

Chapter Twenty-Four in which James makes a fatal mistake by thinking he is above the laws of pharmacopeia and Sylvia finds her dreams becoming reality, but in a most surprisingly unpleasant way.

When James decided to take his Ambien with scotch, and then stay up to watch the news, he made a common but unfortunate mistake. Missing the window of healing sleep, and adding anxiety and alcohol to the mix, he found himself staring out the window and watching the lights of passing cars.

Cars ... the office ... and with that strange floating connection that drugs and alcohol make, James found himself putting on his jacket and heading for the garage door, car keys in hand. He opened the door with the remote and got into the car. Ah, there was his briefcase. He started the car and then reached over to pull out the quarterly report he was working on. They had targeted a bank, in collusion with the Treasury Department, the Federal Reserve and a hand-picked selection of 5 super banks, for bankruptcy and had been selling repackaged debt to them for years, with the upper echelon in on the scheme knowing their retirements were getting more golden by the moment. And then when **bankruptcy became inevitable, they would become the primary creditor** and scoop up whatever assets were left. What a great scheme ...

Those were the last thoughts James Donald got to have, having forgotten to turn on the ventilation system in the garage, and having forgotten his Ambien-fuelled plan to drive to the office to try and win back the company money he had lost.

Sylvia didn't get back to the condo the following morning until nine when she could safely assume that James had gone to work. She started to clean up, taking his glass from the window sill, and walked into the kitchen. Something felt wrong and she walked back into the living room and saw his shoes beside the garage door. And then she smelt that familiar air of exhaust that seemed to cling to her husband and heard the faint sound of the car engine running. She took a deep breath and then opened the door. Oh god. She shut the door and let out her breath.

Then, being practically minded Sylvia turned on the ventilation system, took another deep breath and opened the door and walked over to the car. Still holding her breath she opened the erstwhile driver's door, reached across the body of her husband, and turned off the car. Gasping she shot back into the condo and got her breathing under control. She should make sure he was dead ... but that had just been so obvious. There was no bringing him back. She would have to call an ambulance, but there was clearly no need to hurry, other than keeping up appearances.

The thought that James had deliberately taken his own life seemed ludicrous to her, but it certainly looked that way. And as she thought about it more clearly and the visual trauma faded from her startled mind, she realised his briefcase was in the car, on the passenger seat, and that his laptop must be there too. She went to her bedroom to grab the drive she had hidden along with a pair of latex gloves. Game time.

In a surreal state Sylvia returned to the living room and opened the garage door. The fan had done its work, and the air only held that faint tinge of exhaust. She walked over to the passenger door and opened it, quietly as if she might wake him. She lifted the lid on the laptop and it turned on with a whirr that made her jump. Another deep breath and then with a slightly shaky finger she typed maggie into the password field. A moment of nothing, and then up came James Donald's home screen. Sylvia looked around the empty garage and knew she had enough time to copy his whole hard drive. The coroner could wait.

