

Cupid's Crossbow

A Short Story

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Chapter 1

“Why can’t I continue using a bow and arrow?” Brooke whined. “The crossbows are too touchy. The slightest pressure on the trigger launches the bow.”

“Because crossbows are more accurate and efficient,” Gabriella explained for the umpteenth-millionth time. “You must practice until you’re perfect.”

“I am perfect with the bow and arrow,” Brooke continued to argue with her chief. “I’ve never missed with my bow and arrow. I hate the crossbow. It makes me feel like I’m trying to actually kill a human instead of making it fall in love.”

“Please don’t refer to humans as ‘it’,” Gabriella instructed.

“Well, they’re hardly gods,” Brooke pointed out. “They’re just one step above savage animals. You know, right there below dogs and cats. The pecking order of most loveable is dogs, cats then humans. Personally, I’d place pet skunks above humans.”

“Brooke are you certain you’re ready to take on this assignment? It may be the biggest one of your career. If you mess it up, there will be consequences.” Gabriella glared at her most irascible cupid. “Our very best cupids have tried to make Detective Drew Darwin fall in love. She falls out of love as soon as our spell wears off. She turns thirty this year. She must fall in love or else.”

“I’m ready chief,” Brooke tittered. “I know the drill five soulmates united per day until the end of February. I can handle that with darts. I don’t even need a crossbow.”

“You know the rules,” Gabriella growled. “Arrows, you must use arrows. I swear sometimes I wish I could send you back to—”

“No!” Brooke gasped. “I promise, I’ll make you proud. Just give me the list.”

“Darwin is your priority,” Gabriella reminded her. “You know her name will be dropped from our list on her thirtieth birthday and we will no longer intervene to help her find her soulmate.”

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Brooke dutifully readied her crossbow, took aim and pulled the trigger. The velocity of the arrow still surprised her. She preferred the familiar zing of her arrow as it glided from the bow into the intended victim’s heart. *That’s the way love should be*, she thought, *easy, gentle, so the heart felt the slightest stirring of feelings for another*. The crossbow was like a battering ram plunging into the heart. Recipients often clutched their chest when the arrow entered their heart and they fell in love with their soulmate.

Brooke practiced until she hit her target ten out of ten times straight. *I’m still the best*, she thought as she cleaned her crossbow.

She unfolded her list and scanned the names. *Great they’re all in New York*, she thought. *I won’t have to jump all over the world to meet my quota. I’ll knock them out first thing every morning then concentrate on Drew Darwin*.

Brooke was looking forward to her much-desired reward for a job well done. Every year after Valentine’s Day those who met their quota were allowed to take human form and spend a month in any vacation spot of their choice. She always selected a sunny beach somewhere.

I’m thinking Belize, Brooke thought as she transported to the New York Police Department’s Central Park Precinct. *A quick run through Central Park, shoot a few arrows and I’ll get the five couples for today out of the way*, she thought. *Then I can concentrate on Darwin*.

Chapter 2

Detective Drew Darwin watched as her officers questioned the latest victim of the Valentine Rapist. Every year during the month of February a serial rapist terrorized her town and every year her team of officers failed to apprehend the criminal. *The New York Times* always lambasted her and her department for their failure to capture the Valentine Rapist.

Trent Ranger and Finn Steel were her best officers. Drew had assigned them to only the Valentine Rapist case. She wanted them to concentrate their full attention on catching the monster. She was determined to catch him this year.

Both her detectives were tall and handsome in their own way. Trent was dark with black hair and dancing brown eyes. Finn was blonde with green eyes. Both had been on the force over ten years and were decorated officers. If anyone could catch the rapist, they could.

Finn called a female officer to take the victim home then both detectives joined their boss. "I don't know Drew," Finn shook his head, "once again we have nothing. She wasn't sure about anything. Couldn't say for sure how tall he was or whether he was black, white or green. It's the same story every time. The guy is like a ghost."

"Maybe we should call in a female officer," Trent suggested. "Put her under cover and use her for bait."

"I hate using women for bait," Finn scoffed. "It doesn't seem right somehow. It's demeaning."

"We may have to resort to that," Drew frowned. "I agree it's not the ideal situation, but it's the only thing we haven't tried. Maybe the new precinct will lend us one of their female officers."

"I'll make a phone call," Finn volunteered. "The new captain of the precinct is a good friend of mine."

Drew walked to his desk in the bullpen and made the call. After several minutes he returned to Drew's office.

"They can't free up anyone right now," he announced, "but will try to send you someone next week. They wanted to know how long we'd keep her."

"Until we solve our case or March first," Drew grumbled. "If we don't catch him during February he seems to disappear until the next year."

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Watching the scene below her, Brooke determined both men had a crush on their boss. The heart rate of Finn and Trent increased every time Drew moved or spoke.

Drew's heart rate remained steady. She was obviously fond of both men but not in love with either of them. *Yet!* Brooke thought. *I'll just take my time and decide which one is best suited for her then let my arrows fly,* she concluded.

Brooke spent the rest of the day shadowing Drew. The detective had an early dinner with her parents who adored her and she them. Later she met friends for a drink and nachos at a pub close to the precinct. She was home and in bed by ten.

Pretty boring, Brooke assessed. *This may be more difficult than I expected. She needs to get out and meet people. I need to find that one person who makes her heart race.*

Brooke spent two days watching Drew work cases, file reports and grocery shop. She randomly shot her arrows making her daily quota.

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On the third day Drew addressed all her officers in the morning meeting. “We’ve got to find this creep,” she ranted. “He attacked another woman last night. He almost killed her. His desire to hurt women is increasing. It’s just a matter of time until he kills someone.

“I’m open to suggestions,” Drew told her officers.

“An undercover female as bait,” Trent suggested again.

A murmur ran through the officers as they agreed with Trent. “That is the only thing we haven’t tried,” Finn agreed.

“We don’t have a week,” Drew bit her lower lip. “We need to take action now—today!”

Brooke gave two seconds of consideration to their situation then transported to Gabriella. “Chief, I request permission to take human form?” she blurted.

“What?” Gabriella gasped. “You know we only resort to that in the most extreme cases.”

“This is extreme in several ways,” Brooke spouted. “It’s involved and I don’t have time to explain but I must take human form to help Drew Darwin.”

Gabriella stared at her favorite cupid. “You know the penalty for taking human form and failing,” she warned.

“Yes, ma’am but I’m sure I can make this happen,” Brooke hedged. “Please let me try.”

“Go,” Gabriella waived Brooke away. “Do whatever it takes.”

Chapter 3

Brooke slammed her face into the wall before she realized she was in human form “Damn! That was fast,” she cursed.

“I need to talk to Detective Drew Darwin,” a stout, handsome man with wavy blonde hair entered the bull pen. “I have information about the Valentine Rapist”

“I need to see some identification,” Finn demanded.

The man pulled out his wallet and showed Finn his driver’s license. “This is important,” he added. “I need to see Detective Darwin now.”

Finn stared past the man into Brooke’s sky-blue eyes. “Who the hell are you?” he demanded.

Brooke looked around to see who Finn was talking to then realized he could see her.

“Uh, the captain told me to report to Detective Darwin,” she blurted trying to explain her presence. “You need an—”

“I know,” Finn held up his hand to stop her talking and cut his eyes toward the man in their bullpen. “Both of you follow me.”

Finn led them to Drew’s office. “Detective Darwin this is Paul Wayne. He says he has information on the Valentine Rapist, and this is . . . she can wait until you finish with Mr. Wayne.”

To Brooke’s surprise Drew’s heart raced like a Porsche Panamera Turbo on a straight-away. *She likes Paul Wayne*, Brook cheered to herself. *Belize beaches here I come.*

“I’ll talk to you later,” Drew addressed Brooke. “Please wait outside. Finn stay here.”

Brooke nodded then left the room pulling the door closed behind her. She found a chair in the corner and sat down in it. Using the walls to prop up the human body, she assumed her cupid identity and went through the wall into Drew’s office. She loaded an arrow into the crossbow and was still taking aim when it fired striking Drew in the heart. *Oh, well, true love here she comes*, Brooke thought as she quickly shot an arrow into Paul Wayne. She slipped back into the human body. *I’m going to complain to Gabriella about the touchy trigger on this crossbow.*

Brooke scanned the bullpen as she waited and discovered all the officers were married or in serious relationships. She recognized several officers she had pushed over the edge last year and was pleased to see all of them were happy. *I wonder why Drew Darwin’s love spells didn’t stick*, she thought. *No pun intended.*

After what seemed like hours Drew’s office door opened. “Thank you for coming forward Mr. Wayne,” Drew said escorting the man from the bullpen. She slipped her arm through Paul Wayne’s. “You have my personal phone number. Feel free to call me if you think of anything else.”

“I’ll be in touch,” Wayne promised.

As soon as the door closed behind Wayne, Drew turned to Finn. “Pull up the photos from past crime scenes,” she commanded. “There,” Drew pointed to a photo, “and there. He’s also in this one. Finn, I think he may be the Valentine Rapist.”

“Oh crap,” Brooke gulped.

Both detectives turned their gazes to Brooke. “Who is she?” Drew demanded.

“The new precinct sent her over,” Finn explained.

To Brooke’s surprise Drew’s heart began to race again. *Oh, dear God what have I done?* Brooke thought.

“You’re an undercover officer?” Drew queried.

“Yes, ma’am,” Brook tried to remain calm.

“You look more like a refugee from Star Wars,” Drew taunted, but her heart raced faster. “What is that getup you’re wearing, officer . . .?”

“Brooke, ma’am.” Brooke swallowed hard.

“Um, does Brooke have a last name?” Drew mimicked.

Brooke searched frantically for a last name. She’d never had a last name. “Cupid, ma’am. Brooke Cupid.”

A smile danced on Drew’s lips. “Brooke Cupid? Well Miss Cupid is there any reason you wear leather?”

“Motorcycles!” Brooke was proud of how fast she was on her feet. “I’m in the motorcycle unit, ma’am. The captain instructed me to report to you immediately, so I didn’t stop to change.”

“Interesting,” Drew moved closer and her heart rate soared. “Do all the officers in the motorcycle unit wear leather uniforms—”

“Yes, ma’am.” Brooke interrupted.

“. . . with hearts on them?” Drew finished her question.

“I . . . um . . . just during February,” Brook muttered.

“Well, officer Cupid why don’t you go home and change into something more . . . um feminine and meet me at Patrick’s at six? You’ll need to look more inviting than a butch in leather to catch our rapist.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Brooke nodded moving toward the exit. She couldn’t wait to get out of Drew Darwin’s sight.

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Damn! Damn! Damn! Brook ranted in her mind as she leaned against the alley wall. *I’ve made the lead detective on the Valentine Rapist case fall in love with the rapist. Jesus, I’ll be lucky if I don’t end up serving as the cupid for a Turkish prison. I can kiss Belize and sunny beaches goodbye for at least a century. How could I be so stupid? But her heart was racing. It was still racing after he left. She must have a faulty valve or something. Gabriella is going to banish me.*