

8:45 a.m.

Wouldn't he be more likely to think of with a ³⁵⁸ nick-name, monster-woman, maybe or, creep face?

Craig turned the key in the ignition of the Ferrari. The engine started, then died.

Craig closed his eyes. "Not now," he said aloud. "Don't let me down now."

He turned the key again. The engine fired, faltered, then roared like an angry bull.

Craig pumped the throttle, just to be sure, and the roar turned into a howl.

He looked at the phone screen. It said: "Searching..." He jabbed at the number pad, dialling 999, even though he knew it was useless before the phone had connected to the network. "Come on," he said urgently. "I don't have much time—"

The side door of the garage flew open, and Sophie stumbled in.

Craig was taken by surprise. He had watched as Daisy dragged Sophie out of the garage. He had wanted desperately to try to rescue her. But he did not think he could have beaten Daisy in a fight, even if she had not had a gun. It had infuriated him to see Daisy maliciously pulling Sophie's hair, but he had told himself to remain cool and think straight. Sophie would survive a bit of hair pulling, and the surest way to get her released from Daisy's clutches was to phone the police.

Now Sophie seemed to have escaped unaided. She was sobbing and panicky, he saw, and he guessed that Daisy must be on her tail.

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Chapter Forty-Four: 8:45am (pps358-364)

Craig runs over Daisy

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Now Sophie seemed to have escaped unaided. She was sobbing and panicky, he saw, and he guessed that Daisy must be on her tail.

The passenger side of the car was so close to the wall that the door could not be

opened. Craig threw open the driver's door and said: "Get in, quick—climb over me!"

She staggered over to the car and fell in.

There was no time to phone now, Craig realised as Sophie scrambled over him. Daisy could not be more than ~~a few~~ seconds away. They had to get out of there. As Sophie collapsed into the passenger seat, he fumbled under the dashboard and found the remote control device that opened the garage door behind him. He pressed it, and heard a click and a squeak of unlubricated metal as the mechanism began to operate. He looked in the rear-view mirror and saw the up-and-over door begin to move slowly.

Then Daisy came in.

Her face was red with exertion, and her eyes were wide in anger. There was snow in the creases of her black leather clothes. She hesitated for an instant in the doorway, peering into the gloom of the garage; then her staring eyes locked on to Craig in the driving seat of the car.

He depressed the clutch and shoved the gearshift into reverse. It was never easy, with the Ferrari's six-speed gearbox. The stick resisted his push, and there was a grinding of cogs; then something seemed to slip into place.

Daisy ran across the front of the car and came to the driver's side. Her yellow leather glove closed on the door handle.

*Would he not try to lock the
Jeep?*

The garage door was not yet fully open, but Craig could wait no longer. Just as Daisy opened the car door, he released the clutch and trod on the accelerator pedal.

The car leaped backwards as if fired from a catapult. The roof of the car struck the lower edge of the aluminium garage door with a clang. Sophie gave a yell of fear.

The car flew out of the garage like a champagne cork. Craig stamped on the brake.

The snowplough had cleared the thick overnight layer of snow from in front of the garage, but more had fallen since, and the concrete apron was slippery. The Ferrari went into a backwards skid and stopped with a bump against a bank of snow.

Daisy came out of the garage and hesitated.

Grandpa's car phone suddenly spoke in a female voice. "You have one new message."

Craig pushed the gearshift into what he hoped was first. He eased the clutch out gently and, to his relief, the tyres found purchase and the car moved forward. He turned the wheel, heading for the way out. If only he could make it on to the drive, he could get away from here with Sophie and go for help.

Daisy must have had the same thought, for she fumbled in the pocket of her leather jacket and brought out a gun.

"Get down!" Craig yelled at Sophie. "She's going to shoot!"

As Daisy levelled the gun, he stamped on the accelerator and swung the steering wheel, desperate to get away.

Separate this out and add it.

The car went into a skid, slipping across the icy concrete. Alongside his fear and panic, Craig had the feeling of déjà vu: he had skidded this car, in this place, only yesterday, a lifetime ago. He struggled to control the car, but it was even more difficult after a night of blizzard.

He turned into the skid, and for a moment the tyres gripped again, but he overdid it, and the car skidded in the other direction and spun around in a half-circle. Sophie was flung from side to side in the passenger set. The only good thing, a part of Craig's terrified mind told him, was that it was impossible for Daisy to take steady aim at a vehicle that was being

driven so erratically. He kept waiting for the bang of a gunshot, but none came yet.

The car stopped, with astonishing good luck, in the middle of the drive, facing directly away from the house and towards freedom. The path in front of Craig had been cleared by the snowplough. He pressed on the accelerator pedal, but nothing happened.

The engine had stalled.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Daisy raise the gun and take careful aim at him.

He turned the key, and the car jerked forward: he had forgotten to take it out of gear. The mistake saved his life, for in the same instant he heard the unmistakable firecracker bang of a gunshot, only slightly deadened by the soft snow covering everything; then the rear side window of the car shattered.

Craig knocked the stick into neutral and turned the key again. The throaty roar filled his ears. He could see Daisy taking aim again as he pressed the clutch and found first gear. He could not prevent himself from ducking at the same time as he pulled away, and it was lucky that he did, for this time his side window smashed.

The bullet also went through the windscreen, making a small round hole, and causing the entire screen to craze over. Now he could see nothing ahead of him except blurred shapes of darkness and light. Nevertheless he kept the accelerator depressed, knowing he would die if he did not get away from Daisy and her gun. Beside him, Sophie was curled up in a ball on the passenger seat, hands covering her head.

On the periphery of his vision, he saw Daisy running after the car. Another shot banged.

The car phone said: "Stanley, this is Toni. Bad news—a break-in at the lab. Please call my mobile as soon as you can."

Craig guessed the people with guns must be connected somehow to the break-in at the lab, but he could not think about that now. He tried to steer by reference to what he could see out of the smashed side window, but it was no good. After a few seconds the car went off the cleared path. He felt the sudden drag as it slowed. The shape of a tree appeared through the crazed glass of the windscreen, then there was a terrific crash as the car hit it.

Craig was thrown forward. His head hit the broken windscreen, knocking out shards of glass, cutting the skin of his brow. The steering wheel bruised his chest. Sophie was flung against the dashboard and fell with her bottom on the floor and her feet up on the seat, but she swore and tried to right herself, so he knew she was not dangerously hurt.

What about his pain?

The engine had stalled again.

Craig looked in the rear-view mirror. Daisy was ten yards behind him, walking steadily along the cleared path towards the car, holding the gun in her gloved hand. Craig knew instinctively that she was coming closer just in order to get a clear shot.

He had only one chance left.

He started the engine again.

Daisy, five yards away now, raised her gun arm.

Craig put the gearshift into reverse.

He heard a bang just as he stamped on the throttle. The rear window shattered. A moment later there was a heavy thump, as though someone had dropped a sack of potatoes on the boot of the car.

Craig braked to a stop. Where was Daisy? He could not see through the rear window. He drove forward a few yards, looking in the door mirror. She came into view. She was lying on the drive with one leg at an odd angle, but—he saw with horror—she was still moving. As

he watched, she reached out with one arm and picked up her gun, lying on the snow nearby.

Craig put the car in reverse.

Daisy pointed the gun at him.

The car phone said: "To erase this message, press three."

He eased the clutch out then stamped on the throttle. He heard the bang of the gun over the bellow of the Ferrari engine. He kept his foot down. In the door mirror, he saw Daisy trying to drag herself out of the way, and he deliberately turned the wheel in her direction. Then there was another thud, and the low-slung chassis scraped over something lumpy. Still uncertain, still frightened, he continued to reverse at top speed until the car smashed into something solid and stopped dead.

He had backed into the wall of the garage.

The car phone, which had been telling him how to save messages, stopped in mid-sentence. He tried to start the engine, but this time nothing happened. There was not even the click of a broken starter motor. He saw that none of the dials was working, and there were no lights on the dashboard. The electrical system had failed completely. It was not surprising, after the number of times he had crashed the car.

But that meant he could not use the phone.

And where was Daisy?

To either side, he could see snowy woods. Slowly, he put his hand on the windscreen and pushed some of the glass out. It fell on to the bonnet with a tinkling sound. He looked through the hole, half expecting to see Daisy standing in front of the car pointing her gun at him.

In the road was a pile of ripped black leather, white flesh and gleaming fresh blood.

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EF: I like Craig's fight with Daisy

She was not moving.

Beside him, Sophie said in a terrified voice: "Where is she?"

Craig pushed out a patch of obscured glass in front of the passenger seat. "Look," he said.

Sophie clambered up on to the seat and looked out. "Oh, my god, is that her?"

Craig felt sick. He could not speak, so he nodded.

Sophie whispered: "Do you think she's dead?"

Craig nodded again, then nausea overwhelmed him. Quickly, he opened the car door.

Leaning out, he vomited into the snow.

Good