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# THE WATCH

The Billionaire Spy Series Book Six

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AMARYLLIS LANZA



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Amaryllis Lanza  
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Stuck in the Quicksand

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*Polly*

*A watch of nightingales*

**P**ollyanna Sonnenschein sat in the dark cell of a room in the kennel of the Dark Lady's vast estate in Holmby Hills. The chain around her neck was long enough to allow her to move around, use the ensuite bathroom, and open the curtains to look out at the garden, but she didn't feel like seeing the rose bushes outside her window. She fucking hated roses. They had ruined her life. More. Her life had always been shit—except for a brief period where she had been on the Dark Lady's good list—but roses had landed her a place at the top of the bad list, waiting for her name to be scratched. Permanently.

They could have her name, frankly. She hated her name. It gave people all the wrong ideas about her. They expected her to be sweet, friendly, kind, bubbly. Or a bird. She wasn't. Polly

was grumpy, ornery, bratty. Polly bit the hand that fed her. Polly was a cat.

That was one thing Johny Black, the psycho who got her in this mess, got right. He had no illusions about her at all. He thought she was just a cunt. Sometimes, it's all she was. Johny had allowed her to live for however long she proved entertaining or useful to him. Polly had always known she didn't have long before he put her down.

She was going to die soon, which seemed like a waste. Her twenty-two years on this Earth had been an endless chain of poor decisions, a bad one leading to a worse one, leading to a disastrous one, leading to motherfucking roses. Leading to the end.

Why would she want to see the sun? What was the point?

She was startled out of her surly contemplations, and somewhat blinded, when the door opened, letting in the light from the hallway.

“What the fuck, girl?” A voice as deep as the ocean bounced off the walls. “You asleep? It's fucking one in the afternoon.”

“Who can sleep?” Polly asked, her voice was a weak, raspy croak. She hadn't spoken to anyone for hours. No one in the Dark Lady's service could say a word to her, and after spending all night crying and shouting to be let go, with no one around to listen, she had run out of things to say.

The giant of a man walked up to the blackout curtains and opened them, letting all the California sunshine through to ruin her day. In the light, she got a better look at him. He was painfully handsome, with the features of a film star and the build of a king. She knew him as a member of The Unkindness, and without a mask he was only more attractive. She'd seen him in passing at Gatherings, she never got to play with him, but she remembered his bright eyes, smooth dark skin, and breathtaking physique. His powerful, sculpted body

was hidden today under a white dress shirt and tweed jacket which made him look like a college professor instead of what he really was: a killer.

“So you got the job, huh?” she asked.

“I asked for it,” he said casually, returning to stroke her cheek where she sat on the chaise in the corner. “You’re a mess, kitty cat. Let’s get you cleaned up.”

“Why bother?” Polly said. “You can kill me just as easily now, or take me to wherever you want to kill me. I don’t have to be clean to go in the dirt.”

“What makes you think I’m here to kill you, pet?”

“I know who you are,” she spat. “Just get it done. I’m tired.”

“I can fucking guarantee you do not know who I am, kitten,” he said, yanking the chain attached to her collar and causing her to fall on the floor at his feet, “or you would not be giving me a hard time.”

“Oh, I see,” Polly said, resentful. “They’re going to let you play with me first, before you put me out of my misery. Is that Charlie’s big plan?”

He pulled the chain up, yanking her off the floor and raising his arm high so she dangled by the neck on tiptoes in front of him. He put the other hand on her face, squeezing her cheeks so her lips puckered like a fish.

“You’d best forget you know his name, kitty,” he said. “You’ve only got one life left.”

Then he kissed her puckered lips, so gently, before dragging her by the chain to the standing shower in a corner of the bathroom. It was little more than a hose with a shower head. They didn’t even have a curtain.

He let her drop again on the frosted glass tiles and bent down to tear her oversized t-shirt off and strip her of her cotton panties.

She didn’t even try to fight him. She hadn’t really known

what to expect when the moment finally came, but her imagination had pictured worse than this. Of course, there was still time. They had all afternoon. She'd be easier to dump in the dark.

The killer grabbed the hose with the shower nozzle from the stand overhead, tested the water temperature and then sprayed her with it, set on pulse, so she felt like she was being pummeled by a hard rain.

"You will call me Master Rick, or you will call me Sir," he commanded as he hosed her down, beating her with the water. "When you're nice, I will be nice. When you're bad, I will be worse. Got it?"

"Stop it!" she shouted, trying to protect herself from the pulsing water near her face.

"That is not an acceptable answer." He brought the hose down between her legs so the hard pulsing water lashed her pussy.

Polly clamped her legs closed, and he turned up the heat. "You're going to burn me, you fucking psycho!"

He pointed the hose at her breasts, straight at her nipples.

"You're dirty, and you still stink of rotten roses," he said. "I'm here to make you clean. If you do what I say, you may get yourself out of the boiling pot you threw yourself into, headfirst. Otherwise, kitty, I'll melt the skin off your bones."

Pollyanna did not like to cry. She worked really hard at keeping her eyes dry over the years—no matter what happened—but she knew some Doms got their rocks off with the waterworks. She couldn't recall whether Master Rick was the sort. Polly remembered little about what he did at the gatherings, besides look dangerous and sexy as fuck. Which he still did, even dressed like an angry History Professor who was spraying her with hard shots of nearly scalding water for forgetting which president had signed the treaty for the Alaska Purchase. It was Andrew Johnson. On May 28, 1867. Polly

knew because she was from Alaska. Not because she was smart. Smart girls didn't end up like this, she reminded herself.

It was time to try tears. While she didn't do it often, Polly had studied acting in school—which is why she first ran away to Los Angeles. She'd learned to draw from personal experience to put on a convincing part. Frankly, she had plenty of material to work with for producing tears. The only problem was her face was already wet, so she had to be a bit more intense.

She went through a range of reactions, from puppy eyes, to quivering lips, to whimpers which built up to a heartfelt sob which strengthened into a wail which echoed in the small bathroom.

“Try again, pet,” Master Rick said, moving the spray of water down to her lower belly.

“What do you *want* from me?” Polly sobbed. She had turned on the tears, and now she couldn't find the switch to shut them off.

“I want to play with you a while, kitten,” he said, turning the water all the way to ice cold. “To understand your twisted little mind. I want to know why you thought it was smart to trigger a kind, beautiful, traumatized woman who is the property of our alpha. Only an evil little bitch does shit like that. Are you an evil little bitch, pet? Because I can wash the evil right off you.”

“I tried to explain. It wasn't my idea. I didn't have a choice!”

“Bullshit.” Master Rick focused the cold pulses of water on her chest, around where her heart might be.

“He would have killed me!”

“Yeah, I heard something about it,” Master Rick said. “I'm not buying it. Neither is our alpha. You want to know why, kitty?”



She shook her head and wrapped her arms around herself as best she could to protect herself from the cold.

“Because there’s always a choice, kitty,” he said. “You acted against us, instead of telling us about your trouble. Why the hell would you do it?”

“You don’t *know* this man,” Polly cried. “He’s evil. He’s a monster.”

Master Rick turned off the water and tossed the bottle of Irish Spring liquid soap, which had been on the sink, at her feet.

“You have five minutes to wash your body clear of the rose stench, top to bottom, including your hair, then I’m taking you home,” he said. “If you were a good kitty, I would wash you myself. As it is, you’re lucky I don’t stick you in a sack and drown you.”

“Home where?” she asked.

“Home where you’ll learn your lesson,” Rick said, stepping back into the bedroom and leaving her alone to tend to herself.

The night which sealed her fate replayed in her mind as Polly rushed to scrub herself clean with the fresh-scented gel, working it into a lather in her jet black hair.

She had stared off on her knees, a familiar position, this time at the feet of the split-tongued killer Johnny Black, waiting for him to tell her what she might do to buy herself another day.

*“It’s simple, pet,” Johnny had hissed. Johnny Black could only hiss, because of that damned tongue of his, intentionally bisected, like a snake tongue. Johnny Black thought he was the son of the devil, or some shit.*

*“You will bathe in roses. Soak your mask in rose oil. Spray yourself with rose perfume from your hair to your toes until all you smell is roses. Bring the rose oil bottle with you to the gathering of The Unkindness. Then you will find the blonde girl who walks with the red man. You know the red man, yes?”*

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*“A? Yes, I know A. He’s a dangerous man,” she said. She knew better than to use A’s name. If Johnny didn’t know, she would not be the one to tell him.*

*“More dangerous than me?”*

*How could Polly answer, honestly? It was a close tie. While she would bet, in a knife fight between the two of them, Charlie Green would win, Johnny was in the room with her. Honesty seemed like a bad idea, and she wasn’t really bothered by lying.*

*“No one is more dangerous than you,” Polly said.*

*He patted her head. Hard. Johnny did everything hard. Her brain was already buzzing before. Now her ears were ringing.*

*“That’s right,” Johnny said. “So you go all rosy, rosy. Use the rose oil to refresh the scent, if time passes. Then you go stand next to the blonde as soon as you can. Close enough she can smell you.”*

*“And then what?”*

*“I don’t know, but you will find out,” Johnny said. “Then, you will tell me.”*

*“Why am I doing this?” Polly asked.*

*Johnny bent down to where she knelt at his feet and slapped her hard across the face, twice, so her cheeks matched. He was detail-oriented, Johnny.*

*“No questions. Just do it.”*

*And so she did.*

*And now she was in the shower washing off all the roses, and there was a lot to wash up. By the time Polly got her chance, she had been so nervous about getting it wrong she’d rubbed the entire bottle of rose oil on her skin. It made no sense, this stupid job of Johnny’s. Why did she have to smell like a fucking rose garden? What was the point?*

*A had taken his newly collared sub, Áine, to the improvised whipping post in the patio—an abstract art piece with a stainless steel O. He was punishing her for acting out during his Shibari show. She got jealous and tried to interfere with his aftercare of the rope bunny. It was funny, really, because all the ravens were jealous of her. How had this blonde earned a*

*collar from the man who absolutely refused to collar anyone? Did she know how dangerous A was? Did she have any idea what she had gotten herself into?*

*Polly had decided it was the perfect moment to do it, with the girl bound in place, and A distracted, flogging her. Plus, The Unkindness were encouraged to watch. All Polly had to do was slip through the crowd to the front, to stand on the other side of the whipping post and to get really close to the girl. No one would object.*

*They were outside, and there were so many scents in the air, but the oil Polly had coated herself with was strong. She stood close enough to see the girl's blue eyes and striking white-blond lashes, framed by the black beautiful feather mask which marked her as an owned raven, as special, as prized. Something Polly knew she would never be.*

*Why was she so special? Not only did Áine have A all to herself, she had somehow come to Johnny's attention too. And she was in ecstasy, as A lashed her between the legs with the flogger, Áine delighted in it. She was right on the edge of coming. Polly could see the moan forming in Áine's full, rosy, glossy lips.*

*Then a soft breeze blew on Polly's back and the bitch went nuts—absolutely insane. She screeched like a banshee, like someone had taken a knife to her belly and was cutting her open, pulling her guts out. Polly couldn't move. It fascinated her. Áine had looked so beautiful, just a moment before, being punished for acting out, and now she was a horror show. Was it the rose scent which did it? How?*

*A was shouting at her, but Polly couldn't move. She couldn't budge. She'd seen nothing like this in her life. How could the simple scent of roses make someone lose their shit like this? It was almost magical. Polly felt strangely powerful. She couldn't suppress a grin. A was barking at Polly again to step back. The right thing to do now would be to disappear as soon as possible, but Polly couldn't get her legs to cooperate.*

*Then A freed his raven from her chains and carried her indoors, still screeching, kicking and clawing at the air. Polly felt a gentle black-gloved hand land on her shoulder.*

*Shit. She was fucked.*

Morrígan, the Dark Lady, purveyor of the finest cunts and asses in all the land, was a meticulous record keeper. Better than Santa. She kept a comprehensive list in her head of who was naughty and who was nice. Morrígan understood all the different shades of naughty under the sun, and there was really only one she couldn't stomach: disloyalty.

You could do worse than have her as a boss—Polly knew *very* well—but you could *not* do worse than have her as your enemy. Except, maybe having *both* Morrígan and Charlie Green looking at her as the enemy was probably worse. No. For sure, it was worse. Maybe not as bad as having Johnny Black decide you served no useful purpose, but really damned close.

Polly was fucked, and not in any pleasant way.

*She'd decided, in the short time she was alone in the room staring at Morrígan—who stared back at her with those hypnotic violet eyes—she never wanted to see a rose or smell a rose again for as long as she lived. Which wouldn't be long. Fuck. She was an idiot. Morrígan had given her a good sort of life, all things considered. Polly had messed it all up, like she'd messed up everything else she ever touched.*

*"I want you to explain yourself," Charlie said, each word slipping through his sharp white teeth, his jaw clenched in the pauses between them. He was bright red. His hair was red, his beard was red, his face was red and his chest was red. Charlie was literally on fire. And his eyes were ice.*

*That just... couldn't be good.*

*"I don't know what you mean," Polly lied.*

*"Don't you dare pretend with me!" His voice continued to echo in the room long after he'd spoken, the warning bouncing between Polly's ears causing tears to sting her eyes. "And don't you dare cry! You wicked bitch. You know what you did. I just want to know why you did it!"*

*"I'm sorry," she said, trying not to upset Charlie more than he already was. "I thought... I had no idea."*

*“Why. Did. You. Do. It?” Charlie asked again.*

*Polly looked to Morrigan for help, but it was pretty pointless. Polly sat at the very top of the bad list, and the Dark Lady was more than ready to put a line through her name.*

*“I was told to,” Polly admitted. “Ordered to, really. Threatened. I didn’t have much choice, and I never thought...”*

*“By whom?” the Dark Lady asked. “How did anyone even know she would be here?”*

*Polly hesitated. This was it. The moment she’d dreaded. Time to pick a side. Sure, Johnny would kill her for betraying him, but Charlie looked ready to kill her too, and Morrigan seemed really eager to watch Charlie tear her apart with those enormous claws he called hands.*

*“I have a client,” Polly started, which on its own was a terrible admission. Johnny wasn’t a client of the Dark Lady’s which was a total no-no. You had to keep clean. You had to go on approved assignments, if you were going to work with her. Freelancing and work off the books was strictly forbidden.*

*“You don’t know him,” Polly had admitted, and she’d turned on the waterworks in case it helped. “He knows A. He told me to wear rose cologne around A’s girl tonight. I thought it was a weird prank of his. He likes to play with people, but I had no idea.”*

*“Bullshit,” Charlie spat. “I told you to go away, and you didn’t budge. You were enjoying it.”*

*“I swear...”*

*“Silence!” Morrigan never shouted, so the sound of her raised voice put Polly over the edge to genuine tears. “You will not lie to us. If your client is not one of us, how would he know about A or about his girl being here, or even that there was a gathering tonight?”*

*“I...” she started but couldn’t finish. She’d have to tell them the truth now. It sealed her fate. The end had come. A sob broke out of her chest before she could stop it.*

*“Explain,” Charlie threatened.*

*Polly took a deep breath and fixed her eyes on a dark spot on the lush*

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*cream carpet so she didn't have to look at Charlie's eyes. She could see her skull reflected in them.*

*"I tell him about every gathering I go to," Polly began. "He pays me extra to say what is happening, and to describe the attendees. When I told him about this one, he said you would probably bring a girl. I told him you never bring your own, but he insisted you would. He told me about the rose cologne trick. I thought she was allergic or whatever, and it might make her sneeze. I never imagined..."*

*"Stop. Lying," Charlie growled. "Tell me his name."*

*"He'll kill me!"*

*"Darling, you're already dead," Charlie told her. "You're only negotiating for less pain now."*

And now the pain was here. And it was Rick, which was a shame because when she'd seen him at the gatherings of The Unkindness, she'd only ever imagined him giving her pleasure.

She had told Charlie and Morrigan everything. Charlie had said Morrigan should ship her off. Polly wasn't really clear what that entailed. She didn't imagine it would be good. When they'd brought her over to the kennel for "safe-keeping," as Morrigan put it, Polly figured her days were now measured in hours. But if they'd sent Rick for her, those hours were nearly over.

Home. Rick had said. He was bringing her home. Wasn't it just a euphemism for death? In Polly's brief life, it had always been.