

BOOK 2 IN THE PASSION SERIES



ESCAPE IN
Passion



SHIELA STEWART



Escape in Passion

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This one's for you, Melanie.

Vic is all yours.

Chapter 1

Victor Davis looked into the two young faces, bloodied and bruised, and thought of the good old days when he was the young and stupid, bruised and bloody one. Now, he was the older, more responsible one. When the hell had that happened?

Three months ago, when he'd agreed to take over as staff sergeant of F-Division, the police depot in Passion, was when it had happened. It was all still sinking in. He'd come to town to help his old friend Tom and his then girlfriend, now wife, Cassie, solve a decade old murder case that had ended up unveiling a cover-up in the police department. Cassie had moved into a house where three people had been killed and was convinced it was haunted. He hadn't really believed her or Tom when they'd told him, until he'd seen it with his own eyes.

The dead had come back to seek retribution for their deaths and, in turn, had turned the town upside down.

And now he was here, trying to police a town where a good portion of the occupants hated him, another portion wasn't sure about him, and a select few had warmed up to him.

One of the bruised and bloody boys before him was a member of the We Hate Victor Davis Fan Club. Lucky him.

"Okay, let's start from the beginning."

"Get bent, pig."

Eyes narrowed, Vic leaned down into the arrogant teenager's face, lowering his voice as he spoke. "That is 'Staff Sergeant' Davis, and one

more derogatory word from your mouth, Darrell, will land you a nice comfy bed in the local jail cell. Now, as I was saying. Let's start from the beginning." He straightened and stood before the two boys. "Who started the fight?"

"Fuck face did," Darrell spat.

"Like hell I did," Mitch returned.

"Watch your mouth," Vic warned Darrell, then turned his attention to Mitch, who seemed to be the more reasonable of the two. "Why don't you tell me what happened, Mitch?"

Clearing his throat, Mitch began, "I was minding my own business, waiting in line for the movie when Darrell came over and shoved me."

Vic raised only his index finger to silence Darrell when he opened his mouth. "Go on."

Shifting his feet, Mitch turned away from Darrell. "I think I said something like, 'What the hell?' Then his fist came up and slammed into my face."

"You threw a punch at me first, dick weed."

"What did I tell you about your comments, Darrell?" Eyes sternly on Darrell, Vic asked "Constable Sawyer, you talked to the witnesses?"

Standing stiffly, the constable responded. "Yes, sir, I did."

"What did they tell you?"

Clearing his throat, Constable Sawyer began, "Witnesses said that Darrell came into the facility, shoved Mitch, then punched him in the jaw."

"They fucking lie."

"Darrell," Vic warned in a deep throated growl, "you are pushing my buttons, boy." He held his tongue when Darrell snorted in response. "Now, without resorting to name calling, tell me why you came after Mitch?"

Squaring his shoulders, Darrell spoke in the arrogant tone Vic was growing accustomed to. "He fucking stole my girl."

"I did not," Mitch retorted.

"You fucking did too. I saw you with her last night and when I confronted her about it today, she admitted you were fucking her."

"Enough. I swear to God, Darrell, if you don't watch that mouth of yours, I will lock you up. Mitch, are you seeing Darrell's girlfriend? I can't believe I'm doing this." How had he gone from investigating murders to breaking up some pimple faced teenagers fighting over a girl?

"No, sir, I am not."

"You liar." Darrell lunged at Mitch but was held firmly in place by Constable Sawyer.

"I'm not sleeping with her. She's my sister Lillie's friend," Mitch explained to Vic. "I drove her home last night, and that was it. I swear."

"Why the hell did she tell me you two fu—did it," Darryl amended when Vic shot him a warning look.

Mitch shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe you should ask her that."

"Okay, no charges have been filed. You both can go, providing you keep away from each other. I don't want to have to break you two up again, because next time I might not be so nice. Got it?"

"Yes, sir," Mitch said politely.

"Whatever."

Shaking his head, Vic stepped back from Darrell. "Go home, cool down, and when you have, call your girl and see what the problem is. Stay out of trouble. Teenagers," he exclaimed to Max after Darrell finally left the building and Mitch went back to the line for the movie he'd been waiting to see. "Thank God I grew out of it."

"Yes, sir. Would you like me to write it up for you?"

The kid was always so stiff. He was barely in his mid twenties and took his job seriously, which was a good thing. Except when you remove the uniform, you should also remove the stick up the ass. Max Sawyer rarely did.

But Vic was working on him. "Do you have plans tonight, Max?"

"No, sir."

"Well, make some, after you write up the report. I'm telling you, Max, if I don't see you with a woman soon, I'm hiring you one."

"I beg your pardon, sir?" Max asked with genuine surprise.

"Relax, Max, I was only joking. Find someone to do something with but don't just sit alone in your apartment. See you tomorrow."

"Have a good night, sir."

Waving to Max, Vic made his way along Main Street. He was one to talk. When was the last time he'd been out on a date? The memory of the last woman he'd kissed left a sour taste in his mouth, one he had too often. One he often washed away with a cold beer or glass of gin.

Shaking off that thought, he carried on. There was a crisp chill in the air, and pulling up the collar of his regulation jacket, Vic strolled along the quiet streets he now called home. There were still some houses that were lit with Christmas lights, even though the holiday had been over for weeks now. Nineteen eighty-four had come in without much enthusiasm on Vic's behalf. He hadn't even bothered put-

ting up a tree, much less lighting his house. There really wasn't much point when you were alone.

Tom and Cassie, his two best friends, had gone off to spend the holidays with her family in the city, then off to their honeymoon in some hot resort in Mexico. Lucky bastard, his friend was. Not only had he met the woman of his dreams, but that very woman was every man's, and boy's, wet dream. She was blonde, stacked, and had curves in all the right places. And on top of it, she was knocked up, which only made her even sexier. Who knew watching a woman blossom with child could be sexy? Yet it was for Vic.

Not that he lusted after his best friend's wife; he knew his boundaries, and he would never do anything to hurt his oldest and closest friend. But he could admit, at least to himself, that he was jealous of his friend. Tom had caught himself a real winner.

"Officer, oh, officer. I need your help."

Turning his attention to the high pitched voice, Vic saw the elderly woman running towards him. Instinct kicked in; he prepared himself for the worst. "Is there a problem, Mrs. Dunbar?"

"Yes, yes, oh, dear, dear me."

"Just relax, Mrs. Dunbar. Take a deep breath and tell me what's wrong."

"It's Mr. Jingles, oh, Lord, he's stuck under the tree."

"Did you call for help?" Vic asked, rushing along with the woman as she led him to her house.

"I was just about to go into the house and call, but then I saw you. Thank God. You have to help him."

"Okay, just relax. Was he conscious when you left him?"

"Oh yes, and yelling his head off."

"Okay, that's good. What part of him is under the tree?" Vic pulled out his radio and was about to call in for backup when she spoke.

"His tail."

He paused not just in step, but thought as well. "Come again?"

"His tail. I heard him crying, so I went out to see where he'd gotten to, and I found him stuck under the tree."

"His tail?"

"Yes," she said with exasperation, leading him to the back of the house. "See."

One look and Vic wanted to curse out loud. "That's a cat." And like she'd said, it was screaming its head off.

"It's Mr. Jingles. I don't know how he got himself stuck to the base of the tree. You have to help him, please, officer."

Letting out a deep breath, Vic walked up to the tree. Yep, she was right, the cat was stuck and apparently not just his tail, but it looked like his butt as well. Vic couldn't help but laugh.

"This is no laughing matter, officer."

He didn't bother to correct her in regards to his rank but did stop laughing. Or at least he did his best not to laugh. "Okay, let's see what I can do."

Biting his tongue, Vic knelt down to the cat, who looked like he was ready to shred anything that came near him. Thank God for the regulation work gloves Vic wore. He pushed some snow away from the cat to get a better look. "Well, looks like I solved this one quickly."

"What? What are you talking about?"

"Looks like Mr. Tinkles—"

"Jingles," she corrected.

"Jingles, sorry, has gotten his butt stuck on his own urine." Vic looked down at the panicked cat. "Don't you know that when it's this cold out, you shouldn't put your butt down when you're taking a leak?" he chastised the cat while he hissed and swiped his front paws at Vic.

"Can you help him?"

"I think I can. What I need you to do is go inside, run some hot water into a bucket and bring it out to me." The instant she hurried to the house, Vic let the laughter roll. How could he not find humor in the situation when the damn cat's ass was frozen to the snow because of his own piss? "See, that's where dogs are smarter. They lift their legs to pee and, therefore, prevent having their balls and ass stick to the snow."

"Here we go."

Biting his lip, Vic took the bucket of hot water from Mrs. Dunbar and knelt back down to the cat. "Now, be a good kitty and don't claw my eyes out when I free you."

"Don't hurt my baby," Mrs. Dunbar pleaded.

Nodding to her, Vic just hoped he wasn't the one that got hurt. "Here we go." Tilting the bucket, Vic began to pour the water beside the cat, in hopes it would melt the snow and release Mr. Jingles.

The cat hissed, began to claw wildly, kicking up snow in his fight to free himself.

"Mr. Jingles!" Mrs. Dunbar cried out.

Because he worried the cat would rip its balls off, Vic placed one hand on top of his back while he poured the rest of the water. It wasn't easy holding Mr. Jingles down; the cat was large, fat but strong, and

put up a good struggle. The water melted the snow which released him from the spot he was frozen to, and Vic managed to scoop up the cat with both hands before it managed to run away.

"Hold up there, big guy. Let's check you out."

"Is he all right?"

The cat fought like it was being murdered and managed to dig his claws right through the thick leather gloves Vic wore. He cursed under his breath, shifting the wiggling cat to check out his backside.

That had been a major mistake.

Mr. Jingles wiggled, Vic lost his grip and the cat lunged at him, clinging to his jacket. And if that wasn't bad enough, Mr. Jingles took one carefully aimed swipe at Vic's face and scratched him right across his left cheek.

"Son of a bitch!" He dropped Mr. Jingles, and the cat instantly ran for the house.

"Mr. Jingles," Mrs. Dunbar cried, racing to the house.

"You're welcome," Vic called out, dabbing at the fire on his cheek. "Brutal bastard," he muttered under his breath, trudging his way through the alley and away from Satan's spawn. Damn cat.

With his gloved hand, Vic covered the wound as he marched his way home. *Do someone a favor and look what you end up with.* What had his life come to? He'd resorted to freeing cats frozen to the snow because the feline was too stupid to take a piss inside when it was cold. Six months ago he'd been investigating major crimes, and now he was freeing stupid cats from the snow.

Lord, what had he been thinking?

"Well, hello, handsome."

Glancing over, Vic smiled at the beautiful blonde with big, blue eyes and replied in a sexy growl, "Well, hello yourself."

Finally, things were looking up.

Chapter 2

There she was, a beauty like no other, and...she was taken. But Vic was okay with that, given the fact that she was his best friend's girl. With a bright smile on his face, Vic walked around the truck Cassie was standing behind to give her a welcome home hug. His eyes nearly bugged out when he got a look at her huge belly. "Holy Jesus, Cassie, how many kids you got in there?"

She slapped his arm good and hard, then gasped when she looked up, "Oh, my God, what happened to your face?"

"I had a tussle with Mr. Jingles. You're as big as a house."

"You're such a sweet talker, Vic. Ass. Now, tell me about this fight you got into." Taking him by the elbow, Cassie led him towards her house.

"I'm sure he's feeling worse than I am right now. Probably sitting by a nice warm fire, nursing his balls."

Cassie's eyes went wide. "You kicked him in the balls?"

Laughing, Vic grabbed the back door for her, then followed her inside. "No, his balls were frozen to the snow. I just poured some hot water on the snow beside him to free him, and he showed his gratitude by taking a swipe at my face. Mr. Jingles is a cat. Tom!" Kicking his boots off, Vic walked through the dining room to his friend, taking him in a solid bear hug.

Though they were the same height, Tom had several pounds of muscle on him. At six feet and some inches, Tom was a big man and

worked hard to attain it. He was muscular, ate healthy, worked out regularly and never let Vic forget who was the stronger of the two. Tom had long, sandy blond hair tied back from a strong face. In their youth they'd decided to grow their hair out, mostly to irritate their parents, but when Vic had decided to cut his off, Tom had left his long. Tom looked better with long hair than Vic did anyway.

They'd been friends since childhood, but Vic thought of him more like a brother than just a friend.

And he'd missed him dearly.

"When did you get back?"

"Only moments ago. What happened to your face?" Tom asked, angling to look at Vic's face.

"Tussle with a cat."

"Now, why didn't I get the condensed version?" Cassie asked with a slug to Vic's arm as she passed him by.

"Why go over it again? And damn." He rubbed his sore arm. "When did you become so lethal?"

"You try carrying a kid inside of you, kicking you in the bladder day and night and not have some aggression. It's better I take it out on you." Cassie smiled brightly.

"You get any of that aggression?" Vic asked, still rubbing his arm.

"All the time. I seem to be the reason she's in pain, though I distinctly remember it took two to get her in this position." Tom sent Cassie a look.

"Then you should have to take the last half of the pregnancy," Cassie justified, walking up to Vic. "Sit, so I can nurse you."

"Wow, your bedside manner is touching. What the hell is that?" Vic eyed the bottle she held in her hand with a great deal of suspicion.

"Antiseptic. It'll help clean the wound, and hopefully it won't damage that pretty boy face of yours. Now sit and be a good boy while Mommy tends to your cuts."

"Tom?"

"Suck it up, pretty boy. Better you than me." Tom laughed, placing a hand on Vic's shoulder for support.

"Be gentle with me," Vic pleaded with Cassie, closing his eyes when she came closer to his face with the cotton swab.

"Oh, grow up, you big baby."

"Speaking of big. What the hell have you been eating? You're huge. Damn it, that stings," Vic hissed, opening his eyes to give her a steely look. "You did that on purpose."

"Don't piss off the lady who has the antiseptic," Tom advised. "She's been eating healthy."

"Oh, yeah, I can see how healthily she's been eating. Ouch. Okay, damn it, that's enough. The cut is fine." Vic jumped up from his chair and out of her reach.

"You might need a tetanus shot," she added with a sly grin on her face.

"If I do, you're not giving it to me. Damn it, woman, you're lethal. If I'd have known you'd be this mean to me, I wouldn't have looked after your shop while you were gone."

"You started it with your snide comment about my weight."

She had a point. "I didn't say you didn't look good fat. You still look sexy as hell, and, man, could your tits get any bigger?" Before pregnancy she'd had an abundance of them and now—well hell—if he didn't stop gawking at them, he was going to end up getting a punch in the face from Tom.

"Stop staring at my tits, Vic," Cassie insisted.

"How can I not stare when they're right in my face?"

"Victor," Tom warned.

"Okay, fine, backing off."

"How is my shop?"

Since arriving in town some nine months ago, Cassie had started up a shop selling small figurines, vases, jewelry, and anything else that collected dust. She'd worked hard to get it up and running, and while she had been away, Vic had lent a hand any time he had a free moment, to make sure it was running well.

"It didn't burn to the ground, which is a good thing. The girls did well, and I made sure it was closed down properly every day, and I took in the money at the end of the night."

"Great. Thanks."

"No problem. How was the honeymoon?"

"Hot," Cassie added, while putting the first aid supplies back in the kit.

"Well, duh, it's Mexico."

"It's not the most comfortable when you're pregnant."

"I'll keep that in mind." He rolled his eyes at Tom mouthing, "Sorry, pal."

"I'm going to take a hot bath and relax before bed." Cassie pulled Tom down for a kiss, then slugged Vic on her way out of the room.

"Missed you, too, Cassie." The instant she left the room, Vic turned to Tom, shaking his head. "Oh, Lord, Tom. I think that kid's possessed her."

"She's just cranky from the flight home. After a good night's sleep, she'll be as good as new. How are things with you? How's the job?" Tom grabbed two beers from the fridge.

Taking the beer Tom held out to him, Vic popped the top, took a sip before replying. "I've resorted to freeing cats frozen to the snow and breaking up teenage boys fighting over a girl."

"Tough cases. Bored?"

"Not yet. It's nice, actually, to relax. Sure I have more responsibilities here, but it's not the same. You know what I mean?"

"Yeah, small towns are like that. Any regrets?"

"Nope, no regrets." Vic lifted the beer, took a few gulps, thinking his only regret was not having been able to save the woman he loved.



Julia Wilson drove along the highway, admiring the pretty scenery. The sun was shining bright in the morning sky, casting its rays down upon the snow on the ground, making it look like crystals and diamonds. It was unfortunate that along with the beautiful scene came the freezing temperatures. The weather report on the radio stated the temperatures had dipped to a frigid negative thirty-five degrees Celsius during the night, with the wind chill it felt more like minus forty.

Damn, it was cold.

Thank God her car was warm.

Julia had made sure everything was working properly before she'd left for her road trip. The last thing she wanted was to be stranded on some lonely prairie highway.

She'd decided to drive the last leg of her journey straight through, and now she was regretting not having stopped for the night. Normally, she hated night driving, but Julia was on a mission and that took priority over an irrational fear of hitting some poor creature with her car. What were the odds of hitting a deer, anyway? It was probably too damn cold for even them to be out at night. Now that it was morning, Julia was utterly relieved to see the sign announcing she was only forty-five kilometers from Passion.

She'd be there soon enough.

The song on the radio brought back painful memories, so Julia clicked it off and sat in the silence instead. Her heart was still aching,

and she doubted very much that the ache would dull anytime soon. It had only been eight months since she'd lost her best friend, her sister, and despite what people said, time did not heal all wounds.

She heard the siren wailing and looked up into her rear view mirror and saw the police cruiser behind her.

"Damn it." A quick glance at her speedometer told Julia she hadn't been paying attention to her speed and had gone over the legal speed limit. "Damn it, damn it!" Slowing, she pulled to the shoulder, still cursing. Coming to a stop, she pulled her wallet from the purse sitting on the seat beside her. Now she was going to get a speeding ticket. Just fucking dandy.

She rolled her window down as the officer approached her car, still cursing herself under her breath.

"Morning, ma'am. Do you know how fast you were going?"

Why did they ask that? It was such a stupid question. "I know I was speeding. I wasn't paying attention." She glanced over her shoulder at the cop leaning down to her window, and her first thought was, *Yummy*. His hair was blond beneath the police hat he wore, and his eyes were the most incredible blue she'd ever seen, and looking into them took her breath away. He had one of those faces that was suited for a god, and he could easily win the world's most handsome man category. The dark blue police uniform he wore only made him look sexier.

She loved a man in uniform.

"That's a dangerous way to drive. Have you been drinking?"

"No, sir."

"You were weaving a bit."

"I drove all night. I haven't slept."

"I suggest you pull into the next town and book yourself into a hotel. License and registration, please."

Julia handed it to him, feeling a bit flustered at his true beauty. She couldn't help but watch as he walked to his car, and what she saw made her mouth water. The man had a mighty fine ass, and he definitely wore his pants tight. What she wouldn't do to get a handful of those plump cheeks. Julia averted her eyes—as if he could tell she'd been watching his butt and looked out the windshield when he walked back to her car.

"I'm not going to write you up a ticket, Miss Wilson, but I will escort you to the nearest town. You need some sleep."

"Thank you, Constable—" She leaned out of her window to read his name plate, and her heart suddenly stilled in her chest. "Sorry, Staff

Sergeant Davis."

"Passion is the nearest town. There's a nice motel there, and I'm sure there's a room for you when you get there."

"Right. Okay." Julia swallowed the lump in her throat.

"Keep to the speed limit," he warned her before heading back to his car.

She took a few deep breaths, her heart pounding, her throat dry. It was him. Dear God, it had been him.

Her hands shaking, Julia put the car in gear, slowly pulled onto the road.

She'd driven a long way to find Victor Davis, and now she had.

She just hadn't expected him to look so...normal.