



SAMHAIN PUBLISHING LLC

Christmas Reunion
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"No rooms?" Sylvie Pendleton brushed the hair out of her eyes and glared at the pompous clerk standing behind the counter. A definite lemon sucker. "You're kidding me. Right?"

"The hotel's full. Tomorrow's Christmas Eve."

Sylvie waved a hand toward the windows, where snow and sleet pelted the panes. "There's a freakin' blizzard out there."

"Another reason we're booked," old sour puss spit out.

"I'll sleep in the lobby."

"No. You. Won't."

Leaning forward, Sylvie pinned the ass with her infamous 'don't mess with me' expression. "Watch me."

Thoughts of strangling the jerk fled when a muscled body pressed against her. "You can sleep with me."

Heat shot to her core. Impossible! It couldn't be! The hot mouth nibbling her earlobe convinced her it was.

Explosive memories blasted away reason. "Abe," she breathed, snuggling into his warmth. God, it'd been so long. Like four years.

She whirled, drew back her fist and sucker punched his stomach. "Bastard!"

His lips curved into a knee-buckling smile. "I've missed you."

Sylvie struggled to stay cool, but long suppressed anger spewed forth. "Liar. You walked away. Never looked back. Never called. Never wrote."

A flare of regret flickered in his blue eyes. "I explained—"

"I'm a SEAL, Sylvie. I can't make promises." She mimicked him word for word. "Don't put your life on hold for me, Sylvie."

"You're angry."

"Ya think?" Heart pounding, she studied the man who'd once been the center of her universe. The bastard was better looking now than he'd been the last time she'd seen him. Once she'd loved gazing up at his six and a half foot stature. Today his height made her feel small and unimportant. And so she was...to Abe Marsh. "What are you doing here? Taking a vacation from hunting terrorists?"

"Actually, I'm on my way to see your parents. They invited me to spend Christmas."

His words knocked the wind out of her. "No way. I don't believe you."

He shrugged and tucked an errant lock of hair behind her ear. "Maybe they wanted to surprise you."

Sylvie's brain whirred with the implications. Her family knew damn well Abe had shattered her dreams. Her rage escalated. Before she did something she'd regret, she quickly walked around her former lover.

Abe caught her half way across the room. "My offer stands. The room has two beds."

"Uh...no thanks. I'd rather sleep in a rattle snake den."

She tilted her head, wanting a final look. Big mistake. His eyes were a magnet. Powerless to resist, her lips opened to welcome his descending mouth. Dust blew off the past and she matched his hunger kiss for kiss. His tongue wrapped around hers, coaxing a moan from deep in her throat.

"Take it upstairs. You're disrupting the lobby."

Sylvie pulled away to see Mr. Sour Puss striding in their direction.

Abe caressed her cheek. "Let's go." He grabbed her tote bag, and like a robot, she trailed after him.

By the time the elevator stopped on the third floor, Sylvie's hormones were a raging inferno. Her body thrummed with need to feel Abe's naked body pressed against her skin.

"This way," he rasped.

Too soon, yet not soon enough, they were inside his room. Someone moved. Him? Her? Did it matter? Clothes scattered in all directions. Sylvie ogled Abe's body and shivered in her demi-bra and skimpy panties. Better than she remembered. Harder. Stronger. Her gaze flew to his right side. Deep, rippling purple scars covered his ribcage. "Abe? What hap—?"

Fingers pressed against her lips. "Not now. Later. He caressed her nipples. "Touch me, Sylvie. It's been too damn long since I've felt your fingers on me."

His powerful thigh thrust between her legs and pushed against her, finding the special spot. Sylvie gasped. Afraid of crumbling on the floor in a heap, she clung to the width of his shoulders. Abe walked her backwards until her legs hit the mattress. They tumbled onto its softness.

He kissed his way down her body, stopping to give each pebbled nipple extra attention. Now a quivering mass of sexual need, Sylvie breathed in his clean scent. No fancy colognes for Abe. A sense of comfort washed over her that some things never changed.

"God, Abe," she sobbed, almost shooting off the bed. His mouth nibbled her clitoris through the silk of her panties. She'd die from the pleasure. No man, other than Abe, had ever brought her this close to the brink of frenzy. Not even...

Sylvie jackknifed and dragged the blanket to her neck. "Omigod! Hal!"

Abe rolled to his side and leaned on an elbow, his eyes steamy with passion. "This had better be good. Who's Hal?"

"M...my...fiancé."

Her jaw dropped when Abe roared with laughter. "It's not funny."

"You forget you're engaged? I think it's damn funny!" He finally managed to control himself and scooped her up, complete with blanket and tossed her onto the second bed. "What are you doing?" she squeaked.

"I don't make love to engaged women."

Beneath the twinkle in his eyes, the light of passion still burned. Despite her engagement, she wanted Abe more than she'd ever wanted anything. "Hal will be at the party."

"Is that right? I'm looking forward to meeting such an unforgettable man." Abe dropped a kiss on her forehead. "Sweet dreams."

The room plunged into darkness. Sylvie curled into a fetal position. Not only did her body throb with unsatisfied longings, her heart hurt, and for the first time since Abe had gone to war, she wondered what the future held. *You're engaged to a fine man. Forget Abe.*

"Sylvie?"

"Yes?"

"Don't worry. The best man always wins."

By the time she pulled into her parents' driveway, Sylvie's nerves were hopping like Mexican jumping beans. She'd crept out of Abe's room like a thief before dawn. He hadn't so much as twitched a muscle while she dressed and made use of the bathroom. She'd failed to put everything into perspective during the two hour drive. One by one, she'd listed all of the reasons why marrying Hal was the right choice, but thoughts of Abe kept interrupting her train of thought. Hal had a great job. Life with Hal wouldn't be full of surprises and disappointments. So what if his lovemaking didn't rock her world. Sex shouldn't be the most important aspect of marriage. It was time she settled down and had babies.

Lost in her tumultuous musings, she screeched at a knock on the car window.

"You gonna sit there all day?"

Sylvie smiled at her father. "Hi, dad." She popped the lid on her trunk and opened the door. "Presents are in the trunk."

The man who'd always been her hero walked around the back bumper. "And enough stuff to spend a year," he grumbled loading his arms with bags."

Sylvie joined him, giving him a hug from behind. "I'm so glad to be home, dad. By the way, I've got a bone to pick with you. Why did you invite Abe? You know Hal is coming."

Her father's green eyes, a bit faded with age, became busy searching the trunk. "It wasn't me," he mumbled. "Talk to your mother."

"Count on it." She grabbed her overnight bags and headed for the door.

In the hall she paused, breathing deep of the delicious aromas wafting in the air. Her mouth watered at the scent of homemade bread and her favorite oatmeal cookies. Dropping her bags by the stairs, she followed her nose to the kitchen.

"Merry Christmas, mom." She grabbed a cookie cooling on a rack on the counter. "Mmm...thanks for making these."

Her mother hugged her and kissed both cheeks. "Got to fatten you up. I swear every time you come home you look like you've lost another five pounds.

"Mom? Any reason you invited Abe here for the holidays?"

"Ask your father," she replied, without meeting Sylvie's eyes.

"I did and he told me to ask you, which means both of you are in cahoots." Sylvie pulled her mother away from stirring batter and gently pushed her into a chair. "I know you don't like Hal, but—"

"Honey, it's not that we don't like him. It's just that...well...we don't believe he's the right man for you."

"And Abe is? He broke my heart. Surely, you remember that?"

"He was in the military, Sylvie. Serving our country. He tried to do what he thought was best for you."

This was an age old argument Sylvie knew she wouldn't win. "I hope you and dad can accept Hal. He's your future son-in-law."

With surprising agility for a sixty-year-old woman, her mother rose and returned to cookie dough. "We'll see. Now put your things in your room so you can help me. There are still pies to be made. Hal can have the room next to yours."

The front door slammed and her father called out, "Hal and Abe have arrived."

Sylvie groaned. Freaking great. Could it get much cozier? The three men entered the kitchen. Sylvie steeled herself and walked into Hal's arms without so much as a glance at Abe. "Did you have a good trip?"

Hal planted a quick peck on her forehead. "What's good about a three hour drive on icy roads?"

Damn. For once why couldn't Hal be upbeat? Why did he always complain? Especially now.

"I'll take everyone's gear upstairs." Her father left in a hurry and Sylvie suspected he wanted to avoid any fireworks.

Abe leaned against the doorjamb with a smug smile plastered on his rugged face. Hal appeared weak and ineffectual standing next to Abe. So what? She didn't need a man built like Rambo. Hal was steady and predictable. She never had to worry about highs and lows in their relationship.

"Hello, Hal," her mother said with a stiff smile in his direction on her way to envelop Abe in a bear hug. "Abe! You've stayed away too long. Come sit down and have some cookies. They're oatmeal. The kind you love."

Abe sank into a chair. "Thanks, Mrs. P. Did I ever thank you for all the care packages you sent while I was overseas?"

A look of pleasure lit her mother's face. "It's the least I could do for a man protecting our country."

So much for thinking her mom had baked just for her. "Have a cookie, Hal," Sylvie coaxed.

Hal glared at Abe already eating his second one. "No thanks. Bad for the health. Too much sugar."

Sylvie hooked her arm through her fiancé's, noticing how limp and flaccid it felt under her hand. "Then come help me put presents under the tree."

Abe stood outside Sylvie's room, debating whether or not to simply walk in. He decided to knock.

"Come in."

He turned the knob and stepped inside. A quick scan told him the décor hadn't changed since the last time they'd made love here. The night her parents had discreetly gone to a dinner and a movie, leaving him and Sylvie alone. He'd been shipping out the following morning. That had been four years ago.

Her eyes narrowed and her posture tensed. "What do you want?"

The words would have been belligerent, if not for the wobble in her voice.

"To see you."

Now her hands trembled on the pants she folded. "Excuse me?"

Abe devoured her with his eyes. God she was beautiful. She brought his emotions to the surface in a way that no other woman had been able to do. He fought for control not to take her in his arms and toss her on the bed. Sex had never been the problem between them. He'd hoped her anger had dissipated over the years, but should have known better. Somehow he had to convince Sylvie to forgive and trust him again.

"I never stopped loving you."

She flinched at his words. "You had a fine way of showing it."

The mattress sank as he sat beside her and took her hands. "I thought I was doing the right thing by letting you go."

Sylvie's eyes filled with tears. She brushed them away. "You didn't even ask me what I wanted."

"Can you deny you were terrified I wouldn't come home?"

"No, but—"

"It very well could have played out that way."

She plunked down next to him. "Don't say that, Abe."

His gaze slid to her hand resting on his thigh. Her diamond sparkled in the light. "I'm here now. For good."

"You've left the military?"

"A medical discharge."

Her gaze clouded. "The scars I saw?"

"Yes. Marry me, Sylvie."

She jumped up. "I'm engaged to Hal."

Abe watched her thumb play with her ring. He attempted to rein in his frustration. "Get unengaged."

"On Christmas? That hardly seems fair."

He reached out and pulled her into his arms. "You want to talk fair?" He cupped her breast, his thumb rubbing her nipple to a hard peak. "Is it fair I can't touch you? Love you? Make you my wife?"

He captured her response with his lips. A kiss soft and sweet until it raged out of control. The taste of her tongue made him crazy. They rolled on the bed, trying to get inside each other.

"Make love to me," Sylvie moaned. "I've never stopped wanting you, loving you."

Abe's fingers curled around her arms and eased her away. "Not until you tell Hal."

"Damn you." She grabbed his hair and attempted to kiss him again.

Abe rolled to his feet. "Let's go."

"What?"

"Hal's in his room."

"Abe, I can't..."

He took her hand and dragged her out the door. "You can and you will."

Once in the hall, Abe knocked twice on Hal's door and walked in with Sylvie in tow.

Propped up on his pillow reading, Hal's owlish eyes grew even wider. "Sylvie? What's the matter?"

"Go on," Abe said. "Either you tell him or I will."

She licked her lips, still swollen from his kisses. If Hal had half a brain, he'd know what his fiancée had been up to. Instead, he looked merely perplexed.

Gulping in a deep breath, Sylvie blurted, "I can't marry you. I'm in love with Abe."

Abe expected a lot of reactions. Hal's deep sigh of relief wasn't one of them. "Thank goodness! You saved me from having to break off our engagement. I've met someone else. Someone more suited to my needs."

Beside him, Sylvie stiffened. "Your needs? What the hell does that mean?"

"You're bold...and a bit crass. Emily is quiet and shy. A real lady."

Sylvie leaped toward Hal. "Why you—"

Abe caught her in mid-air.

"Let me at him."

Hal slipped into a whining mode. "What's your problem? It's not like I broke your heart."

"You prig! The only thing that'll be broken today is your nose. Let go, Abe." Abe chuckled at Sylvie's anger and held on to her despite her thrashing.

Sylvie's mother and father rushed in.

"What is going on?" Joe Pendleton demanded.

"I'm going to kill him," Sylvie said between clenched teeth, pointing straight at Hal.

"Oh, dear," Mrs. Pendleton murmured.

Hal climbed out of bed and gathered his books. "Your daughter is a wild woman."

Sylvie's father looked to Abe, holding his squirming daughter, a question in his eyes.

Abe filled him in. "Hal's decided to cut his visit short, and Sylvie and I are getting married before the New Year."

"Is this true? About you and Abe?" Mrs. Pendleton clarified.

Although Sylvie had calmed down, her gaze still shot fire at Hal. "Yes."

"Good luck with that," Hal muttered, as he threw clothes and books into his suitcase. "She'll cheat on you the way she did me."

Joe Pendleton lunged at Hal. "Why you..."

Hal smirked. "Now I know where Sylvie gets her violent nature."

Joe grabbed the front of Hal's shirt. Fearing the outcome, Abe let go of Sylvie and separated the two men. "He's not worth it, Joe."

"You're right," Joe agreed, never taking his gaze off Hal. "You've got ten minutes to get the hell out of my house. Abe, take Sylvie back to her room and keep her there until dinner time."

"I'm not a child—"

Abe put his hand over Sylvie's mouth and hauled her into the hall. "Ouch! You bit me." When he released her, she grabbed his hand and rushed into her bedroom.

"Did you hear that, Abe? We get to spend the rest of the afternoon here. Before he could respond, she unzipped his jeans. Her fingers slipped inside his jockey shorts and curled around his hardness.

He tugged at her hand before he exploded. "Slow down, sweetheart. We can take our time." He maneuvered her toward the bed.

"Not there," she whispered. "The box spring squeaks. The floor."

Abe took his time undressing Sylvie. How many times had he done this in his dreams? He unsnapped her bra, drew in a breath as he watched her breasts tumble from the confining lace. "So beautiful," he murmured, trailing a finger over the rosy peaks.

Sylvie scrambled to her knees and pulled open the drawer in the nightstand.

"What are you doing? Come back here."

"Protection," she said, holding a foil packet in her fingertips.

"We're going to have at least four kids."

"Maybe five," she murmured as she rolled the condom onto his silky erection. Slipping out of her panties, she straddled his hips and eased slowly down onto his cock.

"You're killing me here," Abe groaned. Unable to stand the torture, he took her hips and pushed into her until he was fully embedded.

"Merry Christmas, Abe," she gasped.

Abe smiled into her eyes. "The first of many."

Author Biography

Pam lives in on 25 rural acres in northwestern Maine with her husband, two Siamese cats and a black Lab. By day she works in Bangor, Maine as a legal secretary.

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