



 SUPERHUMAN
SECURITY

TITAN

KENZIE KELLY



TITAN

K E N Z I E K E L L Y

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Virginia Reid faked her own death to escape her criminal husband.

She intended to lay low with the U.S. Marshals until the federal trial put him away for life.

If only it were that easy.

Even being presumed dead isn't stopping her Ex from hunting her, and when it comes out she is in possession of recordings that reveal his illegal dealings—and his partners—the number and variety of people wanting to make sure she stays dead multiplies.

Bodrick “Titan” Vinson just wanted to enjoy a rare week off at his cabin in the woods, but when a car chase invades his serenity and leaves bullet holes in his trees, he can't help but be curious. The strong woman attempting to help her protector calls to him in a way no other ever has.

He's found his mate, something becoming increasingly rare for shifters, but that was the easy part.

Now he needs to keep her alive.

CHAPTER ONE

VIRGINIA REID DIED WITHOUT issue on March 14. A memorial service will be held...

Virginia snorted. The last thing she'd say about her death was that it was "without issue." There were plenty of issues. Not the least of which was that she hadn't died at all.

She'd been forced to fake her death to escape a worse fate. One her ex wanted to provide. Her best friend always said her taste in men was awful. Gaelynn didn't know how right she was.

She snorted again and threw the newspaper to the side. She wasn't allowed to bring any of her electronics with her. Not her phone, laptop, or even her Kindle. To say she was bored was an understatement. The US Marshals handling her case finally relented and bought her a newspaper. Just her luck, it contained her obituary.

She wondered who'd written it. Not like she had any family left to take care of the task. Someone at the marshals' office, surely.

It had been two weeks since she lay in a roadside ditch, expert makeup covering her naked body while a man took evidence photos and reminded her after each one not to move. Like she wanted to wallow in the mud.

The photos were impressive. She looked bruised and battered, cuts covering her arms and thighs. Defensive wounds, scrapes from trying to escape—the makeup artist had thought of everything.

She should have stayed in the trailer park. Diner waitresses didn't worry about hit men hired to kill them, did they? She didn't think so.

Her supposed assassin came through the door of the wood cottage where they stashed her. The safe house was small and remote, but tidy and well-stocked. Mike grinned at the discarded paper.

"I see you found your obit."

"Died without issue." Virginia shook her head. "As if."

"They mean you don't have kids."

"I know what they mean. Doesn't make it any less snort worthy."

Mike was middle-aged, built like a tank, covered in tattoos, and moved with lethal grace. He looked every bit the assassin he played undercover, but the scary facade hid a lovely gentleman.

"Have you checked in with Cathy?" Virginia leaned back in her chair and watched the warm glow erupt from Mike's face like it did every time they talked about his wife.

"Not yet. I want to check the perimeter before I call."

Daniel, the last of their little party, came in through the back door, stomping snow off his boots and sending the temperature inside the cabin plummeting.

“Shut the door!” Virginia yelled, huddling further under the multitude of blankets she’d piled on. A fire roared in the grate and the guys complained on the regular about the heat, but she was Southern born and raised and couldn’t imagine a colder place than the mountains in March. It would take her a month to thaw out after this. Maybe three.

If she’d known where the safe house was, she might’ve just waited for Ex Douche Nozzle to find an actual assassin. Death was only slightly less preferable than being cold.

She heard Daniel moving around behind her before a heavy coat dropped into her lap. She looked up in confusion and caught a tense look shared between the two Marshalls. “Put that and your boots on. We’ve gotta move.”

“Move, as in, go outside?” Virginia stared at the puffer coat slowly sliding off her legs. “In the cold? I’m in my pajamas.”

Daniel sighed. “We need to move. Now. I don’t care if you’re naked under those blankets, just get up and get your shoes on.”

The sound of Mike cocking his gun broke through the fog of confusion. She jumped up, thankful she’d been sleeping in long underwear under her flannel pajamas, and shoved her fuzzy sockclad feet into the hiking boots they’d gotten for her after the arraignment. She quickly named them “bitch stompers” and had to admit they were a better footwear choice than her normal Converse.

Her two round-the-clock guards had made other adjustments to her clothing, including replacing the laces on the bitch stompers for elastic ties.

She grabbed the puffy coat off the floor and zipped it, fastening the velcro tabs and raising the hood. She stood as close as she dared to the fireplace, hoping to store some heat before they had to go outside.

“Did he find us? Where are we going?”

Mike shushed her questions and held up a hand to Daniel. For once, her mouth obeyed her brain and stayed quiet. They left the cabin slowly, both of the guys gesturing, Virginia lost to their communication.

They led her directly away from the back of the cabin, deeper into the woods. That wasn’t good. They had parked the car in front of the cabin. Maybe they had another mode of transportation hidden. How long would it take to get there? How far would she have to hike? The cold was already seeping in through her flannel pants and boots.

She was about to ask when she heard the not-so-distant sound of an explosion. She craned her neck around. A black cloud of smoke rose over what used to be the cabin. Flames engulfed the building. She gasped and tripped, but before she hit the ground Mike hauled her up by her upper arm.

“Keep moving. Don’t look back.”

His deep rumble in her ear helped her concentrate. Instead of panicking, she focused on putting one foot in front of the other. Slow is smooth, smooth is fast, she repeated to herself.

When the local police first told her that her then-husband was trying to kill her, she laughed them off. She couldn’t imagine the skinny, balding man whose greatest goal was being welcomed into high society masterminding a murder for hire plot. It took seeing the footage of her ex soliciting a hit man and spewing venom about her to convince her there might be an issue. Even then she couldn’t really believe it, but when the twatwaffle pulled out a wad of cash for a down payment on her death, the danger she was in hit her like a baseball bat to the stomach.

She left with the police immediately, and they shuffled her between agencies for several days before she landed with the US Marshals. They staged her death and delivered proof of her demise to the ex.

He bought it, hook, line, and sinker. He was in jail within an hour of handing over the final payment to the fake assassin—Mike.

Virginia thought it was over.

Even with all the evidence against him, the judge denying him bail, and him being in prison, he continued to be a threat.

Word got out that he was trolling the jail for anyone with connections on the outside who might make sure she was dead. The idiot had even threatened her in jailhouse phone calls. Everyone knew they recorded and monitored those. How he'd managed a criminal empire was beyond her.

Not that she'd known anything about that, which was ironic. The whole reason he wanted her dead was because he thought she knew how he ran the business. He thought she could bring the whole thing crashing down around his ears. She wished. Maybe if she actually knew something, she wouldn't be so afraid.

Fear gave way to anger when she heard the call recordings. As soon as Mike and Daniel had her settled in frostbite cabin, she asked Mike to teach her self-defense. He did his best in the short time they'd had. Daniel tried to teach her some too, but she hadn't taken to him like she had to Mike. He was more standoffish and kept to himself. She and Mike had bonded over card games and stories of her friends and his wife. He even promised to invite her to dinner at his house when all this was over. It was one of a long list of things she looked forward to doing.

With his tutelage, she was fairly confident she could shoot what she was aiming for. She had a couple of well-practiced self-defense moves memorized. She could throw a proper punch, and he pointed out the best places to hit a larger offender. He'd drilled her on the concepts of "run, hide, fight" and "slow is smooth, smooth is fast."

She still wasn't ready when a gunshot made pieces of bark fly off a nearby tree.

Daniel swung and returned fire while Mike pushed her into a crouch.

"Keep moving. You're doing great. Stay low."

Her heart was beating in her throat and a low buzz had taken up residence in her brain, but she followed his directions. Partly because he kept a hand on her shoulder, both guiding and pushing her forward.

After another minute of gunfire that felt like a year, Mike overtook her and yanked a cover off a vehicle she hadn't seen before. The tarp had completely camouflaged the truck underneath.

She looked under and around for the road but didn't find one.

Dimly wondering how they'd gotten it so far into the woods, she climbed into the backseat and flattened herself on the floorboards like she'd been taught.

The driver's side door opened and shut with a bang that made her jump. The engine roared to life.

"Wait! Where's Daniel?"

"Leading them away from you. He'll meet us at a rendezvous point."

Virginia focused on forcing air into and out of her lungs, her breathing loud in the confined space. She felt the truck slip to the side and bit her knuckle to keep from crying out. Mike needed to focus on driving, not reassuring her.

Pings echoed off the side of the truck.

"Stay down!" Mike yelled, the truck swerving like he was on a slalom course.

She heard him curse before an impact threw her into the side of the truck. Metal screamed around her, and she covered her head with her hands.

"I need you to sit up, Virginia. Sit up and take this gun."

She peeked between her fingers and saw the glint of dark metal. Numb, she grabbed the gun, checked the magazine and pulled back the slide to chamber a round.

"Do you think you can fire at them through the window?"

Until that moment, she didn't know how dire their situation was. He never would have asked her to reveal herself if it weren't. She nodded before realizing he couldn't see her. "Yes." Louder, she repeated, "Yes, I think so."

"Good. They're coming in for another hit on the right side. Don't try to aim for anything in particular. Just shoot and make them think twice about ramming us."

Cold air blasted through the cabin as he rolled the window down.

An eerie calm settled over her. She took a deep breath. "Okay."

“Now, Virginia!”

She sat up and started shooting blind out the open window. The blacked-out SUV looked like it was right on top of them.



GUNFIRE. Titan tilted his head, cocking an ear to listen. Yep, that was gunfire echoing through his woods. He stuck his snout in the air until he caught the scent of gunpowder and gasoline.

Damn. All he'd wanted was a week in his woods. No responsibilities. No spoiled heiress to keep happy while trying to keep her safe. No blow hard businessman who thought every security measure was wrong or unnecessary. Just the woods, his cabin, and sweet silence.

More gunshots. Someone just emptied a clip, and they were headed in his direction. He dropped to his belly. The last thing he needed was to catch a stray bullet.

A dark green truck roared past, its side dented and full of bullet holes. Their pursuer wasn't far behind. A dark SUV, windows blacked out and license plate missing.

A few bullet holes decorated the side of the SUV. Someone in the truck was shooting back.

Curiosity got the better of him and he loped behind the speeding vehicles. His woods were dense and the vehicles were going toward an even thicker copse of pines. Neither of the large vehicles would make it through.

The SUV crashed first. The driver was clearly not familiar with snow-slicked mud. The speeding vehicle slid sideways, tilted on its side, and ended up wedged between the trunks of two stout trees.

The windshield caved in; the roof pushed back. A quick sniff told him everything he needed to know about the occupants. Blood, piss, and shit. Whoever was in that car was dead.

He loped on.

The truck came to a slightly more controlled stop, but smoke rolled under the hood, and the right rear tire hissed.

The driver's side door opened and a man half fell out, a hand pressed to his side. Blood leaked between his fingers and he uttered an impressive string of curse words.

Titan slowed and dropped onto his haunches to watch.

The man pulled a walkie-talkie from the truck and barked into it.

“David, this is Goliath. One pursuer down, but I'm compromised. Need you to retrieve the package.”

Static flared from the walkie.

Another string of cursing cut off when a small head popped into where the back window used to be.

“Mike? Oh my God, Mike, you're hurt!”

The voice, even with a note of panic, rolled over him like a caress.

What the hell?

“Get down, Virginia! Just because they crashed doesn't mean they're done shooting at us!”

The melodrama he'd stumbled into had just gotten very interesting.



VIRGINIA CRANED HER neck around and pushed down the hood of her coat. The SUV was stuck on its side, crammed between two trees. It looked like it had been crushed. She didn't think anyone survived that.

She opened the door and eased herself out, staying low, just in case.

"Damn it, Virginia, get back in the truck!"

She steeled her nerves and glared at him. "You've been shot, Mike. If you bleed out you're no help to me at all. And I need your help to get out of this godforsaken tundra and back to somewhere I'll be able to feel my toes!"

His lips pursed into a tight line, but he stayed silent. She knew it meant his wound hurt more than he wanted to let on.

She pulled the back seat forward and grabbed the first aid kit. She was glad it was in the first place she looked. She didn't relish moving around in the ankle-deep snow searching for it.

She set it down on the ground next to where Mike stood and yanked the zipper open. "Let me see."

"Be quick about it. I don't like being cold any more than you do."

"You big baby. What would Cathy say?"

"She would say I need to retire."

Virginia chuckled. She balled her hands into fists and willed them to quit shaking. "How are we on ammo? I'm out."

Mike was big on tactics. If she could keep him talking, then maybe her nerves would settle.

"There's a bag with extra magazines under the front passenger seat."

"You should sit down."

"Not a chance." His eyes scanned the area. She sighed.

She wouldn't win that argument. She had no idea how to treat a gunshot wound, but stopping the bleeding seemed like a good first step. She grabbed a wad of sterile pads and ripped open the packaging. Mike hissed when she rammed them against his side.

"Sorry." She dug through the kit until she found an ace bandage. It would have to do. Despite the SUV and its occupants being out of commission, they couldn't stay here. They were sitting ducks.

"How many were there?"

He shook his head. "I don't know. I counted six, but Daniel dropped two, and I got one. I only saw two in the SUV." He glanced down at her. "We should hurry."

"I'm almost done." She wrapped the bandage around his torso as tight as she could.

He grunted in satisfaction and grinned down at her. "Not bad." He scanned the area and sighed. "Looks like we'll be walking from here."

"Do we have to?" she whined. "Can't we just stay in the warm truck and wait for Daniel to rescue us?"

He waved the static-producing walkie in her direction. "I think we're out of range and nowhere near the rendezvous point."

She straightened her spine and vowed not to complain. Much. She wasn't shot after all. "Fine. Lead on, Grizzly Adams."

"You mean Bear Grylls."

"What's the difference?"

"Grizzly Adams was a mountain man who trained bears. Bear Grylls is a popular survivalist."

"Whatever. They both sound like dudes who spend way too much time alone in the woods."

He chuckled and led them away from the vehicles. She resisted the urge to sing “deeper into the scary woods” to the cadence of snow crunching under their feet.

Dusk turned to darkness and still they trudged on. They must have been walking for a couple of hours. All conversation had stopped when exhaustion set in. Hours later, Virginia started to think laying down for a nap was a great idea. She was about to tell Mike she needed a rest when the big man swayed to the left before over correcting and falling to the ground like a dead tree.

KEEP READING

Titan is available in eBook format from my website (<https://kenziekelly.com>) until July 2nd.

After then, it will be available on Amazon and in Kindle Unlimited.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Kenzie grew up in Bluff Park, a suburb of Birmingham, AL in a very improper Southern household. She now lives in a suburb Northeast of Atlanta, GA. She married her college sweetheart and has two sons. She is adored by a Pit Bull and tolerated by two cats. She drinks far too much Diet Coke and feels like she can tackle anything as long as she has a book showing her how.

Though other interests have come and gone, four obsessions have remained constant: horses, photography, reading, and writing.

Her job as chief child wrangler and household CEO consumed most of her energy (creative and otherwise) until April 2017 when the characters in her head demanded their stories be told. She's been writing ever since.

Also by Kenzie:

The Ka'atari Warriors Series (Sci-Fi Romance)

The Whiskey Vex Series (Urban Fantasy)

The Empyrean Series (Romantic Fantasy)

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