

# Congratulations, You've Just Won

**Winning this trip seemed just the ticket to healing a broken heart.  
But an even bigger surprise awaited.**

By Jayne Ann Krentz

I figured it was a mistake." Claire sipped the cold, mango-flavored ice tea and watched the waves tumbling at the edge of the beach. "I've never won anything in my life."

"It's OK," Harry Crane said. "You don't have to explain. It's just one of those weird coincidences. They happen sometimes. Who could have guessed we'd both end up at the same hotel at the same time?"

"I called the travel agency," she said. "The guy who answered the phone said my name had been entered in a drawing. I don't remember entering any drawing. But maybe my assistant did it when she booked that trip I took to see my mother last month."

"Don't worry about it. This beach is big enough for both of us."

"I thought, 'What the heck?' " she said. "A free week in Hawaii. Who could turn that down?"

"Right. Just your bad luck that travel agent had booked me into the room across the hall for the same week." Harry shrugged. "I mean, what are the odds?"

She set the damp glass down on the little table and looked at him through the protective shield of her sunglasses. Harry was also wearing shades. It was impossible to see the expression in his eyes.

"It's not like we can't handle this in a civilized manner," Claire said. "We're two adults. So what if we were once engaged?"

"Sure. I can do civilized if I try real hard. And it's been three months. We've both put it behind us."

She pondered that briefly. "You think so?"

"Hey, you're the one who told me I'm not the romantic type, remember?"

"I never actually said that. What I said was, you seemed to be treating our wedding the same way you did any other business deal."

"Huh." Sunlight glinted on his shades as he settled deeper into the lounge. "That the way it looked to you?"

She gazed somewhat wistfully at his bare feet. "Maybe it was the way you focused on merging our two companies. Somewhere along the line I realized that, while you had trouble squeezing in the meetings with the wedding coordinator, you always seemed to be able to make plenty of time for the meetings with the accountants and the lawyers."

He swallowed some of his ice tea in a thoughtful fashion. "Merging a couple of businesses is tricky. There's risk involved. I wanted to make certain you were protected financially."

"I know. And I appreciated your efforts. Honest."

"But all the meetings with the lawyers and accountants didn't strike you as real romantic, is that it?"

She dragged her eyes away from his rugged-looking feet with an effort. "Harry, are you sure you want to go into this?"

"You know me, I'm a big believer in failure analysis. When things blow up in my face, I like to know why so I can avoid the problem in the future."

She realized she was gritting her teeth. "In the future, are you going to think of what happened between us as just another failed merger?"

"Can't blame me for wanting to learn from my mistakes. Say, as long as you're just sitting there relaxing, why don't you give me some advice?"

"On how to be romantic? Forget it."

"I'm a fast learner," he said. "And you'd be doing me a favor. If you don't like the idea of giving away free advice, I could always hire you as a professional consultant. You could bill me by the hour."

She smiled very sweetly. "In other words, I should think of it as a business arrangement?"

He winced. "OK, I get the point."

"You are a fast learner." She noticed that some of his crisp dark chest hair was showing in the vee created by the open collar of his aloha shirt. "But I already knew that." She hesitated. "You're smart. Very smart. Your intelligence is one of the things I admire about you."

"Admire?"

"Yes."

"Huh." He paused for a beat. "Admiration is kind of wimpy, don't you think? I mean, as the basis for a marriage."

She stared very hard at the beach. The sun was setting. In another few minutes, neither of them would need their sunglasses.

"Of course, it's not like I'm an authority on what makes a great basis for a marriage," Harry continued. "If admiration works for you -."

"Admiration is not the only thing I felt," she said through her teeth.

"Funny, I sort of had the impression during our engagement that admiration was about as good as it got for you. Don't get me wrong; it's great to be admired. But sometimes it's nice to have some other stuff, too."

She looked at the ice in her glass. "Let me get this straight. You thought I was only interested in marrying you because I admired you?"

"The possibility crossed my mind from time to time."

"Hmm."

"Did I misunderstand anything?"

"Hmm," she said again. "You know, it occurs to me that, what with the plans for the merger and all the meetings with the lawyers and the accountants -."

"And the wedding coordinator and the florist and the caterer and the travel agent who booked the honeymoon."

"Right. What with all those meetings, plus the fact that we were both trying to run our businesses, maybe we didn't get a chance to talk as much as we should have."

"Yeah." He finished the last of his tea. "Maybe we didn't."

She put down her empty glass and sat up on the edge of the lounge. "The sun is going down. How do you feel about taking a walk on the beach? I hear people do things like that on vacation. Supposed to be relaxing."

"Good idea." He sat up slowly. "I think the concierge mentioned that there's a little restaurant at the far end that sells incredible grilled *ahi*."

"I like *ahi*."

"I know," he said.

"Yes." She had ordered *ahi* on their first date. "Might as well have dinner together. I mean, we both have to eat, and we're both handling this weird coincidence in such a civilized way and all."

"Right. Civilized."

She took off her sunglasses and put them in her beach bag. When she looked up, she noticed that he had removed his shades. She could see the expression in his eyes very clearly now.

They started down the beach together. The sun fell off the edge of the sea, leaving behind a balmy twilight. The sand was still warm.

"Something I should probably tell you before we get to the restaurant," Harry said after a while.

"What's that?"

"About this free trip to Hawaii you won."

"It's OK," she said. "I already know you rigged this so-called contest."

He turned his head to look at her. "You do?"

"Sure." She smiled. "Why do you think I decided to collect my prize?"

Halfway down the beach, he reached for her hand. Halfway down the beach, she gave it to him.