

# Charlie's Angel

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Ronald Higgins leaned forward in a rickety wooden chair and pulled a white envelope from the top pocket of his grease stained khaki overalls. He placed it on a small metal table in front of him. On the opposite side, Zee sat quietly in a grey sweatshirt and black jeans, studying the man's agitated state with piercing blue eyes. Ronald was rubbing his large brown hands back and forth on his thighs. It was disconcerting to see such a tall strapping man, on the edge of despair.

"This is all I have-please help me get back my little girl. She's only nineteen and a bit naïve." Ronald's eyes grew misty. Zee could feel the man's pain as if they shared a heart but he kept a cool appearance. The nature of his job restricted him from becoming too emotionally involved. He'd been helping people caught in dangerous situations from the age of twenty and he had nine years of practice under his belt.

"What information do you have?" Zee asked.

"The last time I spoke with her she was in St. Lucia at an inn called Golden Arrow, room eleven. She said she was being collected about eleven tonight." Zee's eyes narrowed with suspicion. Mr. Higgins told him Charlie ran away.

“She runs away yet she tells you exactly where she is?” Ronald swallowed hard. He looked down at the grimy floor of the derelict warehouse Zee utilized as his office.

“My daughter knows I can’t afford to chase after her. She was taunting me. Charlie and I had very nasty words over her decision,” he replied, his voice cracking. A trip to St. Lucia from Barbados by air was a half hour flight and cost under two hundred dollars. Including tax. Zee glanced at his watch. Eleven ‘o’ clock was less than two hours away. Charlie Higgins was dangerously close to becoming a painful memory for her father.

“I’ll leave right away,” Zee announced getting up, pulling the hood of his sweatshirt over his dark haired head. He walked over to Ronald, his lean six foot two frame towering over Mr. Higgins who was still sitting. Tears were now falling freely down the father’s cheeks.

“I’ll call you when I have Charlie.” Mr. Higgins nodded slowly and got up from the chair, his shoulders trembling.

“Thank you-thank you so much.” He turned to leave.

“You forgot something,” Zee said, looking at the envelope on the desk then walking away.

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It was a quarter to eleven when Zee crouched by the door of room eleven. He had rented number twelve directly opposite. The hidden in plain sight strategy was favoured for this particular situation. He deftly attached a silencer to a gun in his right hand then stretched out the left to knock on the door. Seconds later it was slowly opened by a tall, bald headed burly man. Zee angled his body and shot him twice in the chest. The man fell backwards and crumpled heavily to the floor. A stifled scream emitted from the room. Zee paused momentarily, waiting, listening for movement. He straightened up and slipped inside, scanning his surroundings, gun aimed. There was a beautiful brown-skinned young woman with purple-streaked, shoulder length jet black hair, sitting on the edge of the bed. Her breasts heaved in panic beneath the bodice of her blue short dress; hands clamped to her mouth. Eyes bright with terror. A small red bag was on her lap.

“Anyone else in here?” She shook her head slowly.

“You need to come with me Charlie,” Zee ordered. Her hands fell from her face at the

mention of her name. She stared at the stranger in front of her.

“My name is Zee, your father sent me to get you.” Charlie did not move. Her eyes darted to the dead man on the floor with two bloody holes in his chest. Zee glanced behind him then went over to pull Charlie from off the bed. She started to struggle from his grip.

“No. How dare he try to stop me from having a better life. Leave me alone. No!” Zee tightened his hold on her left arm. He brought his face within millimetres of hers.

“Move. Now!” Zee pushed Charlie outside, paused to close the door and hauled her across the corridor. He yanked open the door to room twelve and ushered Charlie inside. He took a quick look around before disappearing behind her and engaging the lock.

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Zee stood in front of Charlie. Gun in right hand lowered. She was sitting on a chair next to the door fuming, her handbag draped over her left shoulder. The world had gone completely crazy; there was actually an organization that recruited mistresses for wealthy married men! Zee thought. She is beautiful and her father described her as smart as a whip. What the hell was she thinking? Zee knew in the real world that desperation and lack of options led to acts of stupidity that often brought on trouble, deep trouble. But she was young and there were endless paths she could take. He reminded himself that long ago he too had made bad decisions and found himself caught in a deadly web. And someone had saved him. It was the reason he did what he did.

“Why?” Charlie glared up at Zee.

“Why what?” she asked, rubbing the arm he had grabbed her by.

“Why would you put your body up for sale?”

“Don’t judge me!” Charlie shouted. She shot up from the chair, her head barely clearing Zee’s shoulders.

“I don’t want to end up like my parents. My mother ended up dead because she couldn’t afford

proper healthcare and my father works endless hours and we still go hungry sometimes and bills barely get paid. My family has been poor for as long as I can remember. I have a chance for a better life with Mr. Darby, he practically has a money tree.” Zee stared down at her.

“Listen little girl. Those kind of trees always yield bitter fruit.” Charlie frowned then pouted.

“You will merely be flesh to be desired and used. Maybe even beaten into submission when the urge arises, shared with anyone he chooses. Then one day you’ll be nothing but a shell of a human being and you will be tossed aside like garbage!” Charlie stepped away from Zee. She walked towards the centre of the room and turned back to face him.

“I am not going with you!” she hissed. Zee flashed her a vacant smile.

“Charlie Higgins. My job is to take you back to your father. You can come willingly, biting and screeching or with a tag on one of your pretty feet. But when I leave St. Lucia you will be with me.” Charlie watched him with great disdain. Zee walked over to the kitchen counter and set down his gun. He dragged off his shirt and draped it over the back of a bar chair. Charlie’s expression gradually softened as her eyes wandered to the



impressive span of muscles on his chest. Zee caught her gaze.

“I was around almost a decade when you were born. When you become a woman then you would have the privilege to look at me that way.” Charlie scowled and went to sit on the only bed in the room. He glanced at the smooth skin of her thighs that became exposed as her navy blue dress shifted upwards when she sat down. Zee inhaled deeply and slowly in an effort to clear his head. It didn’t help much.

“You’re wasting your time taking me back, I will just run off again,” Charlie muttered.

“Suit yourself. You do whatever you want after I deliver you to your father but until then we’re playing Simon Says. And I think you have a pretty good idea which one of us is Simon,” Zee told her in a stern voice. He opened a black backpack that was on the floor next to the chair and pulled out a pair of handcuffs then grabbed the gun from off the counter. Charlie’s eyebrows shot up in apprehension and she stiffened slightly. Zee dimmed the lights, walked across the room and rested the items on the bedside dresser. He snatched Charlie’s bag off her shoulder and searched through it, taking out her cell phone and

tossing the bag back to her. She caught it and set it on the floor. Zee popped open the back of the phone, pulled out the battery, threw it to the ground and smashed it under his black boots. Charlie watched him in silent rage. After killing the battery he grabbed Charlie by her shoulders and effortlessly tossed her onto the middle of the bed. Her eyes became full moons of shock as she bounced on the mattress and fell onto her back. She didn't budge, just looked up at Zee in barely veiled panic. He climbed in next to her and had one of the cuffs on her right wrist before she could blink. He fastened the other one to the metal headboard. Zee pulled off his boots and laid on the bed, turning onto his right side, his back to Charlie.

“Try to sleep. If you can't, keep quiet so I can.”

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It was barely dawn when Zee and Charlie left the inn. They quickly made their way down Corinth Street which was still asleep. Zee had parked a rental car nearby behind a bond house. He wanted to make sure they were on the first flight leaving for Barbados which was at six 'o' clock.

"I'm not a little girl," Charlie practically shouted at Zee. He shot her an irritated look.

"With all the heavy shit going on, that's what's weighing on your mind? My opinion of you?" Zee put a hand on the small of Charlie's back and quickened his step.

"I am almost twenty," Charlie persisted.

"Numbers don't make you a woman. And the mere fact that you are shoving your age down my throat proves it." Zee slowed his pace on hearing the roar of an engine. He looked over his shoulder to see a black Mercedes barreling towards them. He knew it was about Charlie.

"How the hell did they find us?" Zee growled. He started to run pulling Charlie behind him but she fought him. Zee caught a flash of guilt on her face. He grabbed the front of her dress with both hands and pulled her roughly against him. Their eyes clashed angrily.

“What did you do?” Zee snarled at Charlie.

“Th-there was another man, Marco, who had made the arrangements. He had gone out to get us something to eat just before you came,” Charlie replied in a matter of fact tone. Zee wanted to slap her senseless. She deliberately failed to mention that piece of vital information in hopes of being found. Charlie’s eyes suddenly widened in surprise.

“Look out!” Charlie yelled as she saw a man appear from a side street with a square device in hand. It was Marco. Two long wires snaked through the air and struck Zee in his upper body before he could react. His body convulsed violently and collapsed onto the street. Charlie froze, staring down at his twitching body. The Mercedes screeched to a stop beside them. Three men hopped out; one dragged Zee roughly to his feet, one grabbed Charlie and the other handed a black briefcase to Marco, who snatched it and quickly disappeared back through the side street. Zee and Charlie were stuffed into the car, which swiftly disappeared from sight.

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Behind Zee two men were posted at the closed entrance of an old musty building. Zee was on his ass rubbing his bruised jaw. He gave a tall gruff looking man who stood a few feet from him, a menacing stare. He held a gun hand aimed at Zee, another stuck out of the waist of his pants. A slim man of average height with short white hair stood facing Zee about ten feet away. He was not a happy man. Charlie was standing next to him with her arms wrapped tightly around her upper body. She just stared blankly at Zee, who avoided eye contact with her.

“Who are you?” the man asked in a clipped voice, adjusting the tie of his tailored suit.

“You have not earned the privilege of knowing who I am. I assume you are Mr. Darby.”

“Your assumption is correct.”

“Can you tell me your name then since I can’t know who you are?” he sneered.

“I’ll give that question some thought.” Mr. Darby stared at Zee then laughed loudly.

“We seem to have an asshole who thinks he’s witty, Frank,” he said to the man guarding Zee.

“I sure hit the jackpot with this sweet young piece though didn’t I?” he continued, his attention

shifting to Charlie. He swept her body with lustful eyes. Frank nodded in slow motion leering at Charlie's breasts. Her skin began to crawl and her body went cold.

"I am going to enjoy you very much and my wife will be delighted to sample something different. I think chocolate is going to be her new favourite flavour." Charlie's chest constricted and she began to feel faint. What have I gotten myself into? Zee observed her reaction with a suppressed twinge of sympathy. Mr. Darby smiled at Charlie's discomfort.

"Charlie, remember back at the inn I gave you three options?"

"Yes Zee," Charlie replied looking at him with wild, puzzled eyes.

"I need to know now which one you're going with."

"Willingly," Charlie promptly replied. Mr. Darby warily looked at Zee then Charlie. Frank's eyes were still glued to Charlie's body when Zee rolled across the floor and kicked his legs from under him. When Frank's body crashed to the floor the gun in his hand skated out of reach. Zee grabbed the one from his waist, swiftly putting a bullet in his head. A spray of crimson covered his

sweatshirt. Zee quickly flipped onto his stomach and fired at the two men racing towards him several times. They tumbled hard. Zee scrambled to his feet and spun around. Charlie was flat on her belly, her hands covering her head. Mr. Darby stood paralyzed. Zee took a few steps towards him wearing an expression of distaste; the man was spineless without hired guns. Their eyes made four. One pair filled with rage. One with defeat. Zee pointed the gun at Mr. Darby's chest.

"I thought about your question. The answer is no." The gun barked twice. Mr. Darby stumbled forward with a slack jaw and unseeing eyes. He dropped face down at Zee's feet with a loud thump. Zee went over to help up Charlie. She was crying softly.

"You can weep later. We have a plane to catch."

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Zee wanted to throttle Charlie Higgins. She was staring up at him with unnerving intensity. Her body was close, too close, their feet almost touched. He maintained a stoic expression. Barely. They were at the warehouse waiting for her father to arrive. She reached up and touched his face with her hands.

“Thank you,” she whispered softly. Zee did not reply. He looked over her head at the walls, trying to ignore her. His hands were in fists at his side as if standing at attention. Zee was breathing heavily, his groin was pulsing.

“I did what I was hired to.”

“So what is your real name,” Charlie asked, her hands sliding from his face down his neck and settling on his chest.

“Or haven’t I earned that privilege?” she teased. She pressed her body closer. Zee was in pain.

“I believe that my decision to be here shows I am not a little girl,” Charlie said forcefully.

“I agree you have made significant progress,” Zee answered.

“But?”

“I am not telling you my real name. Odds are we will never see each other again. It’s pointless.”



“Then I shall give you another one.” Charlie tiptoed; her arms crept back up his chest to slide up the back of his head, drawing it down to hers. She pressed her lips against Zee’s. He did not respond. Charlie tilted her head sideways to gain easier access to his mouth, deepening the kiss. She moaned softly and Zee crumbled as her tongue sought his. His hands unfolded and slid over her backside, lifting her off her feet. He groaned into her mouth as their tongues entwined. Zee suddenly ended the kiss, setting Charlie back down.

“Kryptonite,” he murmured. She smiled up at him with dazed eyes and poked him softly in the chest. “I didn’t once hear you complain.” Zee gave her a lopsided grin and shoved his hands into the pockets of his jeans. He looked to his right, alert, hearing the creak of the entrance door. Mr. Higgins stepped inside but remained by the doorway. He nodded at Zee, who did the same in return.

“Thank you again Zee,” Charlie said. She took up her red bag which was on the metal desk and turned to leave.

“So what’s my alternate name,” Zee asked her in a low voice. She paused momentarily to look back at him.

“Charlie’s Angel.” Charlie walked towards her father and they left the building quietly. Zee secretly hoped that she would make a decision in the future, crazy or wise, that would lead to their paths crossing again.

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