

The First Wife

By Shadar

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Chapter One

It was Tuesday and I was going crazy making calls, looking for an A-lister to host next month's Save the Children charity gig. But after the scandal in Pakistan, nobody wanted to be affiliated with them. I think the story was planted by the Pakistan Intelligence Agency to destroy our funding base, given the PIA was in the pockets of the Taliban. They didn't want an American-based NGO operating in their country.

To my further amazement, despite the questionable origins of the story, it had grown legs. No politician or celeb was going to back STC now, at least until the investigation was complete. In the meantime, innocent kids were going to starve to death in a half dozen countries if we couldn't put together a good fundraising drive. How could people ignore the children just to punish the organization? Did they truly care more about their reputation than children's lives?

I sagged exhaustedly in my chair as I sucked down the last of my Espresso. Nobody wanted to talk to an ex-Mad Man about representing an organization that had the stink of child slavery on it. False rumors or not, the celebs lived inside a bubble of external perceptions, and reality could be damned.

I was about to call it quits for the day when my phone rang a final time. I sighed and picked it up, expecting to hear from yet another celeb's PR agent politely telling me to go screw myself.

“James Knight,” I answered wearily.

“Hello Mr. Knight, this is Misty Everett. Do you have a moment to talk?” The phone had the slight delay and faint echo of a satellite link.

I sat up so fast that my coffee went flying. Jesus... was this really her! I slapped my face a couple of times, trying to focus. It was hard to keep my voice from cracking like an excited schoolboy.

“Ah, hello, thank you for calling Ms. Everett,” I said as calmly as I could, artificially deepening my voice. “What can I do for you?”

My words might have been smooth, but my mind was exploding. Misty was potentially the hottest celebrity on the planet, but she’d lived like a recluse since her marriage. She had proven impossible to reach, either for reporters or fundraisers like myself. Even the paparazzi, who are infinitely creative, had given up on chasing her. She and her husband lived in a unique crystalline structure located at Valkyrjedomen, an ice dome 12,000 feet above sea level in the Antarctic interior. The location, granted to them by the United Nations, was a former Japanese research location. It was the most inaccessible place on Earth, and also one of the coldest, with peak summertime temperatures of -30°C and typical winter temps of -80°C .

“Please, call me Misty. I was talking to my husband this morning, Mr. Knight, and we’ve decided that your organization is getting an undeserved shellacking in the press. We are both very aware of the good work you do. We also know how many children’s lives hang in the balance. If the job’s still open, I’d like to help you with your next fundraiser.”

“Yes. Yes, of course, absolutely, we’d so much appreciate that.” I had to bite my tongue to keep from gushing. I wanted to explode. To scream Eureka.

“Good. When can we meet to kick around some ideas to make this event really special.”

“Well, given your kind offer I think its already very special, Ms. Everett. You have no idea what this means to us.”

“Actually, I think I do. That’s why I called.” I’d read somewhere that she wasn’t prone to false modesty. She knew full well how important she was going to be to our cause.

“Of course... I’m sorry. This is just so unexpected.”

“A date and time, Mr. Knight?” she prodded me.

“Call me James, please. How about nine tomorrow morning here at our offices. Your location is rather difficult to reach. Do you have my address?”

“I can find you. Please do not discuss our meeting with anyone other than your closest associates. No publicity or even rumors until we sort out the terms.”

“Of course.”

“Then to tomorrow.” She hung up before I could even say goodbye.

I dropped the phone in its cradle and spun around in my chair as I gave off a huge yell, kicking my feet in the air. I had to take a few deep breaths before I was able to get out of my chair and race down the hallway to Jeff Winter’s office, our CEO. I burst inside without knocking, and then slammed the door behind me. He looked up at me in surprise.

“We got her, Jeff baby. We got her!”

“Who?” he shouted back, piqued by my bursting into his office. “Who’d you get?”

“We got Superman’s wife!”

Chapter Two

Everyone knew the Misty Everett story. A rags to riches story that made Cinderella look boring. Misty Everett had been a lower-tier pro tennis player. She wasn't highly ranked on the tour, but she was famous for being one hell of an eyeful. Tall, blonde and seriously built in an athletic sort of way, her looks made her far more of a celebrity than her tennis skills ever would. She'd made a small reputation for herself as a supporter of children's charities, cancer fun drives and so forth.

Not that she didn't work her ass off to win. She practiced constantly and had enough raw power in her serves to overpower most opponents. But she still managed to lose far more matches than she won. Much of the blame was placed on the publicity that encircled her. Her images weren't confined to the sports rags, but instead she was a major draw in the whole celebrity media circus. Who was she dating? What outfit did she wear to this event or that one? Endless pictures of her playing her matches (who cared if she won or lost) in her tiny outfits, often shot from odd angles.

Her outsized publicity ensured that she was a joke in the eyes of her fellow athletes who publicly wrote her off as an eye candy with limited talent. Further jealousies came from her lucrative industry sponsorships, which eclipsed even that of some top-ranked players.

That kind of talk made Misty angry. And when she was mad she worked all the harder. She worked hard enough to slowly work her way into the top half of the rankings, but people quickly forgot that being the 18th ranked pro tennis player on the planet was no small achievement. Or that she was getting stronger, better and more experienced every year. Perhaps she'd never be #1, but she was a dedicated player. Somehow that wasn't enough for her fans.

She was struggling with the balance between publicity and her tennis when she agreed to support one of her favorite charities — a drive to raise funds to provide shelters for abused women and children. To her surprise,

she found herself seated next to the surprise Guest of Honor — Superman himself. Instead of his red and blues, he was wearing a smartly tailored suit that showed off his amazing physique. The two of them were a paparazzi's dream as they chatted during dinner, smiling and often laughing at each other's jokes. When dinner and the obligatory speeches were completed, they hit the dance floor with such passion that everyone else yielded the floor to them. They posed together for the cameras when the sponsors requested it — they were a truly gorgeous couple — and then as if in a fairy tale, the Man of Steel took her in his arms and flew off into the night with her. All of which ensured they were the top story in the News the next day. Misty Everett had instantly become Superman's girlfriend, at least in the eyes of the media.

This time they actually got it right. A few weeks later, a lucky photog in the right place at the right time got some very candid shots of them swimming on what should have been a deserted beach — in the nude. Nobody had ever seen Superman without at least his red and blues, and Misty was one hell of an eyeful on her own.

After that, it was total insanity. Every reporter and every camera on the planet chased the Superman's Girlfriend story, everyone wondering why, out of more than four-billion women on Earth, Superman had chosen Misty Everett.

Misty tried to keep playing tennis despite the increasingly suffocating publicity that now swirled around her, but nobody even pretended to care how she hit the ball anymore. The only question was what it was like being Superman's girlfriend. The stands and the parking lots at each tennis event were filled with photogs and reporters and other celeb stalkers. Everyone wanted an interview, but whenever she granted one, the questions were all about Superman this and Superman that. Nothing about the match she'd just won or lost.

The disruption was so great that Misty temporarily quit the tour. She disappeared, but the paparazzi found her in Switzerland, so she disappeared again, beginning a cat and mouse game that lasted a year. Then the bombshell announcement came out: she and Superman had quietly married in a small farming town in the middle of Kansas — the last place the paparazzi would think of stalking them. A half dozen official wedding pictures were released, along with a brief press briefing that said they were now living at his Fortress of Solitude, located in the inaccessible Antarctic interior.

Another long year passed, during which Misty avoided any form of publicity. Rumors placed her in this city or that, but no one managed to capture any pictures or her, let alone an interview. Superman, who was as busy as ever, also refused to talk about his personal life.

The pent up demand to know about the First Couple was overwhelming.

And now I had her for my fundraiser, which was about to go from obscurity to the biggest media event of the year. As exciting as that was, it was also sobering. We were a small firm, just Jeff and I along with Charity and a few other staff members. Once we announced that Misty was attending our event, we were going to be overwhelmed with media attention. Nobody would care about the mission of Save the Children, but everyone would want invites to our fundraiser. Which was good as far as it went. Unfortunately, the paparazzi were going to jam the venue and that could discourage some hopefully generous celebrities from actually attending.

Charity disagreed with my pessimism about the last. She was convinced that anyone who was anyone was going to claw their way into our fundraiser, for if there was any couple who could claim to be royalty these days, it was Mr. and Mrs. Superman. She believed that every celeb on the

planet wanted to be seen and photographed with Superman and his beautiful bride.

Chapter Three

Charity was rarely wrong about this kind of thing, and that kept me so wound up that I barely slept that night. Fortunately, downing a half-dozen Espressos on the way to work the next morning took the blur away. Instead of taking a cab, I walked the two miles from the marina to our office, arriving two hours before our usual starting time. I wanted to personally make sure everything was set up. Given the firm's troubles this last year where we lost a number of key clients, this was our last chance to prove that McMillon Productions still had it. That we could do what no one else could.

We also had to get on top of the size of the venue before the waves of media attention washed us away and some big firm came in to pick up the pieces.

Jeff arrived at seven-thirty, looking nervous and red-eyed in his expensive suit. Thoughtfully, he brought a box of pastries and coffees from the deli downstairs. We still hadn't told anyone else, save for Charity, my young assistant. The rest of the staff wouldn't be arriving until nine in any case.

Jeff paced the conference room drinking coffee while I tried to chill out and plan my approach for the meeting. Charity came in and listened to me blabber for a while. As usual, she looked smoking hot despite the early hour, what with her red hair and soft green bedroom eyes. As was her way, she stared steadily into my eyes the whole time.



Then, without saying a word, she set down the document she was working on and walked around the desk to grab my tie and pull me to my feet. Turning, she towed me out the back door and into the alley. As soon as the door closed, she reached down the top of her dress and retrieved a large joint. I came up with a lighter, and soon I was holding a huge lungful of smoke in. Charity always knew what I needed.

We had to handle this meeting with cool, calm professionalism, and we'd both found it easier to talk to the glitzy celebrities with their fragile egos when we were a little high. Most celebs were used to the frenzy of promotional managers and agents and the like, so we always made it a point to be as mellow and low key as we could. Charity and I are a hell of a team when we got on the same page. Although you'd never know it based on last year's performance of the firm.

When we returned to the conference room slightly red-eyed, I put some early Pink Floyd on in the background. The innovative space-rocky kind of sound seemed appropriate for a meeting with a woman who was married to a super-powered extraterrestrial. To a man who many people regarded as a god despite the fact that he modestly claimed he was just a regular guy who'd been born with a gift. Whatever the truth, Superman had singlehandedly saved Earth from destruction by aliens several times. That made him a god in my book.

Charity stationed herself at the front door as the clock approached 9:00. She herded the handful of staffers to their desks before calling me exactly on the hour to say she didn't see anyone else coming our way. Jeff started to get even more nervous after that report, but I just zoned out, enjoying my buzz as I watched the skylight high over head. My theory was that Superman was going to deliver his wife to our meeting to avoid any street publicity, and he always came in through some balcony or skylight. The rules were different for a man who could fly.

Sure enough, at 9:01 I saw the high skylight open and a woman dressed in a white dress appeared... and began to fall.

I leaped up in an attempt to catch her, only to have her come to a stop in mid-air. Jeff fell startled out of his chair when I leaped, but he scrambled back to his feet in time to see Misty Everett float down and land light as a feather beside the conference table.

She wasn't outfitted in an expensive fashion the way most celebs dressed when they came to meetings. Instead, she was barefoot with windblown blonde hair half covering her face, her pale blue eyes gleaming brightly from behind sun-kissed strands. The front of her form-fitting white dress had been blown open, revealing a great deal of her famous cleavage, and her fashionably short skirt (for a tennis player, anyway) was frayed along the edges as if she'd just endured a hurricane. Yet more than anything, she exuded a quiet air of extreme healthiness and confidence.



I winked at Charity, who was coolly eyeing Misty. Jeff and I embarrassed ourselves by freaking out, but Charity seemed to be taking Misty's ability to

levitate in stride. After all, we all knew that Misty had been born as human as all the rest of us.

My chest was tight and my breathing labored as I tried to comprehend what it meant for Superman's wife to now have super powers. This story was going to be way bigger than we'd first imagined, and it was already huge. Misty wasn't just Superman's wife, now she was Superwoman as well.

And nobody knew about her except us. The potential was staggering.

Misty turned her head to look levelly into my eyes as I walked forward, holding out my hand. Even in bare feet, she stood an inch taller than me. She appeared scandalously young compared to Superman, who'd been flying around for two-hundred years. While he looked late fortyish despite his actual age, Misty's bio said she was only twenty-four, and she looked it.

"Ms. Everett. So very glad you could join us," I said as I gestured up at the skylight "That was a very creative way to avoid the press. Quite surprising too, I might add.

She shook my hand, gripping it tighter than a strong man as she smiled brightly. "So imagine how surprised I was last week when these abilities suddenly came upon me."

"Suddenly...?" Charity asked. She snapped her fingers. "Just like that?"

"More or less," Misty shrugged. "I was normal at breakfast. I could fly by dinner time."

I turned toward Jeff and Charity. "Misty Everett, this is my boss, Jeff Winters. And this lovely lady is Charity Smothers, my assistant."

Misty shook Jeff's hand, and then gave Charity an enthusiastic hug. Jeff looked awestruck as he struggled to keep his eyes on Misty face and not on her boobs. He wasn't doing so well. Despite making his living in the

celebrity world, he was suddenly acting like a teenage kid meeting his first supermodel.

Charity wore a faintly sexy smile as she stood close enough to Misty to wrap her arm around her waist. It was no secret that Charity sometimes swung leftie. Until last year she'd come to office parties with a guy on her arm who was just as gorgeous as she was, but last Christmas she'd brought Olivia Thrugood, the hottest supermodel on the planet. They flirted all party long, even kissing openly and passionately, which poured gasoline on the flames of the fantasies that some of us carried around in our heads. Everyone at the party was wickedly turned on by time they left.

I shook away that strange thought. Now that the pleasantries were concluded, I motioned for everyone to sit down. Misty floated down into a chair to sit on one folded leg, her body moving with hypnotic smoothness, her feet barely brushing the floor. She still looked strong and lean from her tennis days. More than that, she projected this almost tangible aura of healthiness, along with a powerful sense of hyper-fertility. Her delicate perfume was absolutely enchanting.

She stared into our red faces for long moment before putting us out of our misery by beginning the discussion. "Gentlemen, I have decided to make your charity event my coming out event, so to speak. I've decided to join my husband in helping the people of Earth, given that I'm now capable of doing most of the things he can do."

I heard Charity take a quick breathe. "Most of the things...?" Jeff started to ask, an astonished look in his eyes.

"Well, all of the things, just not as well as he can."

"Bend steel bars...?" Charity asked.

She gave Charity a mischievous wink. "Of course. But that said, I would like to keep my new abilities a secret until three days before the event.

Then, after a public demonstration during one of our launch events, I plan to auction off fifty hours or so of my super abilities in one hour increments to the largest contributors, just as long as the things they ask me to do are legal. With any luck, we'll be able to raise enough money to feed millions more children next year."

We. I sure liked the sound of that. Misty was going to make us. Never again were we going to have to beg a celebrity to host or sponsor one of our events. Nobody was going to worry about the booze I drank or my checkered history. They were going to be lined up outside waiting for me to speak.

"I don't understand that," Jeff said, sounding even more awkward than usual. "I thought you were, you know, human?"

"I was indeed born human," she replied, taking no offense. "But carrying a Kryptonian child apparently causes mutagenesis."

My jaw hit the table. I wasn't the only one.

"You're pregnant?" Charity gasped, sounding astonished. "I thought it was, you know, impossible, given his strength and... you know."

The media had made a big deal about how Superman was ten-thousand times stronger than any human — presumably in every way. Pundits had speculated what that mean regarding his sex life, which started with conjecture about a penis as big as his muscles and inevitably wound up up with the distressing "fact" that he'd likely blow his wife's head off if he let himself go.

I'd always thought that kind of public speculation was a huge invasion of privacy. Which unfortunately was the kind of thinking that had ensured my demise over on Madison Avenue. As far as Mad Ave went, everything was exploitable if you could us it to make a buck.

Jeff looked confused by the term mutagenesis, but Charity understood it instantly. “That means your DNA now mimics your child’s,” she offered. “You’ve essentially become Kryptonian so you can carry a Kryptonian child. Who will be born super.”

Misty nodded. “Very good. Even more importantly, I want my child to be born into a saner world than we see today.”

“When is he or she due?” I asked daringly.

Her smile faded. “Actually, we have no idea. Kal El suspects that Kryptonian gestation might be very long. Possibly years. We know the pregnancy is advancing very slowly as I don’t show yet. He doesn’t know many of the facts about his own race given he came here as a baby. His father’s crystals did not cover this eventuality.”

My head started spinning faster and faster, with wild ideas flooding my thoughts. This was the second best part of being high, thanks to Charity.

I grabbed the first idea that seemed sane. “OK, how about this. Save the Children already saves children from starvation and disease. Everybody knows we do that, despite this Pakistan glitch. But you and Superman want to help future children, including your own, from having to be born into a world where starvation and war are so widespread. Which means Save the Children is going to have to help solve the basic problems: war, drought and disease. Also food production. Global warming. Maybe even overpopulation, although that’s riskier.” I whistled as I shook my head. “We’re gonna need a hell of a lot more people and money to tackle those kinds of issues.”

“Money is your job, but I’m sure it will help greatly to have me working full-time for Save the Children, not only to raise funds but to help solve those basic problems. While my husband continues to focus on criminals and keeping Earth safe from dangerous aliens, I want to use my time to make a better world for our children.”

Charity and I couldn't have written a better script. It was pitch perfect.

I felt a rush of pride as I knew the world was going to change for the better, and we were going to be the ones doing it.

Chapter Four

That amazing meeting was over all too soon, and Misty floated back up through the skylight. Seconds later we heard the sharp report of her sonic boom. She was gone, hopefully before anyone else saw her.

We all stared at each other for a long moment before rising to clap each other on the back. I was tossing around the OMG's and Holy Shit's while Jeff howled like a coyote. Super-cool Charity even smiled. We found a bottle of good Scotch in Jeff's desk while Charity returned with three glasses. She joined us for the first drink before she went off to brief the staff.

Jeff and I maintained the tradition from our days on Madison Avenue — we drank ourselves silly whenever wildly unexpected good fortune came our way. And given the time of the day plus all the pastries and coffee we'd drank, we were soon both wired and half drunk. We didn't care as we quickly finished the bottle. It was important to wash the last of the OMG's out of our system before we could comprehend the task ahead.

Charity made the usual excuses for us with the staff and Jeff and I left work for the day well before noon. Charity drove me home and managed to get me down the dock to the beautiful old lady I lived on. Serenity was a lovely converted fishing trawler that I'd planned to cruise around the world before the economy and my career bottomed out at the same time.

She got me on board and pointed me toward the master stateroom, at which point I became rather insistent that she stay a while. Being drunk,

my inhibitions were low and my fantasies high. Too many years on the Avenue and the booze — that was always my excuse.

Fortunately, she knew how to handle me, and she played along long enough to get me to my bed. She wasn't only beautiful, but she was smart. My roaming hands and a few bungled kisses were a lot easier to endure than dragging my unconscious body to the bed so I could sleep it off.

As she'd expected, I passed out as soon as I hit the pillow.

It was dark when I woke up alone. My memory of everything that had happened after Misty floated back up through the skylight was pretty hazy, but I figured that was just as well. I'm a lousy drunk. But thanks to Charity, I didn't drink very often any more. The weed she gets me has replaced the booze as my choice of mind-altering drugs.

Now if only I could convince Charity to sail around the world with me, my life would be complete. Which of course was just one more fantasy in a life made out of fantasies. The reality was that I was still a Mad man. I would always be a lousy drunk.

I drank a couple of liters of water and washed down some Advil. My head hurt like hell and I was seriously dehydrated. My breath smelled like a stray cat who'd died in a distillery — a week ago. I brushed my teeth and gargled a half bottle of mouthwash.

Satisfied that I was at least halfway human, I turned to walk back through the boat's salon, stripping off my smelly clothes as I headed for the shower in the master head. I was just starting to pull my soiled t-shirt over my head when I saw blonde hair and too-blue eyes shining out at me from the darkened corner.

“Who the hell are you...?” I started to ask as I froze.

“Is this how you intend to work on our event?” a newly familiar voice demanded. “If so, I can find a more worthy cause to support. Or a better firm to handle it.”

Jesus! It was her.

I shook my head, trying not to panic. “No. Don’t worry, Ms. Everett. We’re just clearing the decks before the real work starts. Jeff and I used to work in advertising. Drinking to celebrate signing a really major client is an old tradition.”

She nodded, seemingly accepting that. Like everyone else, she’d probably grown up watching Mad Men episodes.

“I was thinking, James... instead of revealing my new abilities ahead of time, why don’t we open the fundraiser with a big demonstration,” she offered. “That’ll really get people in the mood and maybe loosen some more purse strings. Especially after you announce that I’m going to be working directly with Save the Children in an expanded role to prevent starvation and poverty. To stop the conflicts that drive so much of their misery.”

Her bright eyes focused steadily on me as she spoke. I was wearing only a pair of briefs. I felt myself rising as her eyes shifted color slightly and she looked down at me. Based on the little smile that teased the corners of her lips, she had her husband’s x-ray vision.

“Won’t that warn those despots that you’re out to get them,” I thought out-loud, trying to get focused as my body developed a mind of its own. “That might put the other STC folks in jeopardy, especially those out in the field. I would think its better to surprise the bad guys.”

“What does an advertising man know about bad guys?”

“Advertising is like combat, albeit fought with words and money and influence.”

“Well, I disagree,” she said with a shake of her blonde mane. “I’m going to be dealing with men who wield the power of fear and intimidation every day. Men who have no regard for the value or sanctity of life. I want them to experience fear before I come for them. I want that fear to become contagious enough to drive them all into hiding where they can’t do much harm.”

I expelled loudly. “I don’t know, Misty. They don’t seem to be the kind of men who are easily intimidated. In fact, fear and intimidation is their stock and trade. It also might be hard to find jails to hold them after their arrest. International law, especially when it involves sovereign states, can be damned sticky, and most of those assholes can buy or intimidate their way out of anything or any place.”

“Who said anything about jail. I was thinking of creating a weed garden decorated with former dictators and despots on the dark side of the moon. Something a Pink Floyd and Roger Waters fan like you might enjoy.”

I stared at her for a long moment, puzzled. “A weed garden on the Moon?”

“Sure. Full of dead weeds that I’ve picked on Earth.”

Oh shit. “You’re serious?” I asked. “You’re going to become an assassin?”

“I prefer the term vigilante. Everything else has been tried. Kal won’t be happy about this when he gets back — it goes against his Code — but just as a gardener pulls weeds in his garden, I’m going to weed out anyone who blocks human growth and progress.”

I had a feeling that “unhappy” was a huge understatement. Superman had always lived by a code that prevented him from taking lives, even if by doing so he risked future victims at the hands of escaped criminals and despots. But this was her business with her husband. For the rest of us, what Misty was suggesting would be a huge game changer.

“Where is he anyway? Your husband. No one has seen him for two months.”

She looked down, her eyes clouding. “I don’t know. He was only supposed to be gone two weeks. Something to do with Darkseid. Unfortunately, I don’t have his speed or his ability to dive through wormholes and so forth. Otherwise I’d be out looking for him.”

“I’m sure he’ll be OK,” I said, trying to sound reassuring. “Hell...he’s Superman.”

I was a lot more worried about myself and STC. Once she started killing people, even if it was only the worst kind of bad guy, the shit storm was going to poison our firm along with Save the Children. This would be a hundred times worse than Pakistan. But hell... the potential to end war?

“This is going to make the PR very difficult,” I said as diplomatically as I could. “Vigilantism isn’t well regarded, even when it involves despots and murderers. How about we keep this under wraps until after the event.”

“I don’t plan on ever telling anyone else what I’m doing. I’ll just say that I’m working to stop wars and help people. I’m only telling you this so you can have contingencies ready to ensure we have deniability, but that we also allow rumors to spread that will poison all the other weeds.”

A thread of worry began to unravel in my gut as I watched her unblinking blue eyes studying me in the darkness. This would all come out in the media eventually. It always did. The people she was going to be targeting were very visible characters. They had influence. Ultimately, someone would connect their disappearance with her. And with me.

I began to wonder if I dealing with a healthy personality here? Or was I dealing with a woman whose rush of power had put her beyond human laws? I thought of the old saw: absolute power absolutely corrupts. Surely

Superman had anticipated this. Surely he would hold her to his vow to protect all life.

If he ever came back. I was reminded that she'd gained her powers after he left Earth. We knew things about his wife that he didn't.

As worried as I was, I couldn't ignore the possibilities she presented. I tried to put myself in her head. Like everyone else, she knew the world had suffered too much from war and conflict and ethnic cleansing. And now we had crop failures and starvation to deal with as the climate changed. That was fueling new warfare over water and fertile land. If she could truly end all such conflicts, if she could get people to behave more rationally, more co-operatively, to somehow avoid the starvation and greed by working together across national and ethnic boundaries, she could remove the poison that humanity continues to suffer from.

How could that be bad?

I shook my head as I gave up weighing the morality of it all. Neither philosophy nor ethics are my forte. My immediate problem was that she'd stepped onto my boat to deliver this bold pronouncement. That made me a co-conspirator. I was going to need Legal to cover my butt, and they were going to be a total pain.

She seemed to read my mind. "I don't have to remind you I'm sure," she added, "but what I'm telling you stays strictly between us. No one at your firm, not Jeff, least of all your lawyers, are to know what I'm planning."

"You're asking a lot. This makes me a conspirator in your plans for murder."

"No one will be able to prove you know anything. You can act as surprised as everyone else when I start weeding."

"I can't do this alone. Charity will have to be involved. We're a team."

“That’s fine. I like her. Good head on her shoulders. Classy. But do not bring your boss into this. I don’t trust him.”

Before I could argue, she floated past me and up the companionway. I rushed after her, only to arrive on deck as another sonic boom shook the air.

I stared into the dark sky for a few minutes, and then turned to go back down and make myself a very stiff drink. As I sat down, I wondered if Misty was already back in her home in Antarctica, perhaps pouring one for herself.

Like me, she was probably standing alone, thinking about the person she had just left. Or perhaps worrying about her missing husband. Either way, she’d be lonely.

I slugged down my drink while looking up at the famous poster on the wall that showed Misty standing affectionately with Superman on their wedding day. She was glowing so brightly that her image dominated the poster, pushing even Superman into the background. Someone had titled it: *The First Wife*.

Amazingly, Misty looked even better now than she did in that poster.

Sighing, I decided this was going to be one hell of a campaign. One last blow-their-socks-off media extravaganza before I faded away.

A classic blitz that would hopefully be remembered for all time.

To be continued?