

SERGEI (HRP #5)

By Roxie Rivera

Final Teaser!

Out for blood, Sergei slowly unlocked the front door and slipped onto the porch. The newly installed door opened with barely a whisper of noise, permitting him to leave the house without alerting the asshole creeping around Bianca's property. Sticking to the shadows, he edged the front of the house and carefully rounded the corner of the wrap-around porch.

As he crept along the right side of her home, he listened carefully for any indication that the prowler was walking toward him. Hearing nothing, he wondered if the man had gone off into the grass or if he'd already made his way to the left side of the house. Over the soundtrack of crickets and cicadas, Sergei detected a low, creaking groan as weight settled on an old wooden step. A second later, wood crunched and splintered and a grunt of pain filled the air.

Got you!

Earlier, when coming back from parking his SUV, Sergei had noticed the step along the back needed to be ripped out and replaced. He had actually been surprised it bore his weight without snapping. Apparently, the prowler hadn't been so lucky.

Running around the porch, Sergei spotted the lumpy shadow of a man crouched on the ground. "Hey!"

The prowler's head popped up, but it was too dark in the backyard for Sergei to get a good look at him. He seemed to be a medium-sized man. The bastard had quick reflexes and leapt to his feet, dashing around the side of the house and disappearing.

As Sergei made chase, he realized the man knew the neighborhood well because he had taken a shortcut from Bianca's yard that spit him out on the side street. Irritated that he had lost the man, Sergei relied on his instincts and took a hard left.

Wearing only his running shorts and sneakers, he silently scolded himself for not grabbing something to defend himself. He had left his gun tucked away in his vehicle because he had been more interested in getting inside the shower with Bianca. If Nikolai

could see him now, he would surely make a quip about thinking with his little head instead of the bigger one.

Coming to a corner, Sergei slowed his pace. He followed the curve cautiously and spotted an alley up ahead. The dark roadway between tall privacy fences was too shadowy for him to scout properly. The man he was chasing had probably taken up a position there to ambush him and inflict an injury.

The sound of running footsteps ricocheted off the privacy fences. The sound grew louder and sharper, telling Sergei the man was headed right for him. Hugging the closest fence, Sergei prepared to attack the man when he burst out of the protective shadows. Hands clenched, he lifted his arms high and counted down the seconds until he struck. The footsteps drew nearer, and Sergei swung his arms toward the oncoming man, fully intending to clothesline the creep.

But when the man burst out of the alley, Sergei's eyes widened with shock. It wasn't a prowler. It was a police officer on a foot pursuit!

He stopped the downward motion of his arms before it was too late, reacting with lightning speed to avoid hitting a man who could make his life very miserable. The officer spotted him and jumped back, drawing his weapon and pointing it right at Sergei's chest. "Hands in the air!"

Shit.