventually,” he said, reading her mind. “Just give yourself some time.”

Except she’d given herself time, and three months hadn’t been enough.

She waved her hand like it didn’t matter. “Stop worrying about me, Jonas. I’ll get through this. It’s part of the risk we take every day.”

Ironic, though, how she could chase a convicted felon halfway across the country and end up with barely a scratch, and

then turn around and get shot in her own home. The place where she was supposed to be safe. It was part of the reason she'd put her old house on the market and snatched up the property she'd been eyeing in a different neighborhood. All new locks and double bolts on the doors had helped ease her anxiety. Running scared wasn't something she was used to. She was the one who went after the criminals. Not the other way around.

But what she did know about the accident terrified her. Whoever had shot her had also murdered her husband.

"I just wish whoever shot me wasn't still out there," she said.

"We'll find them," he said.

"How? We have nothing." She grabbed a napkin from the bar, wiped the sticky sugar residue off her fingers, then eyed the spinach croissant before picking it up. "No forensic evidence. No DNA or fingerprints. Even our one eyewitness—yours truly—doesn't have anything, and we know I was just a couple feet from the shooter."

At least that's what she'd been told from the ballistics report.

"You're putting yourself under too much pressure."

"No." She shook her head while Jonas grabbed another croissant and started eating it. "I need to remember. Luke has been dead for five years, and I'm no closer to finding his killer than we were the day he was murdered."

She'd told Jonas some of the details of the day her husband died. Luke had just finished a twelve-hour shift in the ER. He'd called her on his way to the parking garage like he did almost every day. He said he would pick up some takeout and meet her at home once she got off. She expected him to be there when she pulled into the driveway. Instead, two officers from her district office were waiting to give her the news that Luke had been shot twice in the chest in the hospital parking garage.

For her, life was never the same again.

Madison ran her hand automatically across the four-inch scar on her stomach, trying to focus on the spinach croissant she'd been nibbling.

She hadn't told Jonas how many hours she spent going over every scrap of evidence the authorities had collected on both Luke's death and the attempt on her life. But all she'd found were dead ends. The only evidence they had was a black rose left at the scene—mirroring the cryptic message someone left on Luke's grave every year—confirming in her mind that whoever had shot her was the same person who'd killed Luke.

But she had no idea what they wanted. Or when they might strike again.

"I got your text last night," she said, shoving away the memories that haunted her. "You said Felicia's back in town?"

"Changing the subject?"

She shot him a smile, needing to ease the tension that had surfaced between them. "I'd always rather talk about your drama than mine."

"There's no drama," he said, reaching for his coffee.

"If you say so."

"Her grandmother Hazel texts me every once in a while. She just said that Felicia's been having some problems with her prosthetic leg and came to Seattle to see a specialist."

"Are you going to see her?"

"I'd like to. If nothing else, for some closure. But according to Hazel, she still doesn't want to see me."

She caught the lingering hurt in his expression and wished she could take it away. But some things, she'd learned, couldn't be repaired.

"I'm sorry," she said.

“Me too.” He took a sip of his coffee. “How’s the croissant?”

“Delicious, but you know as much as I do that I need to get back to work.” She held up what was left of the spinach croissant. “If you keep spoiling me like this, I might not pass my next fitness test.”

“I doubt that, and on the upside, your new house is looking amazing. I see you hung up that new copper light.”

She turned to admire the new wall fixture she’d installed the night before. “I hope you don’t mind that I didn’t wait for you. I woke up in the middle of the night and had this inspiration to hang it in the kitchen instead of the dining room.”

“No. I like it,” he said. “It adds a lot of light to the room.”

“That’s what I thought.”

Jonas’s phone buzzed and he pulled it out of his pocket. She could see his expression sour.

“Everything okay?” she asked.

“It’s a text from Michaels. A federal warrant finally went through for a suspect involved in a string of bank robberies.”

“Great. What are we looking at?”

Jonas hesitated. “*Me*, not we.”

She caught his gaze. “Jonas—”

“I’m serious. Give yourself time to ease back in. Michaels wants you at the office this week.”

She thought about arguing with him, then bit her tongue. She was going to have to find a subtler way to convince him she was ready to be out in the field. “Remind me about the case.”

“There’s been a string of bank robberies across the state. I think I’ve mentioned it to you. They’ve managed to steal over two million dollars and the Feds still don’t know who’s behind it.”

“And the warrant?”

“We were able to trace a fingerprint back to a Ben Galvan from a getaway car that was abandoned.”

“Who is he?”

Jonas moved to the sink to wash his hands. “Not sure. Except for a couple minor speeding infractions in college, the guy has a clean record. He’s an accountant with a large firm in town.”

“And now he’s robbing banks?”

“That about sums it up. At least that’s what we think.”

“I want in on the raid,” she said, no longer beating around the bush. “If Michaels isn’t convinced, you can vouch for me.”

Jonas reached for a dish towel, avoiding her gaze.

“Wait a minute.” She moved around the bar and stopped in front of him. “Is that the real motivation behind the croissants? You’re the one hesitating?”

“No, it’s just that—”

“It’s been three months, Jonas. I’m more than ready. My doctor has signed off, my psychologist has signed off.”

“I know.” He dropped the towel back onto the counter.

“You don’t think I’m ready.” It wasn’t a question, as far as she was concerned. It was a statement. She knew him well enough by now to read him.

“You’re the only one who really knows,” Jonas said, “but I know how hard this has been on you emotionally. And on top of that, you have the added stress of your father’s recent diagnosis. Alzheimer’s is a devastating disease.”

Madison frowned. “So you’re saying that my father has a legitimate reason to forget who I am, but you’re questioning my ability to do my job because I can’t remember who shot me.”

“I’m not questioning your ability. You’re the best marshal I’ve ever worked with.”

“But?” she prodded.

“I’ll admit, the fact that you still can’t remember does worry me. Michaels and I think it might be best if you start back slow. Spend some time getting readjusted before you get back into the field.”

“I’ll call Michaels, and—”

“He left it up to me.”

Her jaw tensed. “You can’t leave me stuck behind a desk.”

She didn’t want any tension between them. Their job required complete trust in each other. But if he couldn’t completely trust her, where did that leave them?

She picked up her coffee and took a long sip. She’d been told that she likely had dissociative amnesia stemming from trauma. In other words, she couldn’t remember who shot her because of the psychological trauma to her brain. Typically, a victim lost personal memories, but she lost something of even more importance. She needed to remember who’d pulled the trigger.

“I want you back,” he said. “Trust me. It hasn’t been the same working without you.”

“So?” She popped the last bite of her croissant into her mouth, then swallowed.

“Are you sure you’re ready for this?”

“I am.”

He hesitated, then nodded. “Okay.”

“Okay?”

“You’re in. Just don’t prove me wrong.”

“You don’t have to worry about that. How much time do we have? I need to shower.”

“Five minutes.”

She nodded, then felt a surge of adrenaline shoot through

her. Her sister had never understood Madison's need for that rush, but it was the fuel that kept her going. She needed to get back out in the field. Because if she didn't, then she let whoever shot her win. And she wasn't going to let that happen.