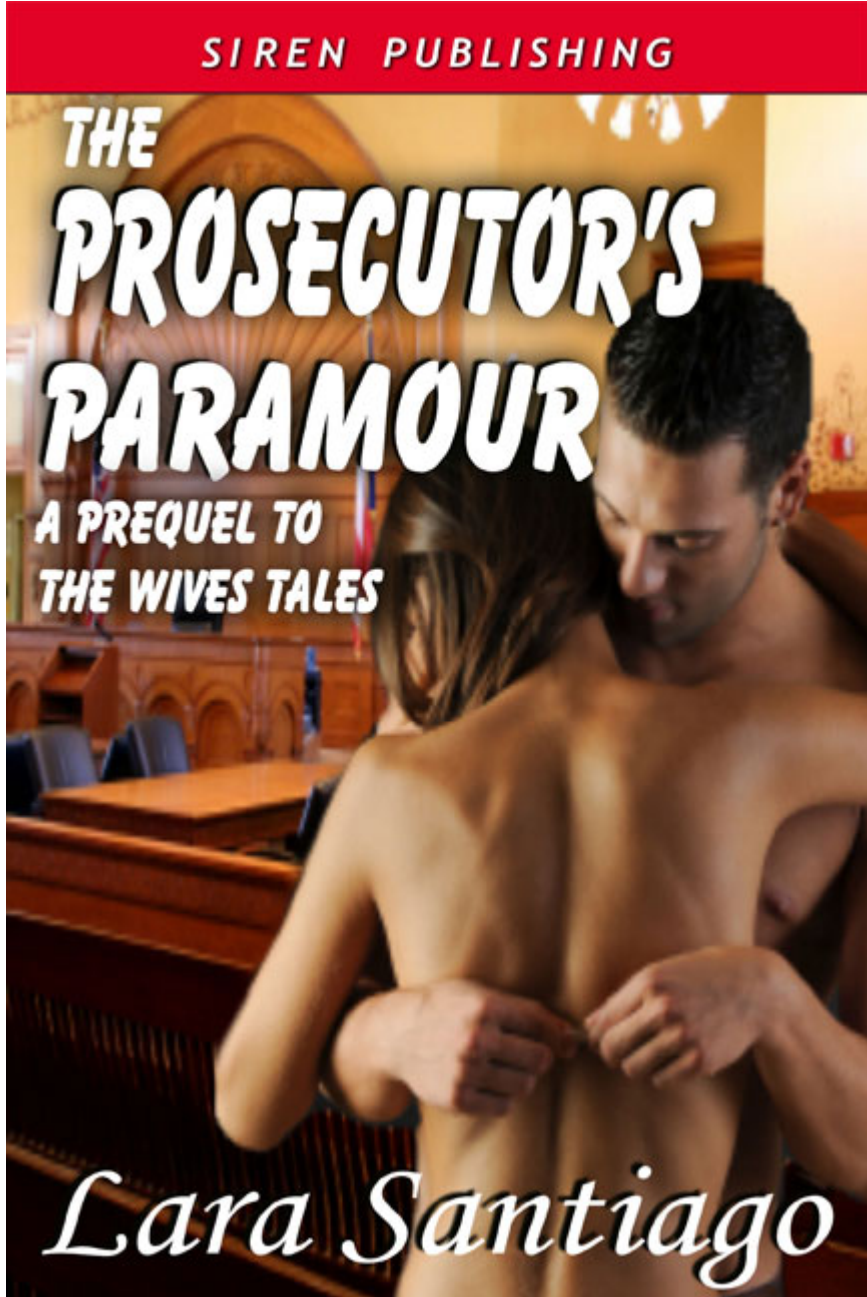


SIREN PUBLISHING

THE PROSECUTOR'S PARAMOUR

A PREQUEL TO
THE WIVES TALES

Lara Santiago



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A Prequel to The Wives Tales

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EROTIC ROMANCE



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Dedication

To my three favorite boys. I love you with all my heart.

To my extraordinary critique partners, especially Kristen, Carolyn, and Carrie. Thanks for your enduring support with this book.

To my fabulous Siren editors. You make my words sparkle and I'm very grateful. Thank you.

The Prosecutor's Paramour

A Prequel to The Wives Tales

LARA SANTIAGO

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Chapter 1

Eastlake City, October 2075

Evie Marsh paused and looked over one shoulder. She tamped down the pervasive dread tickling her spine. Nothing in the shadowy street behind her demanded immediate attention. Shaking off her foolish fear, she checked her wristwatch once more, satisfied she'd be on time for the gala event sponsored by the Family First League.

FFL's enduring mission was to ensure single people over the age of consent didn't stay that way. Two or three of these indulgent events were celebrated each year in the hopes of vanquishing the city's singles population.

The most eligible bachelor in the city would be in attendance, and Evie was tasked with getting his attention.

Evie had been deliberately chosen for the operation she was poised to initiate tonight. She had a plan, not only making contact with Zachary Valetta, but also proving herself valuable to those who'd sent her.

The dangerous goals assigned to this plum job required talent. She possessed the skills. Unfortunately, she wasn't allowed to make use of her expert marksmanship ability or carry her gun along to prove it.

Leaving the crisp fall evening behind, she entered Eastlake City's most posh hotel with a determined spring in her step on a mission to do whatever

was needed to succeed.

* * * *

Zachary Valetta strode through the opulent lobby of the posh Obelisk Hotel towards the double door entry to a function touted as ‘one of the most festive parties of the year.’ This advertisement didn’t sway him. Before he took a single step inside, a waiter with a tray of champagne flutes blocked his entry.

“Welcome, sir!” he bubbled a greeting, a large smile plastered on his face. “Champagne?” He nodded, indicating Zachary should take a glass.

Glancing past the waiter’s shoulder and failing to find an open bar for tonight’s festivities, he selected a glass. The waiter allowed him to pass the threshold into the already crowded party. Music from a live band filtered through the din of voices.

Zachary stood motionless near the door, so far unnoticed by the meddling hosts of this event whose primary and enduring goal was to marry off every single person in the country.

Romantic fairytale weddings hadn’t gone by the wayside altogether in this latter part of the twenty-first century, but the primary purpose of a marriage had shifted to include political matches. Marriages were arranged for political reasons or to increase the wealth and power of those already wealthy and powerful. Compared to the Machiavellian arrangements of today, the English aristocracy of the nineteenth century were romantic love-stricken fools.

Hugging the wall next to the elaborate buffet as he sipped the expensive drink, Zachary watched the door for anyone he knew, preferably a member of the city’s dwindling bachelorhood he could commiserate with to pass the time until he could leave. Given the crowd, he was probably the last to arrive.

Zachary had timed his arrival to suit himself. He was fashionably very late, on purpose. Circulating around the ostentatious party, he resisted the urge to roll his eyes in frustration. He didn’t want to be here.

As lead Assistant District Attorney for Eastlake City, he was a busy man. Parties that didn’t serve his political aspirations were a waste of his

time.

The primary function of tonight's party was to pair up as many troublesome single people as possible and induce them into marriage. The Family First League's agenda power brokers had infiltrated many facets of today's society. The sponsors of tonight's festivities, Tiberius Security, were affiliated with the people hosting the event.

Founded many years ago, the Family First League had become a strong voice in politics, working hand in hand with Tiberius Security. Zachary hadn't realized there were so many single people. Being crowned Eastlake City's most eligible bachelor in a recent society column made him an easy target. He was required to attend since he was single and worked for the government, a stipulation worked out with the DA's office and the Family First League representative assigned to the building. He pretended to be interested in taking a wife, but he wasn't.

It was not because he didn't want someone he cared about to share his life but because he was perpetually career focused. He juggled lots of secrets and marriage would only complicate his already complex life.

"Another champagne, sir," chirped a voice to his right.

A waiter with another full tray of bubbly-filled wineglasses slipped in front of him. He traded his mostly empty glass for a full one and surveyed the room.

Tables with big crystal candle and flower centerpieces hugged the outer part of the ballroom sized meeting room. A string quartette played upbeat yet unrecognizable music from the small elevated stage for couples brave enough to be tripping the light fantastic tonight. The boring music gave him a headache.

No expense had been spared according to the memo he'd been given to entice him here. Out of the corner of his eye, he heard two of the event planners whispering over the details, worrying if enough smoked salmon had been ordered and if only serving champagne and not an open bar had been a good idea. Elaborately carved ice statues of soaring eagles framed the coup de gras of an impressive scale replica of the Eastlake City Justice Center building. It decorated the buffet table surrounded by the most expensive food taxpayer money could buy.

Zachary's gaze drifted back to the entrance where gloved waiters still flanked the double doors and waited to accost the late-coming guests.

He was about to turn away when a beautiful woman stepped into view at the double doors. The waiter stationed just inside the door thrust the tray of expensive beverages at her. She looked startled a moment but gained her composure quickly and took a glass.

Zachary paused to study her. Unlike nearly every other woman in the room dressed in bright flowery dresses, she wore a simple black cocktail dress. Sexy. She moved to the right with champagne glass in hand searching the room as if looking for a familiar face.

Zachary smiled, waiting for her to look his direction. He'd never seen her. She was very distinct from the blonde plastic women he'd already observed at every other function like this one.

There had to be a document somewhere chronicling what the Family First hosts and others attending tonight's party had decreed was the perfect look for a single woman.

The gorgeous girl he watched either hadn't gotten the memo or she rebelled against the current standard of fashion and beauty. He applauded her either way.

Studying her so intently, he noticed a blond man enter the party behind her. Zachary watched as the man took great interest in her ass. It was ridiculous to be jealous and territorial over a woman he hadn't even introduced himself to, but he didn't like the way the man leered at her hungrily.

Zachary watched her walk slowly in his direction. She deposited her full glass of champagne on a table without having taken a sip and turned towards him. He waited to catch her eye, but suddenly a large form blocked his vision.

"Zachary. Glad you *finally* made it." Alfred Reynolds, the current DA, filled his view instead.

"Alfred." He lifted his glass in a light salute, ignoring Reynolds's comment. "It's a mandatory function. You knew I wouldn't miss it." Zachary glanced over the DA's shoulder to keep track of his dark-haired beauty. She had paused to speak with one of the Family First hosts. As soon as he ditched Reynolds, he'd seek her out and ask her to dance.

"Now that you're here, you need to make a concerted effort to find a wife." Reynolds took a sip of his champagne as calmly as if he'd just commented on the weather.

"Tonight? Why? Have you been talking to my mother?" At the DA's stern expression, Zachary sighed deeply. "We talk about this every time there's a singles party. And again, I'm still not looking for a wife. My career is more important. Why do we need to keep addressing this over and over?"

"With your undefeated record, you're the primary choice for DA in the next election. The endorsement letter from the mayor recommending you for the office sits on my desk as we speak." He paused and sipped his drink.

"And?"

"And it will never grace your fingertips unless you make an effort to find a wife."

Zachary snorted. "I don't understand why my work record can't stand alone."

"Your work record is important. However, Tiberius Security has a mission for this country. As more marriages take place and more families are created, crime diminishes significantly and there are statistics to back them up. You need to set an example."

"I'm not getting married to maintain the statistical integrity of Tiberius Security's mission."

"No, you'll get married because if you don't, you will remain an ADA and Everett Wilder will become DA next year."

"I'm ten times the prosecutor he is and you know it."

Reynolds shrugged. "He also has a wife connected to a senator and three children to show he supports the Family First League's agenda."

"Just because I'm not married and shooting out progeny doesn't mean I don't support the FFL's agenda."

"Be that as it may, I've been instructed to inform you that it would behoove you to find a woman to marry, and the sooner the better. Acceptance of submissions for nomination will open in a month. If you don't at least have a fiancée by then, don't bother putting in your application."

"What if I don't find the love of my life by then?"

Reynolds shrugged. "Then you don't want to be DA as bad as I thought you did. Love is not a requirement. Any politically connected woman will do. Besides," he winked, "all cats are gray in the dark."

Zachary frowned at the nasty insinuation. He didn't agree. He didn't want to marry just anyone. He sought more in a mate.

“Once I’m the DA, my work load will increase. I don’t have time for a wife.”

“Make time. As a matter of fact,” Reynolds reached in his pocket and pulled out a tri-fold syntho-page, “here’s a list to help you in your quest.”

“A list of what?”

“Possible contenders for the future position of Mrs. Zachary Valetta.”

He took the list from Reynolds and scanned it quickly. Every female listed was from a political family and every one of them had gotten the memo on how to look like a plastic blonde Barbie doll. He’d seen three of them tonight. None of them did anything to entice him.

Zachary wasn’t interested in a plastic wife. He wanted someone to talk to, someone who understood the law and why he loved it.

Thinking about the beautiful siren he’d seen enter the party tonight, he crumpled the list and handed it back to Reynolds. “I can find my own wife, thanks all the same.”

Reynolds grabbed his arm. “Find one quickly or kiss the DA position good-bye.”

Zachary nodded and stepped away before he told Reynolds to shove the list up his ass. He searched the immediate area for his dark-haired beauty and nearly knocked her to the ground in his zeal to locate her.

“I’m so sorry.” Her sexy voice caressed him. She took a wobbly step, not completely finding her balance, and almost fell into his arms.

“It was completely my fault.” Zachary grabbed her elbow to steady her.

She was an absolutely gorgeous brunette, from the curly locks gracing her lovely shoulders to her sultry gaze giving him the once over. He stared at her, unblinking. Her smoky, seductive eyes trapped him for a moment. Glancing up and down her body once, he noted her curvy shape and long legs that ended in four-inch stiletto heels.

Her tanned skin was flawless, not a single freckle or beauty mark on her face. He paused too long on her lips. Her lush mouth had been crafted for long, lazy, sensuous kissing. Zachary had a sudden urge to lick her mouth and quelled it by lifting his ardent gaze to her eyes. He’d never experienced such a strong pull to a female before.

She shifted those exotically dark eyes to his and he was mesmerized. Her focus dropped to his chest and then to the meager floor space between them. “Thanks.” She gripped his arm tighter and lifted a foot. “I’m not used

to walking in these heels.”

Zachary glanced down. She wiggled one ankle sporting the sexy black high-heeled pump.

“Impractical perhaps, but very attractive.”

She grinned. “Thank you.”

“Would you like to dance? I promise to keep you from falling.”

A trill of laughter escaped, displaying her even white teeth. “Well, as long as you keep me on my feet, then yes, I’d love to.”

Zachary deposited his glass on a nearby table and escorted her through several couples to the center of the dance floor.

Taking her into his arms in a practiced hold, resisting the urge not to crush her to his chest and inhale the fragrance from her hair, he said, “I’m Zachary Valetta.”

“Evie Marsh.”

“Pleased to meet you.” He swayed and stepped to the music, leading her effortlessly around the dance floor, completely enthralled by her exquisite dark eyes.

“Likewise. What do you do, Zachary?”

“I’m a prosecutor for Eastlake City.”

“Oh.” She nodded with interest. “That’s wonderful. My father was a lawman. He had a lot of respect for the prosecutor’s office. He taught me the sacrifices you must endure.”

He tightened his grip on her waist. “What do you do, Miss Marsh?”

“Call me Evie.” She moved a little closer. “I followed in my dad’s footsteps. I’m a lawman. I work at the Justice Center.”

Zachary grinned. “Is that so? I can’t believe I haven’t noticed you before. I’m in and out of the Justice Center almost every single day.”

Her expression sobered slightly. “I just moved here recently. My father passed away in the line of duty...” she paused and took a deep breath, “...and I guess I needed a fresh start.”

“I’m sorry for your loss.” Zachary turned them towards a quieter corner of the dance floor.

“My dad was a good guy and a dedicated lawman. I miss him. It was hard to stay with my old department after he was gone. Too many memories. So I moved here.”

Zachary nodded in understanding. “I’m glad you did.”

“Actually,” she said with a grin, “that’s how I got invited to this party tonight. Single women in the workforce are thought of as a problem to be resolved, especially in the ranks of the lawmen.”

“I’ll let you in on a secret.” He leaned closer. “Single men are regarded the same way no matter where they work.”

She laughed, squeezed his hand and hugged him a little closer. They whirled around the dance floor in perfect step. His hand slipped further around her back.

“You’re doing a marvelous job of dancing, by the way. Even with your high-heeled handicap, you move very well.”

“It’s only because I have you to hold on to. Let go of me and I’ll land on my butt.”

Catching her gaze, he said in a low tone, “Trust me, I won’t let you go.”

Her unique scent wafted past his nose almost with each step they took. Vanilla and lavender assaulted his senses. He was about to lean in to take a deep lungful, but a hand clamped down on his shoulder. Zachary turned. The tall blond man who’d followed Evie into the party attempted to step between them. Evie clasped him tighter and frowned at the intruder.

“May I cut in?” he asked and crowded closer, not waiting for an answer.

Zachary refused to let her go. “Sorry, friend. I never abandon my dance partners in the middle of a song.”

He swept them away, leaving the perturbed blond man.

“He’s been staring at me since I got here.”

Zachary laughed. “I can’t blame him. I’m guilty of the same offense. I wanted to dance with you the moment I laid eyes on you.”

“I forgive your staring because the truth is, I wanted to dance with you the minute I collided with you.” She slid her hand along his shoulder and cupped the back of his neck. The space between their bodies narrowed.

She tilted her head back to stare into his eyes. Her lips were so inviting and Zachary wanted a taste. Pausing mere millimeters from her mouth as her soft breath tickled his chin, Zachary dipped his head until their lips almost touched.

The music stopped all of a sudden and the lights came up, signaling the song was over. They both looked up at the abrupt intrusion of light. The moment was broken. She separated her body from his. Glancing into his eyes then down at the floor, she shook her head. Zachary took a deep breath

to calm down.

Public displays of affection were frowned upon. He couldn't believe he'd forgotten where he was. He'd been desperate for a taste.

Evie lifted her eyes to his again and whispered, "Thanks for the dance."

"It was my pleasure." Zachary grabbed her hand in both of his, not wanting to let her slip away. "Would you like some more champagne or something to eat? Another dance?"

She looked over at the elaborate buffet table and nodded. "All of the above." She grinned. "Just let me go freshen up a bit and I'll meet you at the Justice Center ice statue in a few minutes."

"It's a date." He released her reluctantly.

Zachary made his way to the table of fancy food, snagging another drink on the way. He watched out of the corner of his eye as Evie disappeared into the hallway across the room where the facilities were located. She intrigued him.

He smiled and considered the night to come was shaping up to be much better than when he'd entered the party. A few more dances, a little more small talk, then he'd ask her to dinner some night next week.

He glanced at the hallway with anticipation for her to emerge and caught sight of the blond man ducking into the bathroom hallway. Zachary's sixth sense kicked his apprehension up a notch. He watched the hallway and did a fast count to ten. No one else entered or exited. He gravitated toward the bathrooms, ignoring the people who tried to chat with him along the way.

When he got to within ten feet of the hallway, he heard Evie's voice. "No, thank you. I don't want to dance with you."

"I won't take no for an answer, honey."

"Stop it. Get off of me."

Zachary rounded the corner in time to see the blond man lean in to kiss Evie. He had her pinned against the wall, arms behind her back. His lips landed on her cheek as she turned her head away to avoid his kiss on her mouth. She caught Zachary's eye and her panicked gaze turned into one of relief when she recognized him.

"Haven't you ever heard that no means no?" Zachary strode towards them.

Startled, the man turned his bleary-eyed attention on Zachary. "Mind

your own bish-ness. The lady and I are having a conver-sha-shun.” His slurred speech indicated to Zachary that he’d been to the champagne tray one too many times. The drunk would-be lothario turned back to Evie and aimed the tip of his tongue toward Evie’s jaw. Zachary jerked him away and stepped between Evie and the now very hostile man.

“Hey!” The blond man staggered back, bounced off the opposite wall, and shot his arm out in wobbly roundhouse swing lacking aim. Zachary deftly avoided the sloppy punch and landed his own solid hit in the man’s midsection with a satisfying thud. The blond grunted and stumbled back against the opposite wall again with a wheeze, this time holding his stomach.

“Leave the lady alone. She’s with me. Do not approach her or speak to her again. Do I make myself clear?” Zachary felt Evie’s hands smooth the back of his shirt from shoulder to waist.

The blond man didn’t respond, but the frown didn’t leave his face. Zachary wrapped an arm around Evie’s shoulders and quickly escorted her out of the hallway and into the din of the loud party. The music had started up again as couples littered the dance floor, rocking and swaying to an upbeat tune.

He hugged her close, noticing she trembled slightly. He whispered in her ear, “Are you okay?”

She nodded. “I’m good. Thanks to you.”

He smiled and led her to the buffet table. He grabbed another glass of champagne and pressed it into her hand. She was shaking. “Why don’t I take you home?”

She sipped the drink and shook her head. “I’m fine, really.”

“I know, but I’d feel better seeing you make it home safe. The party’s almost over anyway.”

“Thank you.” Her sultry gaze washed through him. She put a hand on his arm and squeezed. “I’m ready to leave whenever you are.”

“Let’s go.” Zachary slid a hand to her waist and led her to the exit. He passed Alfred Reynolds who sported a frown of disapproval. Evie wasn’t on the list he’d been handed, but Reynolds could kiss his ass. Zachary could pick his own women and Evie’s pinky finger intrigued him more than all five women on Reynolds’s list combined.

If he had to get married, Evie was already his top choice.

He hailed a cab and they drove to the address she provided located in a very respectable neighborhood. Evie lived in one of many singles boarding houses supported by Tiberius Security in the heart of the city. It was a choice place to live, but strict rules were set in place to deter crime. At a minimum, no booze, no smoking, and no members of the opposite sex invited inside the apartments.

Zachary asked the taxi to wait and escorted Evie through the iron gate surrounding a large mansion. She clutched his arm as they negotiated the steep stairs leading to the porch. Evie walked a few steps to a beautiful stained glass double door entry and inserted a key card to unlock the door.

Once inside the foyer, Zachary noticed two sizeable common rooms on either side of a carpeted central staircase.

Zachary decided it afforded a more homey feeling for apartment dwellers and a safer, more upscale environment.

He noticed a sign on the entryway wall listing the hours for guests to be out of the building or locked in for the night. If he didn't leave in time, lawmen would be called to escort him out. It would be an embarrassing slap on the wrist. If he spent the night in her apartment, he'd be trapped inside until morning. If he got caught leaving her apartment the next day, it would be more than a slap on the wrist. There would be hell to pay starting with Evie's certain eviction.

Glancing at his watch, he realized the house curfew was in a few minutes.

"Are you sure you're all right?"

She smiled. "Yes. You saved me from showing him what my father taught me."

"Ah." Zachary nodded. "As a lawman, he probably taught you plenty of good moves for situations like that one. You likely didn't need me to save you at all."

Evie placed a hand on his chest and ran it to his shoulder. "That's not true. He caught me off guard. I'll admit I was glad to see you come round the corner when you did." She leaned up and placed a chaste kiss on his cheek. The spot tingled. She pressed one more kiss on his face. This time the corner of her mouth sizzled his bottom lip and sent a zing to his cock.

She drew back, but her hands rested on his chest. Zachary tucked a lock of her gorgeous hair behind one ear. Running a hand from her shoulder to

her elbow, he leaned closer to kiss her lips in return.

A door down the hallway opened abruptly and an older woman in a robe stepped through, spotting them immediately. "It's almost house curfew time," she announced, pursing her lips into a tight circle of condemnation.

Evie winked at Zachary and turned to look at the woman. "We still have five minutes, Mrs. Rhoades."

"If he's still here in five minutes, I'm calling the lawmen to register a complaint."

"That won't be necessary." Zachary flipped his badge open. "I'm the assistant district attorney for the city, ma'am."

"I don't care who you are! Five minutes," she barked. Slamming her door, she disappeared from the hall, leaving them alone again.

"My landlady is a stickler for the curfew rules in the house." Evie shrugged and twisted to face him with a pursed-lip smile. "She doesn't even care that *I'm* a lawman. Rules are rules."

"I don't mean to get you in trouble." He slid his hand around her fingertips still resting on his chest and brought it to his lips.

"I don't mind. I'm a rebel at heart."

He turned her hand over and kissed the palm. "I have to admit my rebellious nature, as well."

She glanced over her shoulder. "Rules may be rules and I don't agree with all of them, but I voluntarily signed papers to live here so I could reside in a safe neighborhood." She shrugged.

Zachary leaned close enough to feel her breath on his lips and murmured, "Then I'd better hurry."

Her sudden grin punched him in the heart. "Hurry?"

He leaned forward. His lips were poised only a breath in distance from hers to capture her mouth in a kiss. He paused.

Evie closed the meager distance between them and brushed his mouth lightly, rubbing her soft lips against his. It was the permission he sought. Twisting his mouth over hers, he cupped a hand behind her head and licked his way inside of her mouth. Thrusting and swirling, tangling and dancing, he kissed her until they were both breathless.

Zachary broke away first. "When can I see you again?" He nibbled her bottom lip.

"I don't know. I work...tomorrow and..."

He pressed another kiss to the corner of her mouth, lingering there only a moment to taste her before he kissed a trail along her jaw.

“Have dinner with me tomorrow. We’ll go wherever you want.”

She moaned when he nibbled her earlobe and followed with a kiss directly beneath her ear.

“Tomorrow? I don’t know...” she murmured.

“I must see you again, Evie. Name the day.”

Her only response was another moan, the sound of which sent a frantic pulse of desire straight to his cock.

Zachary glanced at his watch and stifled a curse. His time was up. With a gargantuan amount of restraint, he pulled away from her, distancing himself by an arms length. He retrieved a business card from his jacket pocket and handed it to her.

“Call me at my office tomorrow, then I can talk you into going out with me. Otherwise, I’ll be forced to wander the halls of the Justice Center soulfully calling out your name, searching for you. It would be embarrassing for a tough prosecutor like me. You won’t make me suffer like that, will you?”

She looked a little shell-shocked but reached out and took the proffered card and nodded as an infectious smile shaped her lips.

“Okay. I’ll call you.”

“I’d better go before a battalion of lawmen are dispatched to remove me.” He ran a finger down her cheek and along her lovely jaw line, tapping her chin once before he forced his hand away from her delicate skin. “Good night, Evie. Sweet dreams.”

Opening her door, she stepped across the threshold and said, “Good night, Zachary.”

The sultry smile she offered him would live in his sweet dreams tonight.

Chapter 2

Evie entered her new apartment and collapsed on the overstuffed sofa before her knees gave out. When the Enforcers, the undercover branch of lawmen, had selected Zachary Valetta as her new assignment, she hadn't pictured a gorgeous man. Her previous missions predominantly involved scumbag criminals. She'd infiltrated and spied on some of the ugliest and most disgusting men the wrong side of the law had to offer.

Zachary, along with his tall, lean muscular body encased in fine clothing, possessed the most mesmerizing eyes. Chocolate brown with flecks of gold, the color was as unusual as the man. After two seconds in his presence, she'd been entranced. Her new assignment, with his wide shoulders, was a walking shrine to all things masculine.

One of the very few females working for the lawmen as an undercover Enforcer, she was often placed in dangerous situations. Never before in her six-year career had she been even remotely attracted to a man she'd been sent to spy on.

Reeling from near catastrophic betrayal in her old Enforcer unit, Evie had called in a favor from her cousin Matt Westland last week. He'd promptly put her in touch with another Enforcer team in immediate need of a trained female operative.

The mission she volunteered for was a trial assignment. She'd been tasked with infiltrating Zachary's life. Once ensconced, she was to look for evidence of what he did in his private life, specifically any secret associations not approved by Tiberius Security. There was also the sudden and mysterious disappearance of his last secretary, Brenda. Evie was supposed to look for any evidence of his involvement.

After tonight's dancing and seductive end-of-the-evening kisses at her door, she decided she'd made excellent progress.

Task: *Insert yourself into Zachary Valetta's life.*

Mission: *Accomplished.*

With Zachary's business card gripped between her fingers, she made plans to visit him tomorrow morning. Once inside his office, she'd search to see if he had any of the information her new Enforcer team sought.

Leaning her head back on the sofa, she thought about Zachary's goodnight kiss at the door. Amazing. Sensual enough to leave her wet and wanting more.

Perhaps she'd initiate another kiss the next time they met.

New mission: *Instigate at least one more kiss.*

* * * *

"Mr. Valetta, there's a lawman here with some paperwork for you to sign from the Justice Center," Heather, his temporary assistant, informed him over the intercom.

"Thank you, send him in."

Zachary's door opened, and he heard the whisper of soft foot falls on the carpet. He looked up. The next thing he heard was his own loud intake of breath. Evie. She grinned and the radiance of her even, white teeth lit the room.

Zachary smiled for the first time since entering his office that morning. He stood and rounded his desk. A giddy elation washed over him. He expected to have to chase her. This was a very pleasant surprise. He'd planned to call her tonight. A personal visit was so much better.

Dressed in a feminine version of the dark gray lawmen's uniform, sporting a flared skirt instead of pants, Evie strolled into his office. She left the door open a crack.

"Hello, Mr. Valetta. I have some papers that need your signature." Her throaty tone caressed his libido. For the first time since he couldn't remember when, his cock twitched in his pants at the mere sound of a sexy woman's voice.

Zachary cleared his throat and met her gaze. "Miss Marsh?" He closed the distance between them, pushed the door shut and barely glanced at the folder she held. "Really?"

She backed against the door. "Well...I have papers, and you can sign

them if you want, but mostly I wanted an excuse to—”

He cut her off with a kiss. He followed with his body pressing her against the closed door as a moan escaped from between her lips. The papers in her hand slipped to the floor, fluttering beside them as her arms slipped around his neck. Her tongue slid between his lips, brushing inside his mouth with a soft and tender exploration. It was all he could do to stay vertical.

She broke the kiss and whispered, “I dreamed about you.”

“Did you?” He kissed her again.

“Now that I know you’re really an assistant prosecutor, I thought we could go out.”

He barked out a surprised laugh. “You didn’t believe me?”

“Let’s just say I’m careful. I *am* in law enforcement. It’s my job to be wary.” A laugh escaped and she hugged him close. Her lush breasts pressed into his chest, the sensation of which thickened his cock even more. His hips pushed against her almost involuntarily and she moaned.

“I’ll have you know, I was listed the most eligible bachelor in the city last week.” Zachary caressed her cheek with his lips and trailed a path of kisses down to her throat. She tasted like sunshine-warmed strawberries fresh from the garden.

“I heard. I did a little research on you this morning. I’ve heard you’re magnificent in the courtroom, too. You’re undefeated.” She grinned. “That’s why I came running back today as fast as I could. Turns out, you’re a catch.”

Zachary chuckled. He needed to calm down. “Are you free for lunch?” He pulled away, allowing all of two inches between their bodies.

“Yes, but I only have half an hour. It’s barely enough time to eat let alone chat or...” she glanced at his mouth hungrily, “...whatever.”

He leaned in and kissed her again suddenly. She was like an addiction, but she was right. A half an hour for lunch would only tease him to a bloodlust.

“That’s unfortunate.” He drew a hand from her hip, glanced at his watch, and cursed under his breath. “I have a deposition down the hall in five minutes.”

“We only have five minutes again? We need to start planning our time together better.”

He laughed. "And we will. I'll start by making it up to you tonight at dinner."

"We're having dinner tonight?"

"Yes, and dessert."

Heather buzzed from the intercom on the desk. "Mr. Valetta, your deposition starts in two minutes."

Zachary pulled her across the room, dancing them over to his desk, unwilling to release her yet. He pushed the button to respond. "Thanks, Heather. I'll be right out."

Wrapping his arms around her, Zachary couldn't resist one last kiss. Her arms looped around his waist, her fingertips dug into his back as he made love to her mouth. She melted against him as he stroked his tongue against hers softly, and he wondered how he'd be able to leave the room without a raging hard-on tenting his pants.

He pressed a final ardent kiss to her lips. "As much as I hate to leave you, I shouldn't be late to this meeting. I was the one who called it, and I'm completely uncivil when others show up late." He smiled, took a measured step away, and reluctantly removed his hands from her delectable body.

Evie sighed and released him as well. "May I use your bathroom before I go?"

"Of course. Just close the door on your way out. I'll tell my secretary, Heather."

"Thank you." She backed away as she glanced up and down his body.

Zachary took a deep breath and got hold of his libido. "I'll send a limo to pick you up for dinner tonight."

"Perfect." She winked. "Hopefully, we'll have more than five minutes to chat...or whatever."

Zachary quelled the urge to growl as he imagined any number of prurient definitions for the word 'whatever'. Glancing at his watch again he said, "I have to go."

She crossed her arms as if trying to warm herself and waved. "See you tonight."

Indeed, she would.

* * * *

Evie took a deep breath after Zachary left her alone in his office. Gracious, he was sexy. Five seconds more of kissing him and she might have pushed him onto his desk and had her wicked way with him to break the ice.

Ice. What a laugh. There was no ice in Zachary's office. There were only warm promises of long weekends wrapped in his arms to fill her private fantasies. Unfortunately, seduction wasn't why she'd been sent here.

She was here primarily to determine his involvement, if any, with his previous secretary, Brenda, and her disappearance. Her secondary mission was to rifle through Zachary's private files for information on a splinter rebellion group called 'The Resistance.' Tiberius Security wanted to assure themselves that Zachary was all they thought he was.

In Evie's opinion, he was more. She didn't believe Zachary would be foolish enough to keep incriminating documents in his office. He was a lawyer. Lawyers were smart. If he had information on what happened to his last secretary, surely he wouldn't document the fact or file it away for discovery.

With one eye pegged on the closed office door, Evie scanned the office with a practiced eye looking for hiding places. Sliding over to his desk, she pulled on all the drawers. Locked. She checked the file cabinets lining the wall next to the door. Also locked.

She used a flash drive penetrating device to scan the contents of his computer.

She did a quick key-word scan on his computer using her most expensive electronic toy, The Penetrator. She could plug in and search any computer for anything without a single hint she'd ever been in there. She'd gotten it from DarkTech, the black market world's most notorious supplier. They supplied the latest and most razor's edge of unregulated technology available in the world. She guessed the majority of their sales were to criminals. To that end, DarkTech was a blatantly unauthorized source for her to use as a lawman. However, Evie often found their supplies imperative to her work.

The best piece of advice her lawman father had ever imparted was that in order to keep up with criminals sometimes you needed to shop at the

same stores they did. She'd collected a few unofficial sources of black market goods and services for her personal use that none of her enforcer peers knew about. DarkTech was her number one go to place.

In an echo file Zachary had doubtless assumed long deleted, Evie found one deep dark secret he probably didn't ever want revealed. A five-year-old memo containing his apparent distaste of Tiberius Security arbitration practices concerning sexual harassment cases.

She noted the information to herself and wiped the file for him so no one else could find it. The information made her like Zachary even more.

Another file mentioned a name no one else would have noted. She seized on it because the name was the last one her father had spoken before he died. *Sarafina*.

The file was buried in a research database. It mentioned the name, Sarafina in association with prominent local political figure, Vera Wallace, who'd disappeared without a trace the night before announcing her bid to run against Alfred Reynolds for District Attorney of Eastlake City.

The story compared Wallace's disappearance to the disturbing departure of Sarafina Anderson, a senator who'd also gone missing two days before an important vote to reinstate voting rights for single women. As one of few remaining female senators, Sarafina's vote had been critical to the grassroots effort to repeal the 2062 amendment limiting female voting rights to married women only.

Without Sarafina's presence, the bill had not passed.

Evie read the file, alarmed about the too frequent disappearances of citizens who spoke out against the ones in charge, Tiberius Security. She'd silently dubbed them the 'Vanishing People.' Evie was not a fan of Tiberius Security, a fact she did not dare publicize. To their credit, crime had been reduced with the tactics they employed, but individual rights suffered as a consequence. Especially women's rights.

She toyed with the idea of looking through the file cabinet across the room where the syntho-page files were stored, but glanced at her watch and realized she'd already overstayed her welcome. It was time to go. Zachary's new secretary, Heather, would certainly keep track of how long she spent in here. She snagged her device from Zachary's computer, scooped up her bogus file not needing any signatures, and took two steps before Heather opened the door to Zachary's office suddenly, her face wreathed in

puzzlement.

Evie plastered a big smile on her face and exited Zachary's office, mumbling a thanks to Heather on her way out.

Once Evie knew his routine, it would be much easier to spy.

* * * *

"You're late." Alfred Reynolds stood outside the doorway of the conference room Zachary was about to enter.

He made a show of glancing at his watch once before he frowned. "Fifteen seconds after the hour is hardly late. Besides, I called this meeting. It doesn't matter if I'm late, only those who are invited."

Zachary tried to slide past Reynolds through the doorway but found a hand gripping his shoulder.

"Are you late because of that woman you went home with last night? I heard she was in the building."

Zachary shrugged off the DA's hand, motioned to the occupants of the room he'd be another minute, and closed the door for privacy. "Do you have spies at work, Alfred?" He evaded the question. The DA had no business commenting on Zachary's love life when his own was so often called into question.

"I know she was in your office a moment ago, Zachary. What was she doing?"

"She's a lawman." Zachary shrugged. "She dropped some papers off for me to sign. It's not the first time that's ever happened. And here's a news flash, it won't be the last."

"Don't get involved with her." Reynolds' gaze narrowed, and behind his pursed lips, Zachary heard his teeth clack together.

"Why, because she isn't on your top-five list of blonde plastic Barbie doll women I should consider for a wife?"

"No, because I have a friend in the lawmen's office she recently resigned from. She left under dubious circumstances. I have it on good authority that she's trouble."

Zachary smiled internally at the word 'trouble' associated with Evie. 'Rebellious' was a better term. He gave the DA an indifferent gaze and

leaned closer as if to impart confidential information. "The truth is, her father died and she needed new scenery." He then whispered angrily, "As if it's any of your damn business. Stop listening to gossip and stay out of my affairs."

"Don't let her ruin your spotless record, Zachary. All she has to do is announce publicly that you two had pre-marital sex. Even if it isn't true, your career would be over whether or not you've declared exclusivity or an engagement."

Zachary frowned and bored a hole in the DA. "I'm an adult. Besides, it's just a suggestion...not a law."

"Not for you, it isn't. If you go against my wishes and get engaged to this...woman, at least keep your dick in your pants until you marry her. Family First is very serious about keeping couples pure until they marry."

"Where my dick goes is none of anyone's business." Zachary remembered all the regular rampant gossip regarding the DA's extracurricular activities. "Especially not yours."

"Don't make a mistake that will cost you the DA position."

"Trust me. Nothing will interfere with my plans to be the next district attorney." He leaned into Reynolds' personal space. "Nothing."

* * * *

Evie entered the women's bathroom back in the Justice Center before returning to her temporarily assigned desk. She stifled a shiver. She hated public restrooms. She checked all the stalls, passing several sporting lopsided doors swinging on rusty, derelict hinges.

Entering the handicapped stall at the end, she used the facilities. She still trembled with desire from all the luscious kisses Zachary had gifted her with in his office before he left. She smiled at the thought of more lip-locks on the way to dinner tonight. Zachary merely put his mouth anywhere near her and a flood of moisture gushed between her legs.

Evie lifted a leg to toe the handle and flushed. Women's public bathrooms were appalling. There were so few female employees, janitorial services for them were spotty at best.

Doing her best not to touch any surface, she almost peed again when she

stepped from the stall and saw the tall blond man from the party the night before leaning against the bank of sinks.

He gave her a leisurely body scan with interested eyes and said, “Hi, Evie.”

She slapped a hand on her chest, heart pounding in surprise. “You scared me, Derek. What the hell are you doing in here?” She glanced at the bathroom door, hoping it was locked.

Derek Camden was her new Enforcer supervisor and mission contact. He’d sent her on this trial assignment to get Zachary’s attention, so as to better assess her skills as an undercover operative for his team.

Hands in his pockets, he shrugged. “Checking up on you. Find anything yet?”

“I’ve only been with him less than a day.”

“Chop, chop. Time’s wasting. What have you learned?”

She strolled over to the sink next to the one he rested against. Crossing her arms, she said, “I checked his office computer and there is nothing of note regarding any subversive groups he might be associated with.”

Derek nodded. “What else?”

“If anyone sent Zachary’s old secretary, Brenda Beal, packing, it was the DA, Alfred Reynolds. I have it on high authority he’s a perverted prick.”

Derek gave her an exaggerated eye roll. “You’re not telling me anything new.”

“Valetta seems like a decent man,” she shrugged and added, “and he’s a good boss according to his new secretary, Heather.”

Derek rolled his eyes again and sighed in disgust. “Yeah, every woman in three states is in love with him. Does he seem like the type to chase his secretary or kill her once he’s done screwing her?”

Evie shook her head. “My first impression of him says, no.”

He pulled his hands out of his pockets to cross his arms. A deadly expression washed down his face. “I have a new mission parameter to add for you.”

Evie didn’t think she would like it. “What?”

“I need you to seduce Valetta.”

Evie stared at Derek without blinking for several seconds and tried not to act shocked. “I’m sorry. Did you just ask me to seduce the most important Assistant District Attorney in the conservatively and politically rife haven of

Eastlake city? Am I allowed to ask why?"

"He's poised to be the next DA of this city. He can hold office for ten years before retiring, just like Alfred Reynolds has, and we already know what a reprobate he is. There are those who want to ensure Valetta is the right man for the job. And if he is a monster, they want to know that, too."

"I thought I was sent in because they were worried he was a mole for 'The Resistance.'"

"They want assurance all possibilities are accounted for. Make it clear you will do absolutely anything to keep him interested...even pre-marital sex."

Evie focused her gaze on Derek's intense stare. "And if he doesn't succumb to my charms, what then?"

He grinned. "Then he's obviously not corruptible. If he keeps all his ducks in a row, as expected, he'll be the next DA...unless you seduce him, thereby convincing him 'not' to wait for a wedding vow."

Evie remembered Zachary's delectable kiss from last night and the several from a few minutes ago. She hoped her lips weren't swollen from his ardent attention. "What makes you think I'll be able to tempt him into an inappropriate pre-marital sexual relationship?"

"We've thrown two blondes and a redhead his way at various Family First parties with the same mission. He didn't give them a second look. You're the first brunette we've tried. Seeing him practically growl when I asked to cut in and dance with you last night makes me believe you have the best chance. Having him sock me in the gut for touching you sealed the deal."

Evie huffed. "I told you we didn't need to go through with the set up by the bathroom. He was already interested after we danced."

"I disagree. Forcing him to fight for you increased his level of interest. Take my word for it. He wants you even more now that he's fought for you."

Evie rolled her eyes internally at his remark. "But you don't expect I'll be able to seduce him, do you?"

Derek's eyebrows lifted in contemplation. "He has a lot to lose if he allows himself to do anything inappropriate with you. And no, I don't expect him to attack you, but I think if anyone could tempt a man," his gaze ran up and down her body quickly, "you could."

She faked a grin and leaned closer. "Well, I'll do my best." Evie didn't want to seduce Zachary because Derek now required it. Beyond the obvious, she truly liked him. If any inappropriate contact took place, she wanted it all for herself.

Derek smirked. "Quit licking your chops."

"Jealous?"

He rolled his eyes. "Hardly. Just don't forget his secretary, Brenda, vanished off the face of the earth without a single word to anyone, and he was admittedly the last to see her alive."

Squinting her eyes, she leaned a hip against the sink and ran her hands up and down her arms. "I'll watch myself. I always do. Speaking of which, I'd like to ask for a consideration regarding this new mission parameter."

Derek looked to the ceiling like he regretted asking her to work for him at all. "What do you want?"

"As you know, I left my last Enforcer team suddenly right before they betrayed me."

"So?"

"So! I narrowly escaped being gang raped by three men in my own department, three men who were going to swear, under oath no less, that I asked for it to get promoted. If I'd walked into the set-up waiting for me in that bathroom, I'd have gone on trial for charges of moral depravity and solicitation. I'd likely be in prison right now."

"And?"

"And I'm understandably cautious about thrusting myself into another sex scandal for this new department, a department, I might add, that you haven't even permanently invited me to join yet."

Derek huffed a deep breath. "You'll have special dispensation from the government. You won't be charged for having sex with Valetta."

"I want it in writing."

"Fine."

"It's no secret he plans on being the next DA. He won't let anything stop him. He's not going to fall for me or take things too far."

"I disagree." Derek gave her another full body scan. "Trust me, Evie, if anyone can seduce him, it's you."

"He's not stupid."

A perturbed frown lined his mouth. "It's not about stupidity, it's about

lust. When he takes the first opportunity to get a taste of what you willingly offer," he handed her a one-use cellular phone, "call me. We'll move in and make his life miserable."

Evie tucked the phone into her jacket pocket. "If he can be enticed, I'll seduce him. I have extensive training."

"Of that I have no doubt." A sly grin shaped his mouth. "Make sure he fucks you before you call. Oh, and penetration versus oral activity is required in this particular instance."

She closed her eyes for a count of three. "Right. Keep in mind I'm not doing anything until I have a document in writing shielding me."

"Don't be so childish."

"I'm covering my ass. I won't let you set me up."

Someone rattled the women's bathroom door handle, startling them both.

"Meet me this weekend at the designated point of contact," he whispered and slipped into a stall. "I'll have your document."

Evie unlocked the bathroom door for a small older woman she didn't recognize, murmuring an apology as she exited.

The new seduction parameter and all the accompanying lustful thoughts she harbored regarding Zachary flew through her brain. Derek was right. She had practically licked her chops in anticipation of seducing Zachary.

Whether or not she'd tell anyone if she succeeded, especially Derek, was the only question left unanswered.

Chapter 3

“Ah, good evening, Mr. Valetta,” the maitre d’ at the exclusive restaurant said, smiling. “Your table is ready. It’s just as you requested.” The host gave Evie a nod.

“Thank you.” Zachary grabbed her elbow as they were led to a quiet and very private table in the back of the dark, intimate restaurant. The scent of spicy food lingered in the air. Evie noticed a small dance floor on the way to their seat.

Couples danced close together to the low thrumming beat of seductive music in the dark atmosphere. Tucked away in a private alcove, Evie lost sight of the dancers as she gazed at the place where she and Zachary would share dinner. What else might they share in the dim privacy of this booth tucked away from prying eyes?

“Here you are,” the host said quietly. “Your server will be with you shortly.” He stood aside for Evie to slip behind the table, lit only with a single taper candle. The scent of fresh flowers drifted down from the arrangements on a shelf against the wall situated behind their seats.

Zachary slid into the booth next to her. He didn’t stop scooting until his thigh pressed intimately into hers. A rush of electric sensation zoomed along every nerve ending in her leg. Evie took a breath to calm herself as the warmth of his intimate proximity seeped into her fading serenity.

He ordered champagne, and the host slipped away quietly to see to his request. All alone now, it was all she could do not to attack him.

Taking her hand, Zachary brought it to his mouth and kissed her fingertips one by one. A wave of goose bumps zipped down her arm at the touch of his lips. Extracting her hand, she took another shaky breath to control her rioting emotions as Derek’s words “I need you to seduce Valetta” skimmed through her over stimulated brain.

Tomorrow night she’d meet Derek, acquire the paperwork protecting

her, and proceed with the new seduction mission. Tonight, she needed control.

"This is lovely," Evie whispered as she leaned close. She caught a whiff of his masculine scent with a touch of cologne and had to take another deep breath to balance the sudden banging of her heart against her chest wall.

Zachary eased even closer and whispered, "Thank you for joining me tonight, Evie." He twisted his face toward hers putting his lips oh-so-close. Glancing out the corner of her eye to ensure no one watched, Evie turned and placed her lips mere inches from his. Sensing a presence approaching, she didn't close the distance to connect, but the desire to burned through her regardless of who might catch them

A steward arrived with their champagne, interrupting the almost kiss she craved. Once the glasses were filled and their dinner order was taken, they were alone to explore the intense attraction zinging between them.

Zachary raised his flute and tapped her glass. "To rebellious beginnings."

She laughed. "I like that. To rebellious beginnings, indeed."

"I'd like to put my cards on the table so to speak," he began without preamble. "Mind if I tell you straight up what's on my mind?"

"All right."

He took her hand in both of his. A thumb stroked her palm as he spoke, "I haven't been able to think of anything else but you for the past twenty-four hours."

"That's very sweet. You've been on my mind as well." She squeezed his fingers.

"Evie, I don't know how else to say this so I'll just be blunt. I'm looking for a wife."

Her eyes widened in surprise. She hadn't expected him to want to marry her.

"I'm very surprised, Zachary. In my recent research of you, I've been warned by more than one person that you aren't shopping for marriage."

"Who warned you?" His eyes narrowed in amused puzzlement.

"Every one of the few females I asked. Plus several single men commented about how they look up to you for managing to stay a bachelor so long." She grinned.

"I hadn't realized I was the subject of so much speculation regarding my

personal life.”

“Oh, please.” Evie laughed. “There are several pools established in the Justice Center alone, all of them betting on the date of your ultimate demise from bachelorhood.”

His incredulous expression made her laugh.

Not wanting to broach the subject of a permanent relationship, Evie turned her head in the direction of the music floating in the air.

Evie imagined she could see the dancing couples swaying to the music and pictured Zachary hugged close as he led her around a private dance floor instead of one monitored by the Family First League. Ignoring the serious subject between them, she asked, “Could we dance?”

His eyes widened in obvious surprise. “Right now?”

“Yes, if you please.”

Zachary separated from her, stood abruptly, and a sigh erupted from his sensuous mouth. He came around to her side of the table and offered her a hand. “Let’s dance then.”

With a grateful grin, she placed her hand in his, and he led her to the dimly lit dance floor. Hugging her to him in a much more intimate embrace than allowed the night before, Evie melted against him.

The firm sculpted body he possessed captivated her imagination and sent another shiver through her memory. Being pressed against his office door earlier when he’d kissed her repeatedly had been a definite trial of concentration.

Once enclosed in his arms, an indefinable pull arced between them. Did he feel it too? If his flammable stare was any indication, he did. She tucked away the problematic issue of having been ordered to seduce Zachary and pretended they were on a real date, a date that would lead to a permanent relationship if tended properly. She pushed aside the lonely echo resonating in her heart that this was only a ‘temporary’ relationship.

Evie was no slouch when it came to dancing. Dirty dancing was her specialty. She slithered as close to him as decorum and the dark room allowed, ensuring she brushed his trousers with her legs each time her hips swayed to the beat of the music.

Zachary was also a skilled dancer, but in a more refined, formal way. He moved her around the dance floor with a fluid grace, guiding her in every move as if their bodies were one. Drifting around the other couples as if they

didn't exist, he embraced her tighter.

She slid her leg between his and it brushed his inner thigh in rebellious abandon. Tilting her head back to gaze into his face, she grinned when he pressed his leg against hers and eased her back into a dip. His intense gaze sent spasms of desire across her body. She wouldn't stop him if he laid her down on the dance floor and had his wicked way with her.

Clutching her back into his arms, his low-toned whisper ruffled the hair next to her ear. "You tempt me to misbehave, Miss Marsh." She wondered if he could read her scandalous thoughts.

"I wouldn't stop you, Mr. Valetta," she replied, her traitorous lips voicing her carnal thoughts in a tortured whisper.

A shudder clenched through him at her impassioned words. He drew her back far enough to send a volcanic look deeply into her eyes. Heat radiated from him in waves, and she knew she wouldn't stop him from doing whatever he wanted.

Evie pondered a moment on the difficulty of a permanent relationship with him after this assignment, even though she knew it was impossible. She was an Enforcer. After this audition assignment, she would beg Derek for a job with his team. Zachary would fade into a sultry memory for her limited sexual collection. This dance would headline her memories.

The song ended, and they stopped dancing, but they didn't stop looking at each other or lower their arms. Zachary stood unmoving. The expression on his face was unreadable until the music began again. It was a melodic, slow dance. He shut his eyes, pulled her close, and rested his chin against the side of her head. Her breasts brushed his torso with each step they took. Her nipples tightened with each soft touch.

Zachary segued into slower more leisurely steps as he glided them around the dance floor. His delectable scent made Evie edge closer and clinch his waist tighter, reluctant to ever let go. The music's heavy pulse matched the throb in her already vibrating core. How long could she stay with him and not give into any sexual demands, the sexual demands she wanted to initiate until they were gratified repeatedly?

The band stopped playing and took a break. The interruption broke the tense look of fascination they shared. The press of his fingers on her back sent a hot pulse to her clit. He grasped her hand tight and didn't let go as they stared at each other.

His stony expression told her he wanted her even more than his firm cock low against her belly suggested. Zachary wanted a permanent relationship. She suspected he would focus his intention on her from this day forward. Unfortunately, she was a temporary secret infiltration in his life. She shouldn't entertain wicked, lustful desires for a man she didn't get to keep.

The lights came up slightly to signal a break, and their shared passionate moment was interrupted. Zachary glanced up as if he realized they weren't alone, turned her towards their table, and pushed her along. Luckily, it was still fairly dark in the room or everyone would see his reaction to dancing with her.

Once they were seated, he positioned himself close again. "I know I seem rash, but I've never felt this way about anyone else before in my life. I think we make a good match."

She nodded because she couldn't deny their sizzling fascination with each other. "I agree, but I don't want to be thought of as forward. While a month is considered a long engagement to the Family First League, we still have to date longer than twenty-four hours before a proposal can be issued. Do you agree?"

His regretful nod and the pinch of his mouth were probably a frustrated reaction to the conventions of today's society. Long gone were the days of the quickie Las Vegas marriages, at least in polite society where they resided. He sighed deeply and asked, "Will you let me announce our exclusivity?"

Evie squeezed his arm and caught his gaze with hers. "Yes. I can't imagine being with anyone else but you." The words came from her soul, and she meant them. She cared for him. A hollow feeling ensued as she realized the betrayal of her intentions contradicted every thing she said.

The slow seductive grin that shaped his mouth wrapped around her. He added, "Exclusivity makes you my girlfriend, you know."

Evie smiled as a thought occurred to her. "I know. And it makes you my boyfriend, too."

"I like the sound of that." Lifting his glass he toasted them, "Here's to us."

"Now that we're exclusive and everything, I need to tell you I'll be out of town for the next couple of days."

"Oh?" She smiled. "Escaping so soon as the threat of ball and chain loom closer?"

"Not at all." He chuckled. "It's just a trip I'd already planned last week to visit a good friend."

"I'll miss you, then."

A waiter arrived with their food, and conversation about their impending relationship suspended for the remainder of dinner. Once they'd consumed the decadent chocolate dessert completing the meal, she asked to go home. They still had the ride back to her place before the night was officially over.

Evie expected her second journey in tonight's limo might be scandalous...or it would be if she had anything to say about it.

* * * *

A bright flash went off as Zachary ushered Evie out of the restaurant.

"Mr. Valetta, who is your date for dinner tonight?" The reporter stuck a slim microphone in his face.

"Is this relationship serious, Mr. Valetta?" asked another.

A microphone slid in Evie's face. "Are you going to snare the most eligible bachelor in Eastlake City, ma'am?"

Holy hell!

Zachary watched his chauffeur slash bodyguard, Jamie, muscling his way through the media crowd assembled in front of the restaurant. Creating an opening in the pack, Jamie sheltered them through the throng of reporters and popped open the rear door of the limo.

Pushing Evie inside, Zachary followed and slammed the door on more questions from those who'd dubbed him the most eligible bachelor last week.

"That was exciting. I feel like a movie star. Tell me, does this happen to you often?" Evie grinned.

"Not usually, no." Zachary suspected someone had ratted him out to the press. He eased back into the plush leather seats of the limo, wondering how he would keep his hands off Evie.

Being with her tonight only convinced him they were destined for each

other. Her scent permeated his skin, sinking all the way to his bones with silky promises of wild, wicked satisfaction. Wanting Evie desperately, he hoped he wouldn't explode from desire before the minimum requisite engagement time had elapsed. He wanted to pleasure her and hear her breathy cries of climax.

Once the driver pulled away from the curb, he raised the partition to give them complete privacy. The second they were alone, Evie twisted suddenly and straddled his lap. Zachary groaned as his cock pulsed with utter longing. Of their own accord, his arms slipped around her back to hold her close.

"I know we're supposed to be pure while we're dating and being exclusive and everything, but I'm experiencing this ill-disciplined yearning for you." Her hips jerked, forcing her hot center to slide against his cock.

Zachary slid his hands to her ass and dug his fingers into her soft body, trying to think coherently. "I don't think—"

She cut him off with a lip-licking kiss before he could state his honorable intentions to remain pure until they married. Her arms slipped around his shoulders. Her delectable mouth pressed warm passionate kisses across his lips. Zachary suppressed a shudder, trying to gain a modicum of control. He knew the rules. If they were going to be dodging the press, they'd have to be careful about appearances. Having anyone see Evie sprawled across his lap in the back of a limo would be dangerous. He should move her off him.

Her hips pushed forward again. The warmth resonating between her legs made him mindless with agonized desire. His cock throbbed again. He needed privacy to have her. He wanted to have her forever.

There was not a doubt in his mind that she was the singular most desirable woman he'd ever been in contact with. The musky scent of her arousal as she rubbed her warm core against him clouded his mind. He couldn't think past how he could have sex with her as soon as possible. He'd marry her, of course. He'd give her lifelong vows tonight if it was possible, but it wasn't.

"Evie," Zachary moaned, breaking the kiss, "come with me tomorrow."

"What?" She slipped her hands into the hair at the back of his head and stilled her movements.

"My trip is scheduled for tomorrow morning. Come with me."

She pushed out a deep breath. "Where?"

"Maine. My friend has a remote compound on the northern border. It's where I spend my free time. Will you leave with me?" Zachary slid his hands from her hips along her spine, massaging her back.

Her eyes closed. She pushed out another deep regretful sigh. "I can't. I have to work."

"Call in sick." Zachary pressed a kiss to her chin. "I don't want to be away from you."

"How long will you be gone?"

He smiled. "Just two days and a night, but it's too long to go without kisses like this." Zachary pulled her mouth to his, sliding his lips across hers in reckless abandon. His tongue plunged into her soft warm mouth as his fingers slipped up from her shoulder blades and immersed into her rich locks of hair. He stroked his tongue against the inside of her mouth with infinite tenderness, breaking only long enough to whisper, "I can have Jamie pick you up first thing in the morning."

Zachary watched as she seemed to wrestle with his request for a minute before the corners of her mouth lifted in a mischievous smile. "Okay. Kiss me like that again and I'll go anywhere with you."

He licked his lips and dove into her warm mouth again for a taste of heaven as thoughts of the coming weekend swirled in his mind. A secluded compound on the Canadian border would offer all the privacy they'd need to carry their romance to the next level. If he threw caution to the wind, he could ignore current standards of protocol regarding pre-marital sex and indulge his libido. It didn't matter. He planned to marry her. At the compound, he planned to share the most private aspect of his life with her.

The secluded back seat of the limo offered a cocoon of privacy. As they kissed, Evie started moving her hips against his crotch again. His cock was at full attention nestled between her thighs, separated only by fabric. She broke their sultry kiss long enough to say, "Touch me." She pressed her lips to his and pulled his hand to the top of one breast.

His fingertips fairly vibrated with restraint, wanting to cup and knead her breast then pebble her nipple until his lips could follow and taste her. "If I touch you, I won't be able to stop."

The smoky rumble of her laughter made his dick throb in unfettered desire. "Who's asking you to stop?"

“I don’t want you to think I’m a lothario.”

“Since I’m on top, perhaps you think I’m a disreputable female.”

“No, I think you’re the most beautiful woman I’ve ever had the pleasure to know. I never thought I’d find anyone I wanted to share my life with.”

She rose to her knees, lifting the warmth of her center from his cock, which promptly strained to reconnect. Her head pressed against the ceiling of the limo as she gave him a positively prurient gaze of longing.

Leaning forward, her breasts came into line with his mouth. He took a deep calming breath to keep from latching his lips on to the silk shirt, seeking the center to help pebble her nipple for his pleasure and hers. He’d relish wrapping his mouth around one peak then the other before he kissed a path down between her legs and buried his face between her lower lips, licking and sucking...

Evie broke his delicious train of thought, leaning forward to latch her mouth to his in another soul-searching kiss. His hand dropped to knead her breast. His thumb caressed the nipple. Evie sank down on his lap again, straddling his cock. In the next second, her hips curled back and forth, grinding her fiery lower lips against his cock.

The tempo of her breathing increased. Her tongue stroked inside his mouth to the same frenzied rhythm her hips utilized. She moaned in his mouth, sending a ripple of electric desire straight to his cock. Slipping his hand underneath her shirt, he pinched her nipple through the lacey fabric of her bra. Evie promptly stiffened in his arms and cried out, breaking the kiss.

“Oh...oh...” She moaned and dissolved against him, trembling. Her breath warmed his throat as he gathered her in his arms, clenching her tight.

She kissed his chin. Her hands slipped to his face. Planting her mouth on his, she licked his bottom lip and sucked it between her teeth to tease it. Her hand trailed down his chest and into his lap. He jerked when her fingers slid over his cock.

“Evie, oh, God—”

“We’re here, Mr. Valetta,” Jamie’s voice called over the intercom into the backseat, intruding on the delectable sensation of her hand gripping his dick.

Zachary pulled his mouth from Evie’s, noticing for the first time that the vehicle had stopped. He needed to rally control over his libido and his cock when he was in public proximity of his lovely new girlfriend. He’d been

about to open his trousers and take her for a scandalous ride.

Undoubtedly, someone in her house had seen the limo arrive. No less than twenty-four windows faced the street. Somewhere inside, he sensed a stopwatch clicking to register how long they spent alone before emerging.

While he wanted to do any number of wickedly satisfying things, he couldn't very well sit outside her residence rocking the limo until he was fulfilled. It would take more than once. It would also take more than a few minutes. Given the chance, he'd spend the entire night making love to her until they were both too tired to move.

"Think your neighbors are watching the limo?" he asked, pulling her hand from his lap. "More specifically, are they timing us to see how long we stay inside it?"

He watched as she digested his words and kissed each of the knuckles on her hand.

She sighed deeply. Her posture slumped as she whispered, "Undoubtedly."

"Thanks for a lovely dinner and an arousing ride."

Her gaze shot to his lap before lifting to his eyes. "I'm so sorry, Zachary. I—"

"Evie, please don't be sorry. I'm not." He grinned. "I will, however, ask to say good night here instead of walking you to your door."

"Of course."

Lifting her off his rampant erection, he placed her in the seat next to him. "I'll see you tomorrow...early, right?"

Evie stared, disappointment etching her lovely face. "Right. Tomorrow," she sighed deeply once more and stepped out of the limo.

Zachary watched her until she entered her house, fairly pulsing with desire for her. It was probably a mistake to bring her to the compound in Maine so soon in their passionate relationship, but he was desperate to show her his life. All of it.

Even the secret components very few others knew about.

Chapter 4

“We made the papers.” Zachary’s slightly perturbed face greeted Evie at a small private airport the next morning. With the help of the driver, who carried her overnight bag, she exited the limo.

“Really? What does it say?” She’d spent a particularly sleepless night tossing and turning remembering Zachary’s lustful kisses and touches from the night before.

The orgasmic memory seconds before she left the car made heat rush to her face.

If he noticed, he graciously ignored her blush and handed her the syntho-newspaper. She read out loud, “Last week’s most eligible bachelor and lead ADA in the Eastlake City prosecutor’s office, Zachary Valetta, was seen in the company of a dark-eyed brunette beauty last night. Ensconced at the fashionable Sanctuary restaurant, known for private secluded tables and romantic candle lit dining experiences, Mr. Valetta refused to comment on his date or her importance to his life.

“Will the prosecutor’s new paramour capture Eastlake city’s most notorious rake in her spell, steal his heart and finally force him to give up the single life once and for all?”

“Is that all a part of your master plan?” Zachary whispered in her ear.

Evie shivered at his sudden proximity, then turned it in to an exaggerated shrug. “I don’t know. Is it working?”

Sliding his hand around her waist to guide her to the waiting aircraft, his only response was a sardonic smile accompanied by a low growl. The deep toned sound of his seductive voice forced a sharp pang of arousal so strong she held her breath waiting for another climax to implode in her core.

The zip of sensation from his massaging fingertips sailed straight to her clit. She took a deep breath to calm herself and with it came his freshly showered masculine scent. She curled closer, allowing herself the shelter of

his arms as they walked to the waiting stairs of the small private jet.

A female flight attendant stood just inside the door of the craft waiting for them to board.

Zachary allowed her to enter first and motioned her to the first row of two plush seats. No one else was on the plane. Evie wondered how much privacy they'd be afforded during the flight as a heavy aching sensation settled low in her belly.

"Window or aisle seat?" he asked.

"Window. I like to look outside and watch the earth rush away during take off."

He nodded with an indulgent smile. "Fine. But on the return flight, we trade places," he said, leaning closer, "because I like the same thing."

"I wonder what other passions we share."

"Perhaps we'll discover additional commonality on this trip."

Staring at his beautiful face a moment, she hoped she'd be able to restrain herself from attacking him.

Initiation into the mile high club danced in her mind. She settled in her seat, ready to get going. Perhaps once at their destination, they'd have a moment alone without the media, ill-timed interruptions or prying eyes to stop them.

Placing a hand on her stomach, she swallowed hard to keep from launching on Zachary in front of the flight attendant as he sank slowly into the seat next to her.

Evie pretended to stare out the window as if in contemplation of the scenery, but in truth she thought about her current mission. Specifically her plan for seduction. She called in sick to work, but she didn't speak to Derek.

She left a message that she wouldn't make the scheduled point of contact meet and walked out her door to the waiting limo before Derek could call her back. The cellular phone he'd given her rested in her purse, but she turned it off so he couldn't track her. She didn't reveal her destination, wanting to simply disappear with Zachary.

If she didn't have paperwork to protect her, she didn't want Derek to be able to record any carnal activities she might participate in for her own satisfaction. Glancing at Zachary, Evie wondered if he would allow a physical relationship.

The aircraft door was shut and a few minutes later a voice in the ceiling

said, "We're cleared and ready for take off."

The plane rolled forward and took off like a shot along the bumpy runway. Evie turned away from Zachary's magnetic pull to view the scenery speeding by.

When the aircraft lifted off the tarmac and into the air, she reached out and gripped Zachary's forearm. She slipped her fingers through his, wanting to share the rush of lift off with him.

Once the plane leveled off, he lifted the armrest between them, released her seatbelt and took her into his arms rubbing his hands down her back.

Evie buried her face in his shoulder, gripped his arms and tried to catch her breath. She was so attracted to him, it was a wonder she didn't self-combust every time they made physical contact. He held her close, his face buried in her neck, and kissed the tender spot below her ear. She wished they were already lovers and gripped her hand to keep it from slipping down to stroke his cock.

The flight attendant approached them holding a small tray with tumblers of ice water as if she'd sensed the need. Evie should tell her to pour it directly in her lap to cool her ardor.

Zachary took a deep breath and pulled away. "Before I do something I shouldn't in front of witnesses, could we talk about our future?"

She extracted herself from him and settled back in her own seat. "Sure. What do you want to talk about?" She wanted to talk about sex and the next opportunity for a taste.

"Now that you've been dubbed the prosecutor's paramour, we'll both have to deal with the media when we return." He ran a finger down the side of her face and tapped her chin once. "With your permission, I'd like to step up our relationship and announce a marriage proposal as soon as we get back to town."

Evie's heart pounded with desperate hunger at the thought of getting married to Zachary. "A marriage proposal after only a few days still seems fast. Will I be vilified in the press for seducing you inappropriately?"

"No. I won't allow it." He shook his head. "The DA has some sway over the press in certain matters."

"Okay." She shrugged. "I'm sure you know best how to handle this." Evie was in dangerous territory and a prickle of guilt slid into her stomach. "What else would you like to talk about?"

Once she disappeared from his life and returned to her secret Enforcer existence, Zachary would become the object of much lurid speculation. His former secretary vanishing last month would come up. She made a mental note and vowed to speak with Derek. She'd do her best to ensure Zachary didn't suffer because of anything she did during this mission.

"Where would you like to go on our honeymoon? I figure I can take at least two, maybe three weeks off."

"I don't think I'll be able to get that amount of time off." Evie thought about the limitations of her temporary lawman job at the Justice Center. It was only for show while she performed this mission, but she needed to stay true to form. "Perhaps I could get a few days off for a long weekend."

He cleared his throat. "Once we're married, you'll have to give up your job."

"What? Why?"

He took a deep breath. "Tiberius Security has a profound influence over senior officials in the DA's office. They set strict rules regarding employment for prosecutors, many of which are unwritten. I'm obligated to follow all of them whether or not they are written down or if I agree." He looked away, staring out the window to avoid her gaze.

"And do you agree?"

He turned suddenly and pierced her with a gaze. "Doesn't matter."

"It does to me. I've always been a lawman. Following in my father's footsteps was all I ever wanted to do." Evie swallowed hard. *Don't pick a fight.*

Zachary glanced over his shoulder, probably looking for the stewardess, before he turned to her with a conciliatory smile twisting his lips. "If it were up to me, I'd deny you nothing. Not even a job if you wanted it. But I won't ever repeat that in public." He winked and grabbed her hand to kiss her knuckles. She forced a smile and turned to stare out the window of the jet.

Whether or not she would be allowed to have a job after becoming his bride didn't matter. She was being foolish. This was a mission. She wasn't marrying Zachary Valetta.

No matter how perfect he was for her.

The memory of her father and his untimely death in the line of duty slid into her uncomfortable recollection. Her zeal to follow in his footsteps and remain a lawman after his death tested her capacity for reason. Regardless of

the aggravations she endured as one of very few female lawmen, it was the least she could do in honor of her father's memory.

Her father had beamed with pride on the day she received her certification after completing the very grueling lawman training program. The exhausting course was worth every frustration to see her father so happy.

She wished she could only remember his face full of pride at her greatest achievement, but inevitably, any thoughts of her father brought with it the final time she ever saw him alive.

Bleeding from gunshot wounds as the wail of the ambulance drew near, her father whispered, "I want you safe, Evie. Find Sarafina." His last breath escaped and his body relaxed in death. Evie slumped over his chest sobbing, clutching his limp hand staring at his blood staining the street.

Evie tilted her head against the headrest to erase the unpleasant memories. She leaned against Zachary now reading papers as the flight attendant strolled by every few minutes to ensure they were comfortable.

Drowsy from lack of sleep from the night before, Evie drifted in and out of wakefulness leaning against a man she was supposed to be seducing. A man who smelled like wicked pleasures of sexual decadence. Awake or asleep, Zachary made her foolish heart pound with infatuation.

Every detail she learned about him made her like him more and more. Grateful and appreciative of his warm male body to lean against during the flight, she relaxed. The plane hummed along and soon she dropped into a pleasant slumber.

Evie stirred awake a long while later still hanging on to the fringes of a vivid dream involving a tropical island swaying with palm trees. Bright blue water glimmered in the ocean next to the clean white sand she walked along in peace.

Then someone said, "We're cleared to land. Please buckle up." Evie woke without memory of where she was until she felt the volcanic warmth of a body beneath her.

Zachary.

She opened her eyes and saw the collar of a man's shirt. Lifting her head, she saw a lipstick smear on his shirt. Next to it was an embarrassing wet spot where she'd drooled as she'd slept.

Inhaling a deep breath, his magnetic scent enveloped her. He turned his

head and her lips were mere centimeters away from his.

"Did you sleep well, my lovely paramour?" The amusement in his tone was infectious. She smiled at first until she realized where her body was in proximity to his. The armrest between them remained in the upright and locked position.

One of her legs was securely perched across his lap and her knee rested on his hipbone. His hard length rested beneath her inner thigh.

The realization of where she was seeped into her fogged brain, and with it came a sharp pang of longing so strong, she took a breath to calm down.

"Zachary," she breathed against his lips, "I'm so embarrassed."

"Don't be. I enjoyed it."

So did she.

"But I got lipstick on your shirt."

He shrugged. "A small price to pay."

Lying sprawled across Zachary within the first day of the new seduction assignment was a step in the right direction, but not quite what she'd planned. Sharing his body heat made Evie want to kiss him, so much so that her lips burned with the unquenched anticipation. She licked them to put out the fire, but touching them with her tongue only revved her desire. She glanced around the cabin of the aircraft, checking to see if the flight attendant was close by, but didn't see her.

Zachary glanced at her lips and without warning tightened his arms around her, crushing Evie into his chest. She leaned in, prepared to kiss his luscious mouth, until he whispered, "We're landing in a second. Hang on to me."

The breath of air from his warning danced across her lips and a tortuously strong sexual pull ignited between her legs.

A heavy anxious feeling settled low in her belly. Her pussy tightened with rampant need. Her hands clutched the firm muscles beneath his fine linen shirt. She was too preoccupied with pent up sexual longing to notice that the plane she rode in skidded across the tarmac.

Her mouth bumped into his chin as the wheels of the plane hit the runway. She left another smudge of lipstick on the shadow of whiskers across his chin.

Evie had to taste him. She just had to. She didn't care if the flight attendant caught them. "Thank you," she murmured and placed her mouth

on his in sincere gratitude.

His low appreciative moan when she rubbed her lips across his sent a pulse of desire zinging through her veins until goose bumps rose. Zachary slipped a hand up to cup her head and invade her mouth with aggressive kisses meant to enflame. She was already on fire.

Remembering where they were, she removed her lips from his as the plane taxied to its final parking spot. His eyes blazed. He took a couple of deep breaths, still staring at her.

She got the distinct impression he wanted her by the pole shaped indent now evident on her inner thigh, but he resisted it. He didn't want any impropriety attached to their new exclusive relationship, at least not in a semi-public place.

Too late for that now, she thought, catching the amused gaze of the flight attendant who stood at the end of the short aisle. She politely waited for them to disengage their bodies before she approached to de-plane them.

Evie stood on shaky legs. Her hands lifted off his shoulders reluctantly.

She wiped the back of one hand across her mouth to ensure no drool still glistened there and broke the intense gaze they shared. A serious boundary had been crossed on this flight. A boundary she was supposed to tear down anyway. Half her job was complete.

A thrill of anticipation sent an electric charge down her spine at the coming night. Especially when he murmured, "We'll resume this later once we're alone at the compound."

Chapter 5

Zachary was on dangerous ground. He shouldn't be fondling his new 'paramour' in front of anyone able to give an exclusive interview. However, the thought of backing away from Evie was painful. His cock throbbed in readiness for the coming evening. Each thought of the rapturous look of Evie's face as she climaxed last night made him more insane with desire.

Spending the flight with her sprawled across his body had been a study in equal parts of torture and mild gratification.

Her stupendous breasts pressed into him with each breath she took as she slept. He'd spent the trip resisting the virulent urge to move his hips slowly back and forth across her leg.

He wanted Evie with an unprecedented attraction no other woman he'd ever met had touched within him. He couldn't wait until they married. Convention be damned, because he planned to make their relationship permanent just as soon as they got back to Eastlake City. With all the carnal activities he pictured participating in tonight, he'd make her his bride as soon as possible when they returned.

The soft breathing sound from her lips as she slept made him want to comfort her on levels deeper than what repeated sexual satisfaction would cure.

Every glance, gaze or stare Evie gave him pierced to his soul, as if she already understood him and approved. They were an hour away from their destination. He promised himself he wouldn't make a single move until he was assured of complete privacy.

The trip to the compound seemed tortuously long to Zachary. Evie held his hand and rested her head on his shoulder the entire trip.

Pulling up to the guard gate, Zachary was surprised to see a recognized figure step out of the guard shack to greet the vehicle. The man approaching the car was nearly six and a half feet of genetically enhanced brawn and

Zachary's oldest friend in the world.

Leaning down to look inside the open back window, his subtle eye squint was the only sign of recognition. "Good afternoon, Zachary." The deep timbre of Tyler Blackthorn's familiar voice drifted into the backseat.

"Tyler. Good to see you."

Tyler glanced at Evie and then at their entwined hands. "Export contact?"

"No. Guest."

"That so?" He arched a brow in surprise. "Mr. Huntington won't be back until tomorrow morning."

"Yes, I know. We have brunch plans at ten. Join us, why don't you?"

Tyler gave Evie another searing appraisal before answering, "Wouldn't miss it." He tapped his gloved hand on the top of the car twice and backed away. Zachary closed the window as the gates opened to let them through.

Evie squeezed his fingers. "He's a big guy."

"Yep. He's also the best security money can buy."

"Did he just say Mr. Huntington would be here tomorrow morning?"

"Yes."

"As in Charles Huntington, one of the ten richest men in the country?"

He cleared his throat. "Yes. Why?"

"I didn't realize the esteemed circles you traveled included such a powerful man."

Zachary shrugged. "He's an old friend of my parents. My folks live out of the country now, and Charles is like my family."

"I wonder if the prosecutor's paramour and her humble beginnings will be good enough for the fairy tale relationship the media is generating for you."

"You only have to impress me. And I'm already impressed."

They drove several miles on a blacktop road cut through a dense forest to reach the hidden house on the large estate.

Exiting the vehicle Zachary watched as Evie's head swiveled around looking at the large house and surrounding wilderness of wooded acreage. The house was a replica of a French palace. Not Versailles, but an equally breathtaking and updated custom construction of Château de Balleroy. The steep black slate roof and several chimneys topped the light tan and brown stone exterior.

"It's beautiful here." The breath from her lips formed white wisps from the crisp air. "Cold, but beautiful."

Her grin melted his heart and even after only a couple of days in her company, he suspected he was falling in love with her.

"Come inside and I'll give you a tour...and I'll help you warm up." He grabbed her hand and led her up the stairs of the mansion.

Entering the house a cantilevered staircase greeted them. Huntington's butler welcomed them inside and another member of the staff carried their bags upstairs as they followed.

As previously arranged, Evie was put in a room across the hall from his. Once the staff retired, they'd finally be alone.

* * * *

Evie swore she could smell Zachary from her side of the hallway. She needed to seduce him soon. Not because her job required it but because her libido did. She wanted him in the worst way.

Her heart banged in her chest each time he touched her body anywhere. Her clit was about to explode in orgasm as she resisted the urge to grab his hand and stick it between her legs for relief. The fact that there was no protective wall separating the front seat from the back in the car they arrived in was the only thing that kept her from attacking him on the way here.

Riding together in the car was a sensual experience of longing. He hinted once or twice in their casual conversation of waiting until they were married to partake in carnal pleasures although they didn't discuss it out right.

Evie wanted sex. She didn't get to marry him. Therefore, she was going to do her level best to seduce him tonight and make a memory for later. It was personal, not mission-related.

If he knew how much she craved him, it might make it easier to get him on board with her seduction plan. She planned to pour it on at dinner. If they even made it to dinner. She wanted a Zachary-flavored snack right now.

She touched up her make up after changing her clothes, added another spritz of perfume and readied herself to be alluring.

A tap came at her door. She crossed to open it. Zachary stood on the

threshold. The delectable scent of his cologne enveloped her. His sensual voice assaulted her. "I know it's early, but are you ready for a light dinner?"

"I could eat." *You.* She took a deep calming breath and smiled.

He tilted his head towards the door across the hall. "I've had a small meal set up in my suite. Will that be acceptable?"

She nodded. "Perfect."

Stepping inside Zachary's suite, Evie prepared to do whatever it took to get him into bed. Each time he kissed her hand it sizzled all the way to her clit. He closed the door. She didn't move and his arm brushed her back. She turned, absorbing the feral gaze he gave her. Oh, he was interested all right.

"Thank you so much for letting me drool on you during the flight." Evie put her hand on his chest.

"You're welcome." He covered her hand and squeezed once.

Evie closed her eyes for a couple of seconds, waiting to see if he would kiss her. He didn't, but when she opened her eyes he'd leaned closer as if he wanted to.

"Please, Zachary. I'll die if you don't kiss me again. I want you desperately."

"I'm thrilled you're desperate for me, Evie. But I don't want you to think that I expect you to sleep with me before we get married."

"I have no doubt about your intentions. You're the most honorable man I know. I'm not leaving this room until I'm satisfied..." She let a giggle escape. "...again."

He exhaled a long breath, closed the minimal distance between them in one step, and crushed his mouth to hers. She tightened her arms around his neck as his tongue slipped between her lips to entwine and engage.

Pulling her close, he pressed his cock into her stomach until she pushed back. Her hands slipped down to his chest on a path to grab his ass and hold him in place.

Once her fingers crested his hips, she heard him groan. He kissed her like he couldn't get enough. She separated her legs and planted them on either side of his, opening herself up.

He kissed a path along her face, buried his face in her throat and grabbed her under the thighs. She slipped her arms around his neck again and wrapped one leg around his waist. He nibbled a path along her shoulder, stopping when he reached her neck. She maneuvered her mouth to his and

sucked his bottom lip between her teeth for a nibble. His groan signaled a shift in the very air around them.

It was as if a dam of obsession broke. Two breaths later, she was sandwiched between his warm hard-planed body and the door. His hand slipped down to cup one breast. His thumb glanced across her erect nipple causing a groan of bliss to escape as his hips pushed into her once. She was ready to explode.

He pressed into her again, twice. More. A rhythm ensued. His cock grew against her belly. Hallelujah.

Don't stop. Don't stop.

One of his hands slid down and caressed her other leg before his fingers hooked beneath that thigh too. She slipped it around the back of his calf. His hips moved into the center of her body. His rigid cock ground against her sensitive clit. The sensation sent waves of pleasure outward from her center. A couple more strokes and she'd scream in release.

His mouth made love to her lips, dipping and swirling forcibly. He stroked her again and again. When he pinched her nipple through her blouse, orgasmic nirvana was hers. Her desperate hips drove forward allowing his marble hard cock to slide along her ready-to-come clit as a huge climax gripped her. She stiffened and moaned into his mouth.

Waves of pleasure radiated from her core tingling outward to her extremities. She trembled in his arms. Without them, she'd slide to the ground in a satiated puddle. He kissed her passionately, his tongue stroking inside her mouth. Her pussy muscles clenched and clenched, wanting a cock to tighten around. She wanted to melt at his feet and beg for more.

The powerful climax receded slightly. Her brain function returned. He'd given her two amazing orgasms so far and they hadn't even gotten naked together yet. She vowed to return the favor before leaving this room tonight whether or not they ended up without clothing.

He removed his mouth from hers, kissed a delectable tickling path to her ear and whispered, "Was that a satisfying kiss?"

"Yes." She laughed. "You'd better watch it or I'll expect that every time." She was shocked she could speak at all

"Fine with me. Any other requests?"

"I want to have sex with you. However, you have the most unbreakable willpower." Her breathy reply surprised her. She waited for his response to

her proposition.

A twinkle sparkled in his eye as he whispered, "I don't have any willpower. Look behind you. I set the stage for your seduction tonight."

Looking past his shoulder into the room, she noticed champagne and several silver covers over plates of food. A fire roared in the fireplace and a soft blanket had been placed in front of it making a cozy place for an after dinner rest.

"So what if I wanted to wait?"

His eyes widened and he loosened his grip on her shoulders. "Then we'll wait." He let out a long breath. "It won't be easy, but I'll use whatever microscopic resolve I possess to keep from ravishing you."

His volcanic gaze pierced her soul, making her tremble. She wanted him. She wanted him now. He was breathing hard but kept her at arm's length. Probably doing his best to keep his distance in case someone was about to spring out of the nearest closet and catch them in the act.

He pulled away. The rapturous look on his face shifted to something else. Regret?

He cleared his throat. "I'm sorry."

"I'm not. Of course the difference is that I came once already and you didn't yet. I think we need to remedy that, don't you?"

Breathing hard, Zachary peeled her body from his and backed up a few steps. His eyes did not leave hers. Evie rested against the door panting.

"Believe me, I want to. However, I have discipline over my lust."

Her engaging smile melted his heart a little more. "Self-control is overrated." She pulled herself together and pierced him with her own passionate gaze.

He nodded at the dining table behind them. "Dinner is waiting."

"We can eat if you want...or I could eat you." She reached down to his trousers and began unfastening his belt.

Chapter 6

Zachary backed out of her reach, his belt buckle sagging to the side. “You don’t have to do that. I promise I don’t expect it.” But he wanted it so frantically he was almost blind from lust.

“And yet I want to.” She eased closer and put her hands on his waist.

He groaned. “Evie—”

“Please, you’ve made your intentions clear, Zachary. I fully believe you aren’t trying to get me into bed so you can add a notch on your belt.” She tugged at his belt buckle as if to punctuate her point. “It’s obvious to me we both care about each other. We’re finally all alone. Let’s take advantage. Why should we wait?”

Zachary couldn’t think of a single reason why they should wait. He wanted her with a singular enthusiasm he could no longer deny. He cared about her even in the short time they’d known each other. He knew he’d lay down his life for her, whatever their future held.

Her hand brushed his cock through the fabric and his eyes shut for a moment to clear the vision of her hand anywhere near his dick. Opening his eyes, her beautiful earnest face greeted him. His nearly nonexistent control slipped a notch and he fought the urge to take her to bed.

When she sank to her knees before him, he fell against the door in surprise. Evie released his cock before he realized his pants were even undone. She stroked him once. The touch of her bare hand on his cock was so unexpected that he clenched his fingers to keep from releasing. Her mouth came in contact next. He groaned in utter disbelief as the breath from her lips swept over the tip of his throbbing bare shaft barely holding onto his slipping control.

Her lips closed over the swollen head of his dick and several inches of his cock disappeared into her mouth before he shut his eyes and stopped watching.

Evie slipped his shaft out of her mouth and licked the tip of his cock. His head fell back and banged against the door. She promptly wrapped her lips around the head again. Her tongue flitted around licking and sucking as she stroked his cock up and down. Up and down.

Gripping the base, she suctioned him deeper, earning another appreciative groan from the depths of his grateful throat. After a minute, she found a delicious rhythm as a powerful sensation centered in his gut. Up and down, she sucked and squeezed. The exquisite feeling of pre-orgasm settled in his balls. He tried to pull her off his cock mumbling, "Wait. Evie...I can't hold it. Oh, God, I'm going to..." He lost his capacity for speech while waiting for her to disengage her mouth.

Instead of releasing him, she squeezed her hand around the base of his cock and sucked him harder until a climax of epic and unfathomable pleasure spiked through him. He growled something unintelligible as his cum escaped down her throat.

His legs trembled in the aftermath of the orgasm as the harsh sound of his heavy breathing reverberated in his ears.

* * * *

"Now we can have dinner." Evie slipped Zachary's impressive cock back into his pants. "If you want to." His dick was still hard as if climaxing only once wasn't quite enough to make him shrink down to normal size. He leaned forward. His hands pressed to his thighs as if for balance. His butt rested against the door. Still breathing deeply, he kissed the top of her head.

"We're definitely getting married. Don't even think I'll let you get away now."

Evie laughed and got to her feet. She ran her fingers through the silky texture of his dark hair once. She crushed the longing of Zachary as her husband. Turning towards the dining table, she looked to see what he'd arranged for dinner.

A small, round, intimate table set for two was positioned close to the fire set with a vivid burgundy tablecloth edged in gold thread. Two silver domed covers rested on top of the plates on the dining table. A trio of tapered golden candles were set in crystal holders flickering between the

place settings.

Off to one side a wheeled service trolley held several serving dishes with various nibbles and appetizers. Cheeses, grapes, assorted fruits and veggies, plus a dish of what looked like expensive Swiss chocolate truffles.

Evie snagged a truffle and popped it in her mouth. It was probably reserved for dessert, but her rebellious nature didn't care. The rich flavor of chocolate confection coated her tongue and an unexpected moan escaped her lips.

"That moan expresses exactly how I feel." Zachary slipped behind her, pressing himself against her back as the treat melted in her mouth.

Strong arms encircled her waist. He kissed a path around the back of her neck eliciting another moan when he brushed the sensitive place below her ear. He tugged her earlobe between his teeth and asked, "Hungry?"

"Not for food. Not yet." Evie twisted to face him, burying her face in his throat. His masculine scent laced with a hint of cologne teased her with promises of wicked delights. She craved the feel of Zachary's naked body sliding against hers in a primitive dance as old as time. She wanted sex.

Evie pulled him away from the food and towards the huge inviting bed. Before he could protest, she pulled her shirt over her head revealing a see-through black lace bra.

Zachary cursed under his breath, grabbed her and pressed his mouth to hers. His kiss singed her lips as his hands burned an imprint on her skin. His tongue enveloped hers and caressed her mouth like he'd been in love with her for centuries. Fast and frantic, Evie removed the rest of the articles of their clothing between crazed passionate kisses, not stopping until they were both naked.

Discarding his pants and boxers, she circled her arms around his neck and resumed their passionate kisses. He crushed her to his chest. His fingers pushed through the strands at the back of her head. Grabbing a fistful of hair, he pulled her mouth away to feast on the sensitive skin at her throat.

Zachary twisted and pulled the coverlet down, exposing the sheets. Entwined, they fell together to the soft surface of the bed. Evie landed on top. Her pussy tightened in readiness for imminent pleasure. Her fingers trailed between his legs. She grabbed his cock one handed and gripped it. Zachary groaned. His body arched off the bed. Resting on his elbows, he gave her a searing gaze.

Seconds later, they were writhing on top of the turned down sheets. Evie ended up on the bottom this time as his hand slid between her legs. She nearly climaxed with the first stroke of his fingertips across her clit. Zachary kissed her cheek, her throat. Working his way lower, he kissed her breast. He licked her nipple before sucking it into his mouth. She arched and moaned. The stroke of his fingers on her thighs made her wild.

She frantically whispered, "Please touch me."

His finger stroked her clit twice before veering off to stroke her lower lips. Two fingers slipped inside her body, torturing her with delight. She wiggled her hips as he pumped his fingers in and out, in and out.

His lips kissed across to the other breast to lick and tease her other nipple. As his fingers entered her again, his thumb caressed her throbbing clit. A pleasurable arc snapped through her slick core and she gasped.

The sharp ache that had been building increased to the pinnacle of near release. Rapture was almost hers as he strummed her. The sharp tug of his teeth on one nipple pushed her very nearly over the edge of orgasm. She clenched to prevent the release. She wanted his cock inside.

Evie rolled him to his back and straddled his hips, poised to ride. He grabbed her shoulders. His erect cock only inches from her wet pussy.

"Wait." His panicked gaze caught hers.

"No. I can't resist you, Zachary. I want you inside me." She impaled her slick pussy with his cock, sliding down until his balls rested between her legs and he'd pierced her completely.

Their tight fit together made her quiver.

He closed his eyes and growled. Hands sliding down to her hips, he lifted her. Afraid he was lifting her off, she slammed down. He growled again. She ground herself on his cock, sliding back and forth. His eyes stayed shut. The expression on his face was pained.

"Zachary," she called. His eyes opened and the feral gaze of desire tore into her as she whispered, "Watch me." She increased the speed of her movement. His hands on her hips now helped her progress. His hips stabbed upward deepening the thrusts.

Evie's happy clit rubbed against the mat of curly dark hair at the base of his cock. Her climax clenched his length and shot through her without warning.

The intensity of her orgasm bent her forward. Impulsively, needing to

nibble, she bit his shoulder. He roared as her teeth sank into his flesh and he thrust his cock harder, deeper inside her body. She thought she might split from the pleasure of it. She moaned and rode him until he stiffened and let out a roar unmistakable for anything but climax.

She slumped onto his chest boneless and completely satisfied to catch her breath. His arms snaked around her and clinched her tight.

“I love you, Evie,” he whispered.

Chapter 7

Evie woke to a buzzing sound and felt Zachary slip out of bed to answer his phone. She smiled in memory of their night together. She listened to his low-toned voice. Sexy.

“Yes.” The sound of his voice caressed her with wantonness.

“No.” He cleared his throat. Evie noted he only cleared his throat when he wanted to think of how he was going to answer a difficult question.

“That won’t be necessary.” The more he spoke the more she vibrated with renewed need.

After experiencing a taste of lovemaking with Zachary, Evie was loath to admit he touched her soul where no other man had ever reached before. What would she be willing to do to keep him? Anything? Was there even the possibility for a permanent relationship? Probably not.

She had responsibilities and ultimately a mission to complete. It was important that she focus on her future with her new Enforcer team, wasn’t it? Perhaps, but she decided to save her serious thoughts for when she got back to Eastlake City. In the magical warmth of his arms, she devoted her dreams to spending her life with a man she admitted she was falling in love with.

After making love, they’d retired to the soft blanket before the fire. They had talked about a wide variety of subjects from jobs and ambition to family and childhood dreams. She learned that he had a passion for the law just like she did. His voice resonated with pride as he talked about being a prosecutor. He mentioned his desire to be the next DA and told her he was about to submit his application to replace Alfred Reynolds.

Zachary fed her grapes throughout their deep discussion and professed his love for her once more before tucking her under the covers.

Sliding fingertips over her body in the darkness, Zachary found her clit and stroked it leisurely as he sucked on her nipples until she was dripping

wet and panting for him to take her.

Pulling her legs apart, his wide, thick cock nestled between her drenched lower lips and pierced her pussy in a single deep satisfying stroke. His thumb found her clit, rubbing her to near climax as he thrust his cock steadily inside.

Displaying a tenderness she hadn't expected for the explosive chemistry they shared, Evie reveled in the sensations that his touch evoked. Her orgasm came slowly washing over her in pulsing, bone-shattering gratification. Her pussy gripped his cock as her satisfied moans echoed around the dark room lit only by the fireplace. Zachary's cock continued a slow rhythm of thrusts until he groaned her name and stiffened, clutching her fingers in his. Before they fell asleep entwined together, he assured her that she was the one.

The harsh sound of his voice interrupted her lusty memory.

"Yes, I'm sure." Zachary barked into the phone.

She popped open one eye and tried to focus. Red digital numbers swam before her eyes in a blur on the bedside clock. *It must be early.* She blinked a time or two but her eyes weren't ready to open yet. She gave up trying to distinguish the time when she heard him conclude his phone call.

"Don't do anything. It's not needed. Right. Later." He hung up and slid into bed behind her. Gathering her into his arms, Zachary pressed his chest into her back.

Evie relaxed and melted forward into the bed as his hands slid over her sensitized skin. He kissed her shoulder and pulled away to massage the muscles on either side of her spine until she moaned in appreciation. Slipping his fingers around to cup a breast, he thumbed her nipple until it pebbled to a nerve-ridden peak. His mouth burrowed into a tender ticklish spot on her neck and kissed until she squealed in delight.

He massaged his way down the front of her body stopping between her legs to stroke and arouse her clit.

Pressing kisses to her neck he whispered, "Are you awake?" His fingers entered her. Lying on her side, Evie's hips gyrated to the rhythm of his thumb across her clit as moisture gathered between her lower lips.

"I am now. What time is it?"

"Early. Before dawn." The stroking continued. "Say the word and I'll let you go back to sleep." He kissed her shoulder tenderly as his fingers slowly

entered and withdrew.

“You’re asking if I want sleep or sex?”

“Mm hmm.” He stroked her clit with meticulous care. “What’s your pleasure?”

Pushing into his hand she said, “Both are good choices...”

Zachary kissed the back of her neck. “I agree.” The scratch of his whiskers on the back of her neck was driving her insane.

“If only I can stay awake.” She sucked in a breath, fisting her hands in the sheets as he played with her.

He laughed and withdrew his fingers from her pussy, sliding his fingertips across her clit briefly before trailing down the inside of her thigh.

“Sex,” she cried out in alarm, “I want sex.”

A rumble of laughter accompanied his words. “Good choice.”

Stroking a finger across her clit again, he rubbed her sensitive flesh until she was at the edge of another release. His thick cock rested against her ass, teasing her. His mouth lifted from her shoulder. His fingers stopped moving. “Are you sure you don’t want me to let you sleep?”

“No!” She sucked in a trembling breath on the precipice of another grand climax. *Don’t stop. Please don’t stop.* As if reading her mind, the pressure of his fingers on her clit increased.

“Well, perhaps I’ll finish playing with you first.” Lowering his mouth, he sunk his teeth into the skin on her shoulder. He licked the spot he’d bit and trailed kisses to the back of her neck.

“I want you inside of me when I come. Please.”

He kissed her neck once whispering, “As my lady wishes.”

Zachary rolled her forward onto her stomach. Evie felt his cock brush down her butt and caress her inner thigh.

Pinned underneath him, she spread her legs and lifted her hips. He pushed his cock seemingly to her ribcage as he entered from behind. He had a big cock but this position made him feel gloriously bigger. He pumped once, twice.

One of his arms was trapped underneath her torso and one hand squeezed a breast tenderly as he moved, slowly filling her up and retreating. His tempo increased as he buried his cock into her pussy again and again.

His weight pressed her into the mattress, limiting her movement. Her arms were beneath her. His cock tunneled in and out. In deeper and out. The

erotic sensation of being trapped excited her. She couldn't move. His free hand slid to her hip leveraging a deeper thrust. He pounded into her. The achy heaviness of pre-climax vibration danced inside. She whimpered as it gripped her. Waves of pleasure rode through her as her pussy clenched his cock in exquisite release.

A low growl erupted from Zachary and he slammed deeper. Evie screamed as her orgasm still pulsed from her core. Three deep strokes later, he roared as his body stiffened. A moment later, he slumped on her gasping. Breathing hard herself, as spasms of release convulsed her muscles, she moaned her appreciation into her pillow.

After a few moments, he rolled off. "Are you okay? Did I crush you?"

"No. Not crushed." She sucked in a deep breath and let it out. "I'm good."

"Only good?"

"Okay, I'm wickedly stupendous. I may never be the same."

Grabbing one shoulder, he rolled her onto her back. His eyes blazed with hunger as he leaned over her on one elbow. A satisfied smile graced his lips. "All right then, I guess I'll let you sleep." He kissed her mouth only once before sliding next to her.

Snuggling up against her body, he slung one leg across her thighs as if to hold her in place so she wouldn't escape. She didn't want to.

Evie drifted to sleep while cocooned in his arms, wishing she could stay here with him forever.

When she woke again, the room was light with the break of dawn and she was all alone in bed. Raising up on her elbows, she heard the subtle tones of Zachary's voice speaking from the bathroom.

Evie was about to call out to him, but his agitated voice compelled her silence. She slipped out of bed and walked towards the bathroom to listen.

"...already knew that. No. This situation is completely different than Brenda's..."

At the mention of his former secretary's name, Evie paused, unsure if she'd heard correctly.

"...know as well as I do...Brenda had to disappear..." Evie leaned forward but couldn't hear anymore. Was Zachary responsible for Brenda's disappearance? Surely not.

"Later." Zachary barked from inside the bathroom.

Evie backed up and slipped into bed just as he exited the bathroom.

His eyes narrowed when he caught her stare, but only asked, “Did I wake you?”

Heart pounding, Evie leaned on one elbow and forced a smile. “Yes. I missed your warm body snuggled up next to mine.”

“Come shower with me. I’ll make it up to you.”

Evie relaxed and told her suspicious mind that Brenda was a common name. She wasn’t ready to believe the worst about Zachary. She might not ever be able to.

Once inside the shower stall with hot steamy water pouring down on them both, Zachary expertly massaged her overused muscles. His hands were as amazing as the rest of him.

She took the soap and washcloth from him to return the favor, which he allowed for a while. Wrapping his arms around her as soap suds slicked their bodies, he demanded a kiss.

As their mouths played, their hands wandered to other places. His to grab her ass and grind his cock against her lower lips. Hers to slip into the soft wet locks of hair as his mouth fastened on her neck to nibble.

The erotic scene played out when she wrapped her legs around his hips and he lifted her against the tiled shower wall, then lowered her onto his erection.

He pumped into her body, deliciously filling her as steam swirled around their private fantasy playground. She found herself so moved by the atmosphere that she climaxed as he powered his last few strokes to completion. He growled when her internal muscles clamped on his cock in release after he stopped moving.

She memorized the steamy, sultry surroundings. She inhaled the soft fragrance of the perfumed soap, setting to memory the smell and feel of his body pressed to hers during what was probably their final encounter.

* * * *

A couple hours later, Evie and Zachary ate a pleasant lunch with Charles Huntington and his security officer, Tyler Blackthorn, in the ornate and ostentatious dining room of the compound. The conversation had been

innocuous and boring with the exception of Huntington's security officer, Tyler, giving her the occasional riveting look.

She might have dozed off from lack of sleep if it hadn't been for Tyler alternately glaring at her and Zachary. She didn't know what his problem was, but he made her nervous. She hoped he didn't recognize her from a previous Enforcer mission. She knew she hadn't seen him. As big and scary as he was, Tyler would be easy to remember.

Evie dismissed him and planned a way to scout around Huntington's house without 'the best security money could buy' as a chaperone. She'd never get an opportunity like this again. She predicted a long bathroom break in her future.

After the dishes were cleared, the four of them adjourned to the library. Huntington's library was a colossal two-story room with several ceiling to floor bookshelves. There was a balcony around the upper level of the rectangular room and two rolling ladders, one on either end, to ascend to the second floor library space. From what she noticed, the book collection was expensive and rare, reflecting the personal tastes and lifestyle of Huntington.

Paper products had been outlawed for years, replaced with synthetic paper in various forms of syntho-pages, but all the books housed here were real. Huntington did have the reputation as one of the richest men in the country to uphold.

* * * *

Zachary escorted Evie by the elbow, following Charles and Tyler through an opulent two-story arch. Charles led them into a comfortable reading area off the impressive library. Zachary seated her on one of several sofas lining the space, then strode over to stand beside the large fireplace framed by two narrow windows facing the Canadian border. This was his favorite spot in the house. The library was huge but tucked away at the back of the house.

Staring into the flames, he contemplated his life and the inherent problems he'd created for himself by sleeping with Evie in a naughty premarital fashion. He knew in his heart, however, that he'd never regret last night. He truly loved her.

Everyone could kiss his ass that he didn't wait for an official marriage ceremony joining them together before partaking in carnal knowledge. It was only a matter of time before they wed. He'd set it up for as soon as possible once they flew back tonight. He wasn't waiting a month.

He avoided looking at Evie because flashes from their shower this morning kept creeping into his mind and distracting him. Every time he glanced at her, he caught himself thinking about their future together. He was certain his face turned sappy so he didn't look at her in front of his friends.

Charles had requested his presence but not Evie's, and they couldn't speak freely in front of her. At least not yet. Not until Zachary shared with her the secret of the compound and Charles' relationship to him.

Tyler had been calling him repeatedly, trying to get him to authorize a background check on Evie before marriage plans were announced publicly. Charles agreed. Zachary did not. He knew all he needed to about Evie.

Zachary knew Charles had planned to discuss the steps needed to become the next DA of Eastlake City.

Evie asked a few polite questions about Charles' extensive rare book collection as he considered his future. After several minutes of innocent conversation he was about to send Evie out to pack up her things so he could speak to the other men alone, but she gave him a better reason.

"Excuse me." Evie rose from the sofa where she'd been perched. "I'd like to freshen up before we leave. Where is the nearest bathroom?"

Charles pointed at the door. "Down the hallway into the foyer, first door on your right, my dear."

"Thank you." She sent a smile to Zachary that stabbed his heart and exited the room, shutting the door behind her.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" Tyler asked once the three were alone.

Zachary turned an uncivil gaze in his direction. "I don't know what you mean."

"If you haven't already fucked her, and I suspect you have given your relaxed expression, you're about two seconds away from throwing her down to mount her whether you're alone or not."

"So?"

Tyler tilted his head to one side and said, "Even the prosecutor is

supposed to wait until after the marriage vows are spoken before he fucks his paramour.”

Zachary narrowed his gaze and crossed his arms in his best don't-screw-with-me posture.

“I noticed you made the Eastlake City society page again this week.” Charles asked, politely intruding on his memories from the night before as he changed the subject. “A slightly different article this time than the last.”

“Yes. So what?” Flames danced and sparked in his line of vision.

“Are they accurate?”

Zachary glanced at Charles. “Yes. Why do you think I brought her here? I'm going to tell her about my life and the compound.”

“Are you crazy?” Tyler launched off the furniture he rested on. “Do not tell her anything until I have her checked out thoroughly.”

Charles nodded. “He's right, Zachary. I arranged this meeting to inform you of the new condition attached to the Eastlake City DA's position.”

“Let me guess. They want me to get married before they'll even consider my application.”

A thin tolerant smile appeared on Charles' face. “Did you receive a list of women from the DA?”

Zachary shook his head in surprise. “How did you know about that?”

“I helped compile it.”

Zachary was stunned. “Why?”

“I was asked to, of course. As the largest supporter of Tiberius Security and the Family First League, I have some say.”

“Great. Pick Evie.”

Tyler grunted, “We don't know who she is...yet.”

Zachary crossed his arms. “Are you checking up on her? I told you it wasn't necessary.”

Tyler shot him an uncivil gaze. “She's a lawman. So was her old man.”

“I already knew that.”

“Did you know she has a classified file?”

Zachary's eyes narrowed. “What's in it?”

Tyler barked out a laugh. “I'm trying to hack in and find out. It's only a matter of time.”

“And you did this without my authorization?”

“Yep.” Tyler glanced at Charles and nodded once. “I got the okay from

my 'boss'."

"You take your orders from me. Regardless of what you find in Evie's classified file, I'm marrying her."

"That might not be wise for your career. Given your precarious position, any one of the other five women on that list would be better suited as your wife."

The unmistakable threat hung in the air. Choose another woman to marry even though you've been screwing someone else for the past twenty-four hours or your rosy future might be over.

Glancing at Tyler, he noted his old friend's expression was sardonic as usual.

Shaking his head, Tyler replied, "I should get that information soon. Why don't you delay your flight until I have her dossier so you can decide if she'll work out?"

"Trust me. She's the one. The only one. Besides, I don't want to take the time. I need to get back to prepare for my wedding."

"When are you planning on tying the knot?" Charles asked.

"Less than a week."

Tyler snorted and crossed his arms. "What if you find out disturbing information about your bride-to-be before that?"

"Then I'm screwed anyway I look at it. I don't want any of the women on that list."

"You should prepare yourself. Whatever I find in that classified file will likely keep her from being suitable wife material. You'd have to pick a new bride anyway...and Evie would have to disappear."

"Evie can't just disappear like Brenda did. We've been in the papers together. It would generate too much talk."

Tyler and Charles exchanged weary glances. "It might be too late anyway."

"Why?"

"Zachary, your infatuation with Miss Marsh complicates things." Charles stood and approached the fireplace. "Anyone who's seen you together will tell tales."

"I don't care. If I can't have her and become DA...then I might as well not go back either."

Tyler huffed, "You know as well as I do that isn't a possibility. We've

all worked too hard to get you into the DA's position. We'll simply invent a plan B. Charles Huntington could demand that you be instated as the new DA."

"No. That creates other problems. I don't want Charles Huntington to have to pull strings."

"Why not leave her here?" A wicked smile slid onto Tyler's face. He stroked his chin with thumb and forefinger. "I'll look after her for you until this is all settled."

"I'll kill you if you touch her." The words escaped his lips before he could stop them. Zachary inhaled a deep breath to douse the bitter taste of jealousy dripping in his veins.

Tyler barked out a laugh. "You're in love with her. Jesus, you're a sap."

"Zachary—" Charles' rebuke was cut off by the sound of Tyler's cell phone buzzing.

Pulling it off his belt, he opened it and barked, "Yeah?" Tyler listened. Two seconds later, he snapped his posture straight and shook his head at whatever the information he heard.

"No. Stay put. I'll take care of her." Sending a glare to Zachary, Tyler rolled his eyes and stomped out the room.

Chapter 8

Evie left the impressive library and ran down the hallway to where she knew the bathroom was in the foyer. Before entering there, she intended to sneak into the office room she'd noticed on the way in to the house yesterday. Spying on Charles Huntington was an unexpected boon. It also didn't prick her conscience as spying on Zachary had done.

Peeking out of the hallway, she put a hand on the brass doorknob of the now shut door leading to what earlier looked like an office. Looking over her shoulder to ensure she was still alone, she twisted the knob. The door opened easily. She slipped inside the dark room and locked the door behind her. After surveying the room, she eyed the desk as a thrill of anticipation ran down her spine. Perhaps she would find useful information regarding the activities Huntington was involved in.

It was late afternoon and should have been lighter for the time of day, but there was a cold front on the way and angry swollen storm clouds darkened the sky.

Evie went straight to the desk and checked the drawers. All locked. She perched on the edge of the luxurious executive chair and scanned the desktop. On the pristine desk calendar before her displaying the current month, Evie saw a small notation from two weeks ago. She squinted and leaned forward to read the few words.

Brenda Beal: Sarafina subject scheduled for disappearance. The breath she'd been holding whooshed out. Sarafina pounded in her brain. It was the last word her father uttered before he died. The research she'd conducted to find Sarafina had gotten her into big trouble with her former Enforcer team. She suspected they had set her up to keep her from searching through the old lawmen open case files.

Evie still hadn't figured out why the disappearance of a junior senator, Sarafina Anderson, from five years before was on her father's mind before he died. She was more clueless as to why her searching for it led her peers to betray her.

She read the notation again. Brenda Beal was Zachary's former secretary who'd gone missing two weeks before. Why did Huntington have it noted? How did Sarafina figure into the equation? With no divine explanation forthcoming to her questions, she kept looking.

Searching the surface of the desk she noticed a small clipboard rested on top of the papers in the 'to be filed' basket. She pulled the clipboard out carefully. It was the gate guard log for the current month. Evie noticed her name at the bottom, having arrived the night before with Zachary who was also listed next to her name as her host. Scanning the log for the earlier part of the month, another name caught her eye. Brenda Beal.

Two weeks ago, she had also arrived in Zachary's company according to the date listed on the log in neat script. It was also the day after the last date anyone had seen Brenda alive in Eastlake City. *Had Zachary brought Brenda here the day she went missing?*

Dread slammed into her stomach and settled in. There had to be an explanation, but she couldn't exactly ask Zachary to explain the contents of a log she wasn't supposed to be reading. She replaced the clipboard and resumed her search, looking for anything that might allay her new fears.

There was nothing else of note on the desk.

Dropping to her knees, she started to check the waste basket but spied a piece of paper peeking out from under the desk. Snaking her fingers to the paper she grabbed it and held it up to the window to allow the cloudy filtered natural light seeping in to help her read.

It was a memo from Tiberius Security headquarters. The upper left corner had the red stamp of a classified document.

The best kind, Evie thought and scanned it quickly. It was from over a month ago.

Date: September 12, 2075

To: Tiberius Security Affiliates and Associates

From: Tiberius Security Headquarters

Re: Plan Implementation Step up from July 2076 to April 2076

A decision has been reached by Tiberius Security Headquarters regarding the implementation and country re-orientation process, which will be changed to April of the tri-centennial year.

Since we wish to be fully in control by the anniversary date of our glorious forefathers, we will execute the planned strategy three months early.

The law to eradicate women from the workplace will initiate our policy for the betterment of all citizens. Another correspondence will follow to detail the exact date.

Once the working women are ensconced at home with their families and the single marriage-aged women are auctioned by their male relatives and safely married, we'll be able to move forward with our other initiatives and live as the Maker intended.

Failure to comply will be dealt with harshly. The institutions for women will be ready for those unfortunates unable to marry immediately. The Tiberius School for young women will be available for training of future young women to learn homemaking skills and be ready for auction to our future leaders.

Voices approached outside the door. Heart pounding in her chest at the thought of being caught, she could hardly breathe. Evie slipped the paper back where she'd found it and crawled out from under the desk. Careful to stay silent, she darted for the door. Ear pressed to the hard surface, she listened to the voices grow fainter. She released a startled breath.

Holding herself still, she counted to ten before unlocking the door to peek out. Seeing no one, she backed out of the office trying not to make a noise. The document she'd read blazed in her mind. Saints alive, Tiberius Security was taking over the country. They obviously had a well thought out strategy in place to make these monumental changes.

The most disturbing of which involved outlawing women in the work place and marriage auctions. The dramatic changes they proposed for women's lives resembled a trip to the Stone Age. The final step in subjugation of women's rights. Women as property. Young girls sent to learn how to be good housewives for Tiberius future leaders. She couldn't fathom the idea. She tucked the disconcerting information about Brenda

away for later as she quietly slid her body out of the room.

Evie took another step back and clicked the door shut. Exhaling in relief, she bumped into something hard...and human.

She shrieked and twisted around to see who'd caught her. A beefy torso filled her vision. Her gaze trailed up the chest and she tipped her head back.

Evie recognized the angry face as Huntington's guard dog, Tyler Blackthorn. He looked like a military commando with his buzz cut hair and angry eyes. *A dangerous thug probably addicted to steroids*, she surmised as she perused his muscular chest.

The name Satan flashed in her mind. She decided it was an apt nickname for him.

His frown sent an unchecked tremble down her body. "What were you doing in there, baby doll?" His low-toned inquiry sent another bolt of electric fear to her mid-section. Until his words registered.

Frowning at being called baby doll, then thinking better of her attitude since she'd just gotten caught snooping, she stuttered, "I...I..."

Unable to articulate a reason for why she'd been snooping around was an alien feeling. Bathroom!

"I was looking for the...bathroom."

His lips shaped into an amused smile. He drilled a perilous gaze through her core, his eyes the color of coal. Leaning down and never breaking his fierce gaze, he lowered his face to her eye level. One hand rested above her head on the wall. His other arm came up and she flinched, thinking he meant to strike her. He pointed to another door next to the one she'd exited.

"Through that door, baby doll." He was so close that his breath ruffled her hair. The heat from his substantial muscular body didn't warm her. Satan was too close. She backed into the door she'd exited to distance herself.

Evie forced her eyes to follow the line of his muscular arm until she noticed the door next to the one she'd just exited. "Thank...thank you."

"Better hurry, baby doll. Your party is leaving soon. Unless you'd like to stay here with me."

Evie shook her head once without speaking, not trusting her voice not to betray her fear and tremble. Never show fear, her father had taught her, even if it controls your body in waves.

* * * *

The hour-long trip from Charles Huntington's remote compound to the airport was distressingly quiet. Zachary held Evie in his arms for the trip, but sensed her distance. Tyler had pulled him aside to snitch about her exit from the front office when she went to the restroom.

He fervently expressed his serious doubt over her lame excuse of searching for the bathroom. Zachary sighed. He wondered what she might have seen to make her so quiet. Tyler's paranoia was rubbing off on him. She probably hadn't seen anything.

With heaps of persuasion from Charles, Tyler was on a mission to hack the classified file he'd found on Evie. In addition, Charles and Tyler ganged up and warned him not to further involve himself with his new 'paramour' until she was completely checked out. They didn't need a sex scandal.

Zachary wondered at his resistance to his friends concerns. Fearing on some level that his perfect mate was too good to be true, he'd balked at any negative information about her.

If Tyler found a single shred of bad news in that secret file, regardless of how small, she'd likely be ripped away from him to disappear like so many others had done at the compound.

Zachary knew in his heart that the others were in a better place, but he didn't think he wanted to go on if Evie couldn't share his life. He'd do his best to initiate damage control if her classified file revealed a minor indiscretion.

"I'm glad you came with me on this trip," he said and squeezed her shoulders with one arm.

Tilting her head, she smiled after a momentary pause and answered, "Me too."

"I know things will be crazy in the media when we return, but I'll do my best to shield you."

She shrugged and mumbled, "Okay."

"I love you," Zachary added and had no doubt he sounded sappy, but he meant it. He wanted her to understand his intentions. He would do everything in his power to marry her, regardless of what classified

information Tyler found.

"I love you too, Zachary." She snuggled closer and rested a hand on his chest. "I really do," she murmured almost inaudibly.

Her admission melted his heart a little further.

Seemingly content to remain quiet for the trip to the airport, Zachary memorized the feel of her in his arms. Once they were back home, he'd have to cool things down in public.

Making good time to the airport, Zachary led Evie from the car toward the VIP lounge knowing they had an hour to kill before their private jet would be ready to fly them home.

Evie walked on his right as they strolled along. Zachary's eyes darted about waiting for a reporter to jump out and accost them, asking where they'd been overnight. It was sad to realize he felt slightly guilty over what had transpired even though it only served to convince him they were meant to be together.

He noticed a group of five burly lawman enter the airport from the opposite end of the airport corridor. His phone rang suddenly, distracting him. He stopped moving to answer it.

Evie also stopped walking as he answered, "Yes?"

"Get back to the compound now!" Tyler's urgent bark caught him off guard.

"Why? What's happened? We're already at the airport." He couldn't imagine what would make Tyler so agitated. He glanced down at Evie. Her gaze was wide and focused on the approaching lawmen. Zachary watched the large uniformed men get closer. The lead man was a blond and looked slightly familiar.

Zachary searched his memory as Tyler's voice intruded. "Evie Marsh is an undercover Enforcer. In her classified file her latest assignment is listed as, 'Infiltrate the life of Zachary Valetta.' Her tasks include finding out what happened to Brenda Beal and looking for any subversive information connecting you to 'The Resistance.'"

Zachary swallowed hard and cleared his throat. "Anything else?" His heart hammered in his chest and the painful significance of Evie's true profession sank through to his bones.

"Yes. Her mission parameters were modified the day before you brought her up here."

Zachary gripped the phone. "To include what?" He glanced at Evie, yet her attention remained focused straight ahead.

"Seduce Zachary Valetta.' Did she succeed?" The sudden cramp of pain gripping Zachary's midsection might have doubled him over if he hadn't been in a public place. As it was, he sucked in a deep lungful of air, unable to allow Evie's betrayal to seep into his mind.

He didn't want it to be true. His continued silence in response to Tyler's question hung in the wire between them.

Tyler's edgy voice full of smug innuendo continued, "Never mind. Get back to the compound so we can make her disappear. We'll invent a plausible story for the media."

Zachary remembered who the blond man was when he got within ten feet. His piercing baby blue eyes were hard to forget. This was the man who'd tried to cut in and dance with Evie at the party where they'd met. Zachary had supposedly 'rescued' Evie from this man's rambunctious and inappropriate attentions by the bathroom.

It had been a setup.

Worst of all, he'd fallen for it.

Zachary murmured, "It's too late for that."

"What's going on? Jesus, are there reporters there?" The edgy anger was back in Tyler's voice. He didn't let him answer. "Zachary, whatever you do, don't admit to spending the night with her. Lie about it. Even if you didn't screw her, it'll look bad."

"Not media. Lawmen closing."

"Shit. That's worse. Don't hang up. Let me listen." Zachary dropped his arm, the phone still on and resting in his hand.

Evie turned and her positively desolate face greeted him as the group of lawmen shifted their original trajectory and strolled towards their static location.

"I'm so sorry, Zachary," Evie's genuine distress almost moved him. He wished she weren't such a liar.

She turned back to the group now upon them and said, "What are you doing here?"

"Hello, Evie," the blonde man said. His expression seemed amused.

She let out a sigh and asked, "How did you find me, Derek?"

"We tracked you through your phone."

Evie pursed her lips and narrowed her eyes. "How? I never turned it on."

Zachary was surprised and wondered why she hadn't turned her phone on so her team could track her. He wondered if they'd figured out who owned the compound. Obviously not, since they showed up. The property was shielded through several subsidiary corporations before the name Charles Huntington was revealed. Usually lawmen and officials stopped all inquiry after seeing his exalted name.

"That's not standard procedure, now is it?" The blond she'd called Derek gestured for her to come closer. She didn't move so he broke from the other lawmen, stepped into her personal space and said in a low tone, "I guess it's a good thing I had your phone equipped with a stand alone GPS tracker housing its own power supply."

"You're spying on me?"

"You didn't let us know your destination."

"Because I didn't know it. Not exactly."

"We were worried someone might have made you disappear." Derek sent a superior smile to Zachary. The innuendo was clear since one of her tasks had been to find evidence that he'd spirited Brenda away.

Derek grabbed Evie's arm to lead her away and without conscious action, Zachary took an aggressive step to block him. His foolish heart hadn't caught up to the unbearable truth quite yet.

"What's going on?" Zachary asked, pretending not to know the answer.

"Evie is an Enforcer," Derek announced blithely. "She was assigned to infiltrate your life. We think she may have been compromised."

Evie caught his eye, her expression unreadable. "Zachary..." she trailed off and turned away.

The blond man focused his arctic blue gaze away from Evie and fixed it on Zachary. "Don't do anything you'll regret, Valetta. I'm not pretending to be drunk this time. She's going with us. Once we get her official report, you'll be called to a hearing to respond to her allegations. Make yourself available."

Evie didn't look at him again. Her gaze was on Derek and Zachary quelled the jealous streak that roared through his irrational soul. She'd been sent to spy on him and seduce him. So why hadn't she turned her cell phone on? Why didn't she want them to track her? Why didn't she end it all now

and tell them they'd slept together?

He lifted his own phone back to his ear and tried not to sound bitter, but didn't carry it off. "Did you get all that?"

"Yeah. I'm sorry. What are you going to do?"

"The only thing I can. I'm heading out for Eastlake City to do damage control."

The group of lawmen, now including Evie, marched away to the commercial flights area of the airport and out of his vision.

The woman he'd fallen in love with, heart and soul, had betrayed him cruelly.

Regrettably, he'd have to return the favor in order to survive it.

Chapter 9

On the commercial flight back to Eastlake City, Evie was seated next to Derek and surrounded by the other lawmen. There were no other passengers around to listen in if they chatted. She still hadn't spoken a word since leaving Zachary behind in the airport. She wanted to die. She'd never wanted him to find out she was an Enforcer and especially not while Derek gloated about it in person.

She sent a sullen perturbed glance his way and jiggled the ice in her complimentary beverage.

Derek sipped his drink and said, "You were supposed to call once you seduced him."

Evie closed her eyes and took a breath to calm her temper. Was he fishing for confirmation of what he already knew? She popped her eyes open and cocked her head to the side. "I told you I wasn't doing anything without paperwork."

He gave her a dubious look. "You're telling me you spent the night with him and didn't fuck him?"

Evie had planned for this question. "Actually, I tried to." She let exasperation color her uncivil tone, adding, "He wasn't interested in breaking the rules."

"I find that hard to believe. Why did he take you to the most remote residence in Maine if not for private pleasures?"

His amused sneer, complete with glaring cold as ice baby-blues, unnerved Evie's tenuous calm until something occurred to her. "You never cared about his missing secretary, did you?"

Derek smiled and shrugged. "Not exactly."

"What exactly?"

"We suspect the DA, Alfred Reynolds, was responsible for Brenda's disappearance, along with several other women in the Eastlake City Justice

Center.”

“You could give a shit less if he’s involved with any secret ‘resistance’ group?”

“Now, that’s not true. Did you find anything out about a rebellion?”

She paused, thinking about the memo at Huntington’s house, and responded with an unconvincing, “Not exactly.”

Derek smirked and asked, “What did you find...exactly?”

“Nothing about a rebellion.” She was unwilling to share the Tiberius information she’d learned. She didn’t trust him, but she had to tell him something. “Ever heard of Sarafina?”

His impatient eyes narrowed. “No. What is it?”

“I don’t know. I saw the term written on a calendar at his friend’s house.”

“What friend?”

Again, she hesitated. “Mr. Huntington.”

“Holy shit. Huntington as in Charles Huntington? Best friend and largest financial supporter of Tiberius Security?”

Evie shrugged then glanced at her watch. They were about to land. Derek didn’t say another word on the flight.

She wanted to race home to take a shower and scrub off the scent of betrayal staining her body. The utter revulsion in Zachary’s eyes when Derek and the other Enforcers strolled up almost knocked her on her ass.

Two hours later, she and Derek filed into an empty courtroom in the Justice Center so she could sign her statement testifying against Zachary.

Derek would enter a description of Evie’s mission in the official mission task document. She was supposed to swear under oath concerning any wrongdoing on Zachary’s part.

Evie prepared to tell her first lie in a courtroom setting. She’d burn in Hell as a liar before ever betraying Zachary again.

An arbitration judge from Tiberius Security marched into the court, surprising Evie. She thought this was an informal hearing to bring charges, if any, against Zachary from her testimony.

She didn’t plan on there being any charges.

The judge sat quietly reading papers on his tall desk.

Evie sent a narrow eyed questioning stare at Derek, but he ignored her.

The judge spoke, breaking the silence in the dimly lit room. “Miss

Marsh, did you discover any information to indicate Mr. Valetta was duplicitous in his former secretary Brenda Beal's disappearance?"

Evie stood did a mental finger cross and lied, "No, sir. I did not."

"Did you find any information which led you to believe he belongs to any subversive groups attempting to discredit or harm our fine nation?"

"No, sir."

The judge paused over the next question. His mouth screwed up into a distasteful frown and asked, "Did you try to seduce Mr. Valetta?"

"Under direction from my Enforcer superior...yes, sir, I tried to entice Mr. Valetta into a premarital sexual relationship."

Another frown crossed his mouth. "And were you successful?"

"No, sir. I was not," Evie stated, willing herself not to show any signs of her deceit.

"Are you sure?"

Evie paused before responding and focused a puzzled gaze on the judge. The question was absurd. Was she sure she'd been unsuccessful in her seduction? Did the lie burning her lips show so clearly?

She straightened her spine and responded with false surety, "Yes, sir. I'm sure Mr. Valetta wasn't receptive to my overtures." She thought of another lie. "As a matter of fact, he was furious."

The judge nodded and finally seemed satisfied with her testimony. "Are you willing to sign under oath that your testimony is accurate?"

"Yes, sir."

A bailiff brought her the syntho-page oath. She stilled her hand from shaking as she put her signature on the lie-ridden document.

Accepting it from the bailiff, the judge nodded again and motioned for one of the guards stationed at the door to open it. He scanned the document and offhandedly remarked, "This is exactly in line with the charges brought forth against you."

"Charges...against me?" Evie turned to Derek who promptly avoided her gaze. She got a tremendously bad feeling.

"Please be seated, Miss Marsh. Your accuser will be brought in now."

A shard of uneasiness stabbed Evie. "What accuser?"

The judge waved a paper at her as if it would explain everything. "Mr. Valetta has filed charges against you for trying to instigate promiscuous premarital activity, and he added a Class A moral depravity charge because

you apparently didn't give up after he told you 'no' the first time. He's livid over your inappropriate actions in this matter. He submitted his complaint hours ago."

The doors to the back of the courtroom opened, and Zachary stepped inside and approached them. Evie sharply inhaled a breath of disbelief. What was going on here?

She leaned over and whispered furiously at Derek, "I'm being charged?"

He shrugged then whispered back, "It's a formality. The officers in his own chain of command requested our services for the task to ensure he's squeaky clean enough to be the next DA."

Evie didn't take comfort in his explanation. "I shouldn't be officially charged. I'm an Enforcer. I did what I was told."

"The judge will show him the paper you signed and close the proceedings. Calm down."

Evie watched Zachary move to the table to the right of the one she sat at and hoped the desperate longing she experienced didn't show.

He didn't even glance her way. Evie knew he must hate her for what she'd done. She wanted to tell him she loved him. What she'd said in the ride to the airport this morning had been the heartfelt truth.

Zachary faced the judge, his stony face showing no emotion.

"Mr. Valetta, I've read your complaint and concur with your charges."

Zachary cleared his throat. "You do?"

The judge nodded and handed off the document she'd signed. "Miss Marsh has corroborated your charges, vindicating you from any wrongdoing."

Evie wished her career didn't rest on a lie. She really wished Zachary wasn't reading about her duplicitous act. He scanned the paper and dropped it to the table. If he was surprised that she'd lied about their fabulous lovemaking, he didn't show it.

Directing his gaze to the judge once again, Zachary asked, "Am I done here?"

"Almost. If you'll add your signature below Miss Marsh's to officiate the statement, we only have one more order of business tonight."

Zachary signed with a flourish and the secret they shared was part of the official record.

"What other order of business?" Zachary asked without looking up.

"A new law was passed just this morning allowing the courts to employ a machine to determine the absolute truth." The judge glanced at Evie. "This will be the first case where we use the recently patented Body Scan Device."

The room was so silent, a mosquito fart would have echoed like a freight train, as her dad was fond of saying.

Zachary cleared his throat and asked the question burning on Evie's lips, "What's a Body Scan Device?"

The judge responded matter-of-factly, "It's a scientific device that can determine if a female has had sex within the past forty-eight hours."

* * * *

Bursting through the doors to the courtroom, a man strode towards the judge.

"My name is Mr. Horatio," he announced to the room. He was impeccably dressed in an expensive suit.

Zachary recognized him as a high-level Tiberius Security representative. In one hand, he carried a large black case. Moving to the front of the room, he opened the case on a table situated below the judge's elevated desk.

Zachary studied the suitcase as dread encompassed him. Evie's shocked expression mirrored his.

The judge motioned again and said, "Miss Marsh, if you'd please step forward so Mr. Horatio can test you."

Evie didn't move a muscle as Mr. Horatio removed the piece of equipment from its resting place in the red velvet lined suitcase. The device looked like an over-sized spiked dildo on steroids or perhaps like something used to eviscerate humans by extracting internal organs while the screaming victim watched in horror. Evie remained motionless.

Derek grabbed her arm suddenly and pulled her towards the man holding the evil looking scanner. He whispered something in her ear that Zachary couldn't hear.

Mr. Horatio waved the vile instrument, which started smoking in front of her body from waist down to mid-thighs. The scent of burnt rubber made him gag. Evie covered her mouth and nose with a hand as the smoke circled her head.

Holding the device away from her, Mr. Horatio looked at the digital readout and in a lurid tone said, "This woman has had sex in the past forty-eight hours. A lot of sex."

"What?" Evie screeched.

The judge ignored her question and asked, "Define 'a lot of sex,' will you, Mr. Horatio?"

He looked at the readout again. "At least three times, maybe four."

Four. They'd made love four times. Zachary clamped his lips shut. He'd almost said it out loud.

"You were a busy little slut weren't you, Miss Marsh?" Mr. Horatio gave her an evil smile.

"I'm not a slut."

"That's a matter of semantics, but you are a liar." He promptly turned to the judge. "I assume she'll be charged."

Evie huffed out a breath. "You're crazy. That machine is obviously mistaken."

Zachary asked, "Is there a margin of error rate or percentage of accuracy for this scanner?"

Mr. Horatio's mouth flattened. "I tested it on my own wife. I had relations with her last night and tested her this morning. The machine is accurate to my satisfaction."

Evie spat out, "Was your wife satisfied, or just fucked and tested?"

The judge intervened. "Your vulgarity won't make this better, Miss Marsh." He frowned and asked, "Would you like to recant your statement about Mr. Valetta?"

Evie looked up and caught Zachary's gaze for the first time since he'd entered the room. He held his breath as she shook her head and answered, "No. I tried. He refused."

"Is that when you sought out and found another to assuage your scandalous and inappropriate sexual desires?" Mr. Horatio barked and leaned in close to Evie. "Who fucked your busy cunt, Miss Marsh? Was it more than one man?" Horatio accused.

Zachary watched Evie's resolve crumble. She swallowed hard and when her lips trembled, he barked, "Stop it!" without thinking.

"Regardless of the accuracy of your machine, I don't believe you have the right to abuse her."

Mr. Horatio turned a surprised look his way. "I'm surprised at your defense, Mr. Valetta. I was given to understand from the papers, you were involved with this woman. This betrayal must be eating at you. Perhaps you know the identity of the man she fucked."

Zachary detested the need to lie. He only did it because of absolute necessity. "I can only tell you that I didn't see her 'fuck' anyone." *She makes love like an angel, though.*

"Can't the machine determine who her sexual partners were?" The judge asked. "My understanding was that the device would be able to link with the National DNA database."

"That will be a reality soon." Mr. Horatio beamed and backed away from Evie. "However, this device is merely the prototype. The scientists assure me that the final product will have DNA recognition capabilities in six months."

"I'll ask you one final time. Did you have sex with Zachary Valetta?" the judge asked.

She narrowed her gaze. "No."

"Fine." Mr. Horatio laughed. "Arrest her."

"Why am I being arrested?" Evie's gaze flew to the judge.

"To be put in prison pending your moral depravity trial for the others."

"Moral depravity trial? Wait a minute. I worked for Mr. Camden and for the government on a special undercover Enforcer mission." Evie turned her startled glare on Derek. "You said I had special dispensation."

"To have sex with Zachary Valetta...not anyone else you came across."

Evie shot Derek another harsh glare. "You're a liar. You set me up from the beginning. You're no better than the assholes I used to work for."

His eyes hardened, but he remained silent.

"Our device proves you had sex several times. Probably with more than one man. Unmarried sexually deviant women like you are corrupting the men in our society." Mr. Horatio launched into a diatribe. "We gave you a task to do and when a principled man like Zachary Valetta ignores your immorality, you promptly engage in licentious activity with the first man you can seduce."

Evie snorted. "Oh yeah. Why aren't men considered morally reprehensible?"

Mr. Horatio's lips thinned. "Because women like you talk them into it."

Evie turned to Derek. “You’re going to let his happen?”

“Sorry, Evie, I expected Zachary to put it to you at least once. I can’t help you.”

Evie’s beautiful deadpan face revealed nothing as she gazed at him. Zachary knew he couldn’t speak up, but he wanted to clear her. His lonely soul knew she was his mate. He maintained his fierce prosecutor face for the public. Her piercing stare in return, which drilled to his core, was unreadable.

If he confessed, after signing the official complaint document housing their lie, his career as prosecutor would be over immediately. Unfortunately, he couldn’t let that happen.

Zachary wondered why Evie didn’t reveal their affair to try to save herself.

Chapter 10

Evie sat in her prison cell wondering how to get out of this mess.

If it hadn't been for the sex-o-meter, no one would know she'd had sex. Looking around her sterile cell, she pictured her speedy trial.

She maintained that the device was mistaken and refused to admit to any sexual contact. The sin of dishonesty ate at her guilty soul. It didn't matter. They had their sex-o-meter proof.

It took the judge less than ten minutes to find her guilty of moral depravity. She was sent to her cell for a couple of hours to ponder her future before sentencing commenced.

There was a recent law written into existence regarding prison for women. Ironically, Tiberius Security hated to put women in jail. They found it abhorrent even though what they planned was probably worse than prison. Evie suspected it was in line with what the Tiberius Group planned to do to women next year.

A guard came, interrupting her thoughts when he unlocked her cell door. He motioned her to exit. The time had come for her sentencing. Evie was led through an empty dark courtroom to the judge's chambers to learn of her punishment.

"In deference to your service to the lawmen, and your father being a decorated hero in that realm, an offer has been extended by the prosecutor's office. I suggest you take it and be grateful."

Evie narrowed her gaze on the judge. "I'm listening."

"You may choose the marriage mart instead of prison. Once selected by a consenting man, you will be kept under house arrest for the duration of your ten year sentence."

"After ten years, I'd be free?"

The judge shook his head. "At the end of your incarceration your husband would then decide whether to release you back to the marriage mart

or keep you.”

“How generous. He gets ten years, I get life without parole. What if we don’t get along?”

“There is a failsafe written into the contract. Your new husband has forty-eight hours to decide to keep you. If he consummates the marriage within that time, then you’ll be his.”

“Perhaps you could scan me with the sex-o-meter to make sure he fucked me,” Evie said with as much sarcasm as she could deliver. “Why do I need to be married?”

The judge’s lips thinned. “It is the opinion of this court that you need a man to take care of you and keep you in line. If women were occupied at home, they wouldn’t get into so much trouble.”

“What century do we live in again? Women used to have rights. Oh wait, they still do.”

“Along with those rights comes split households and chaos reigning in our society. History shows us that the more rights women obtain, the more problems society incurs. The outcome is inevitable. Your cooperation will go a long way in your favor.”

“Marriage to a stranger or prison. Those are my only choices?”

The judge nodded and smiled smugly.

Evie let out a deep sigh of resignation and said, “Fine. I choose marriage.”

The judge nodded. “A guard will escort you to the marriage mart.”

“Now?” Evie didn’t expect her sentence to begin so fast.

“You should consider yourself lucky there is one scheduled today.”

“Should I? Silly me, I was yearning for a long engagement.”

“Prison, my dear, is still an option.”

Evie clamped her lips shut and decided it would be easier to evade a husband than a prison.

“The marriage mart it is then.” The guard grabbed her arm and escorted her out of the judge’s chambers.

Derek Camden waited in the courtroom when she came back through. It was difficult being led around in handcuffs like a criminal.

“May I speak with her alone?” Derek asked the guard as he flashed his Enforcer badge. The guard nodded and stepped out of the room.

“Now that we’re alone did you want to bend me over the defendant’s

table and screw me again?"

"Temper, temper, Miss Marsh. I'm here to help you."

"No thanks. I've had as much of your 'help' as I can stand."

He ignored her justifiable bitchy attitude and asked, "Is there anything I can do for you? Call anyone for you? Offer to bid on you at the marriage mart?"

"No thanks." The only man she wanted for a husband was Zachary. No one could help her achieve that impossible goal. A stranger as a husband would be easier.

Derek exhaled slowly and turned to go. Evie thought of something she wanted after all. "Wait."

He turned back.

"Will you contact my cousin, Matt Westland, and tell him what's happened?"

Derek nodded.

"Is there anyway he could call me?"

Derek furrowed his brow and shrugged. "I'll see what I can do."

She nodded. "Thank you."

"I know you won't believe this, but I'm sorry it worked out this way, Evie."

"You're right," she answered quietly. "I don't believe you."

Evie exited the courtroom without looking back. The guard took her directly to the auction.

The marriage mart was degrading. She was led to a small stage facing a video camera. Lights from every angle blinded her. She was asked to say her name and turn around...slowly.

A cow at auction probably felt less demeaned than she did, but not by much.

She wasn't the only woman up for bid. Fourteen other unfortunate women were up for grabs in today's prison auction. She was so humiliated.

A bell sounded, making her jump. A telephone rang and someone she couldn't see answered it.

The guard leading her around approached her on stage. "Someone has bid the maximum on you. No one else challenged it. Let's go."

"Wait, who is it?"

The guard glanced at a digital device. "Your new husband's name is

Tyler Blackthorn.” Evie closed her eyes and tried to stay on her feet. She was married to Satan.

She wondered if it was too late to choose prison.

Zachary knew Tyler. She didn’t want to see him again if she was married to someone else. She already missed Zachary desperately. Being forced to submit sexually to a man in the name of a valid marriage to stay out of prison was patently unfair. Especially a man she knew.

If Zachary ever visited the compound, she’d die.

The guard led her towards the exit door. Evie balked. “Wait. Isn’t there going to be a ceremony?” Anything to drag this out further.

“No. You’re already married by proxy. Once the funds transfer was complete, you were his wife. He’s meeting us at the airport.”

Still in handcuffs, she was escorted out of the Justice Center to a vehicle bound for her personal hell.

“When do the cuffs come off?”

“When I turn you over to your new husband.”

Arms crossed and wearing a demonic smile, Tyler Blackthorn stood at the gated entrance ramp for a private jet. Evie decided prison would have been the less frightening choice.

“Let’s go, baby doll.”

Hands cuffed in front, she waved her bound wrists at him. “Wait. Won’t you at least take these off?”

“Nope. All the better to keep you obedient.”

“You’re a foot taller than me. Are you afraid you won’t be able to make me obey?”

His rumbling laugh took her by surprise. “I could just fuck you into submission.” He lowered his face as a satanic smile slid into place. “Ever been in the mile high club, baby doll?”

“No.” She looked away from his piercing gaze. If he laid a hand on her, she’d start screaming and wouldn’t stop until she was rendered unconscious. Sex with Satan might kill her. Sex with anyone but Zachary would likely end in the same result. The death of her soul.

She gathered her courage and asked, “Are we...” Glancing into his face, she trailed off. She wished fervently that someone would just shoot her right now.

Her new husband’s expression softened. “What?”

“Where are we going?”

“Back to my place at the compound. It’s not as luxurious as where you already stayed, but it’s better than prison.”

Evie’s head pounded. “Got any aspirin? I have a headache.”

“A headache already?” He grinned. “Sorry, baby doll. I only have something for relaxation.”

Evie narrowed her eyes in suspicion as the blood pounded painfully in her head. “If it’s a pill, I’ll take it.”

He retrieved two tablets from his shirt pocket. She gratefully swallowed them dry hoping the pills included an instant painkiller. The effects of the drugs were immediate all right. Her body went limp and she fell forward into her new husband. He lifted her up into his arms and carried her. She’d been tranquilized.

“Don’t you dare do anything to me once we get airborne...” and then she couldn’t speak any longer. She slid into blackness listening to his deep echoing laughter.

Chapter 11

Evie woke from unconsciousness expecting to be in an airport, or worse, snuggled up to her new husband. Her last memory slid uncomfortably into her brain. Glad she wasn't in mid-air waking up as Tyler initiated her into the mile high club, she patted herself down to ensure he hadn't done it while she slept. Taking stock of her body, she knew she hadn't been violated.

Feeling around, she noted that she was sprawled on top of a bed. She lifted her head from the pillow. The handcuffs were finally gone. Still woozy from the drugs, she rolled off the comforter and staggered to her feet, holding on to the bed for support. She was alone.

Surveying her surroundings, she spied a window and lurched across to it to look outside. She recognized the landscape. She was on the third floor of Charles Huntington's compound house. Narrowing her focus, she tried to see the invisible Canadian border in the fading daylight. Evie silently cheered. It would be her salvation because at the first opportunity, she was hauling ass into Canada.

Looking right, a cheery fireplace crackled away next to a small dining table set with a tray of food. Her stomach growled. Taking a deep breath, she left the view to get something to eat.

Once her stomach was full, she searched the room for an escape, but didn't see an obvious one. The attached bathroom was large and luxurious but didn't have any windows.

The one window in the bedroom looked out on a tall three-story drop. Triple paned, reinforced, bulletproof glass rested in the window frame if the label in the lower left corner was accurate.

Evie looked over her shoulder at the only door, which was solid and probably bolted from the outside. Would her new husband come to claim his 'husbandly' rights tonight? Should she fight him off or pretend to be dead while he rutted over her? The thought of his hands on her body made her

stomach lurch. Breathing deeply, she willed herself not to vomit.

Evie decided to go into Enforcer mode and pretend he was a mark like any other case she'd been on. She'd endure until she escaped. The clock on the mantle chimed eleven when she slid into bed and dropped into a troubled sleep.

In the warm safety of her dreams, she remembered Zachary's lips on her body. She basked in the memory and again experienced the heights of pleasure as unseen hands stroked her body.

She surrendered as she slumbered, wishing for impossible things. Her dream lover slid skilled hands across her naked flesh. Her nipples hardened and a rush of moisture coated her core in anticipation of being invaded by a firm, thick cock.

Zachary.

She arched in her sleep welcoming his attention in her dreams. His kiss on her sensitized flesh sent spasms of delight across her body. Phantom lips kissed a path between her legs. The enveloping itch called for immediate attention. The sensation of a firm lick across her clitoris took her by surprise. She inhaled deeply, hearing herself moan from pure unadulterated bliss. Was she still dreaming?

Lips well versed in pleasure surrounded her greedy clit and the pressure from the decadent kiss woke her. Her eyes opened. Someone was in her room, in her bed...licking her. Evie lifted her head from the pillow blinking to wake up.

A man's head rested between her thighs. She noticed a hand on her breast and her nipple was pinched between forefinger and thumb. Satan had come for her after all.

"Stop!" she screamed automatically, recoiling in horror. The reprehensible intruder's hands grabbed her thighs to still her before she could escape his torment.

"No. You're irresistible." Zachary's voice caressed her.

"Zachary? What are you doing here?"

"If you have to ask...I need to work harder." He bent his head and sucked her clit into his mouth again.

She moaned, "Oh, Zachary..." The abrasion from his unshaven face ground against the lips of her pussy and she couldn't speak any longer. His tongue teased her relentlessly until she felt two or three of his fingers enter

her body. A hand found the erect peak of one breast. The most blissful pleasure radiated from nipple to clit instantly. She climaxed while trying to keep from screaming the walls down.

Whimpering her release as she ground herself against his mouth, she shook with satisfaction. Zachary kissed his way up her body and buried his lips against her throat.

“Miss me?”

“Yes,” she whispered. “But you shouldn’t be here. What if you get caught?”

He laughed. “What if I told you I don’t care if I get caught?”

“Well, I care.” She sat up. “Get out of here before that satanic husband of mine shows up.”

A wicked grin shaped his mouth. “Why did you lie about our sexual encounter in court?”

Swallowing hard, she said, “Because I didn’t want to you to be ruined.” Tears slipped down her face and she hugged him closer.

“Why would you care if I was only a mission to you?”

“You were never ‘only’ a mission, Zachary. But I don’t expect you to believe me.”

He ran a finger down her face and tapped her chin. “I knew you were different the minute I saw you. All the blonde plastic girls at that party wore loud flowery dresses but you had on a slinky black number with four-inch stiletto heels. God, you’re sexy.” He grinned.

Evie tilted her head. “I was in love when you said you had to hurry and kiss me at my door that first night. I wanted to drag you into my apartment heedless of the strict rules.”

“I’ll let you have me right now.”

Evie sobered quickly. “I can’t.” She took his face between her hands and sniffed. “My husband might show up at any moment.”

The thought of being married to someone else made her desolate. She burst into tears. “He doesn’t seem the type to like to share his women and I’d imagine he’s particularly opposed to cuckolding.”

She lowered her hands. “I shouldn’t be doing this with you.” Another sob escaped before she could stop it.

“Don’t cry. Tyler decided he didn’t want a wife after all.”

She wiped her eyes. “I don’t understand. He got rid of me before the

forty-eight hour thing?”

“Something like that. He transferred your sentence to his employer Charles Huntington.”

Evie huffed. “I don’t want to be married to him either. I only want you. How do I end up married to you?”

“It’s complicated, but technically, you already are married to me. Charles Huntington is my alias.”

Evie scrunched her eyebrows. “I don’t understand. Who is the man I met?”

“His real name is Erik Larsen. He pretends to be the public persona for Charles while I’m off being a prosecutor.”

“What about...my ex-husband, Satan?” she smirked.

“He’s my personal bodyguard and head of security for the compound. I called him directly after our court fiasco.”

Evie let out a long breath. “So you saved me, after all.”

“Seemed like the right thing to do since you saved me first.”

“Thank you.”

“My pleasure.” He smiled and changed the subject. “So you were an Enforcer sent to spy on me. What did you discover?”

Evie took a deep breath and said, “Sarafina, a log showing Brenda came here the day she disappeared, and of course, Tiberius Security’s alarming plans for total domination of woman.”

The amusement promptly slid from his features. “I can’t stop it.”

“What?”

“I can’t stop what Tiberius Security plans to do.”

Evie made a face. “So you’re adopting the ‘if you can’t beat ’em, join ’em’ philosophy?”

“Not exactly. We’ve been running interference from this compound for the past five years. It’s called the Sarafina project, named for the first woman we smuggled out of harm’s way.”

Evie wiped her face and the tears that erupted. “The day he died, my dad told me to find Sarafina so I’d be safe.”

Zachary nodded. “We do what we can to thwart Tiberius Security. If we find out someone is targeted for termination, we smuggle them out of the country. I learn of them with frightening frequency in the DA’s office. That’s why Brenda was shuttled out. Alfred Reynolds was about to do

something deplorable.”

“Where do you take the people who disappear?”

“This compound is on the very edge of Canada’s border. I have a tunnel from my sub-basement which runs under the border and leads to Canadian soil.”

“You operate the underground *résistance*?”

“Yes.”

“I almost thought it was an urban legend.”

“Nope. We’re the real deal, but we fan the flames of all the fantastic rumors spread about us.”

“Am I really married to you?”

He sobered. “On paper you are, but I’ll be the new District Attorney for Eastlake City soon. That will change things for us.”

“Don’t you have to get married for that?”

“Yes, I do. Unfortunately for you, my future wife’s name is Tiffany. I’ll marry her in less than a month.”

Evie swallowed hard and a tear spilled over one lid. “So you’ll live in Eastlake City with...Tiffany, meanwhile I’m under house arrest with my ex-husband Satan and my new fake husband Charles while I pine for you.”

He laughed. “Not exactly. I have a plan for us to be together.”

Evie’s mouth fell open. “How?”

“It involves generous amounts of cooperation on your part. How do you feel about genetic engineering?”

Evie’s eyes widened. “Why do you ask?”

“I need you to become Tiffany Elizabeth Huntington, newly created niece of Charles Huntington and future wife of the new DA. I picture a stacked blonde, but you’ll have input.”

Evie grinned. “I’m your new wife, Tiffany?”

He nodded and shrugged as a smile creased his mouth. “With the Sarafina project, we have nano-technology available to create new faces. As much as I hate to alter your lovely face, I find I can’t live without you.” Zachary leaned in and planted his mouth on hers.

She moaned and broke the seductive kiss. “I only want you, Zachary. I’ll be Tiffany. I’ve been in disguise before as an Enforcer, and if it keeps me with you, then it’s a small price to pay, even if I have to be a blonde.”

“I love you, Evie. I always will.”

"Can I see the tunnel to Canada?"

"Now?"

"Yes, please."

Ten minutes later, Evie climbed down the ladder descending into the sub-basement of Charles Huntington's ultra secret hidey-hole. Countless Americans had escaped Tiberius persecution through several of the tunnels.

"It's like a cave down here. I expect to see a miner with a pick axe emerge at any moment," she said, seeing her breath in the frigid air as she dangled from the last rung of the escape tunnel ladder.

"It *is* a cave down here," Zachary remarked in an amused tone, helping her down to the dirt floor. "Dug out about fifty years ago by a rich family wanting to be able to escape if the need arose."

"Your family?"

He nodded. "Technically it was Huntington's."

"How did you get an alias?"

"My parents are both doctors. They were involved with a medical group that did some genetic testing and application years ago. When the project went south, they moved overseas and left their family fortune in trust for me.

"When I came back to attend college and then law school, I used my mother's old family name of Valetta and created a life.

"So what name were you born with?"

"Zachary Larsen."

"So Erik Larsen is..."

"He's my Dad's cousin. Together we created a persona for Charles Huntington and Erik lived the life. Once I had my law degree, I was able to do some fancy documentation to put the house into Charles Huntington's name. I'm careful to keep my lives separate."

"How long until my transformation?"

"A few days."

"Tell me she's not a dumb blond and I guarantee you'll get lucky tonight."

"I already got lucky tonight." He grinned. "She can be whatever you want."

"Who thought up the name Tiffany?"

Zachary cleared his throat. "Satan."

“Figures. So what’s to stop you from taking me against that wall over there?”

“The thirty degree temperature. We’d get stuck together. Let’s go up to our soft bed.” He rubbed his cold nose against her cheek and kissed her face.

“Fine. I’ll race you.”

Zachary blocked the ladder. “What do I get if I win?”

“The choice of being on top or bottom.”

“Win, win, then.”

“Exactly.”

THE END

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Timeline

1900—2.8% of the female population enrolled in college

1920—19th amendment ratified giving women the right to vote

1972—First issue of *MS.* magazine hits stands. “I’ve yet to be on a campus where most women weren’t worrying about some aspect of combining marriage, children, and a career. I’ve yet to find one where many men were worrying about the same thing.” Gloria Steinem, founder of *MS.* magazine

2006—US Population hits 300 million - Married couples become a minority

2010—Conservative agenda focuses efforts on preserving disintegrating nuclear family

2020—100 year anniversary of 19th Amendment—First year total female voter registration has declined in almost fifteen years

2024—All law enforcement entities combined into one force called lawmen to reduce redundant efforts and eliminate jurisdictional in-fighting

2024—Tiberius Security hired as supplemental law enforcement while lawmen are established and reorganized

2025—New Arbitration Law enacted. In lieu of courtroom trials, arbitration offered to lessen burden of courts and hasten speedy trials

2030—Family First League founded (FFL)

2034—Marriage back in vogue—Married couples no longer a minority

2040—FFL gets bill passed in congress: In two parent families, mother required to stay home until youngest child enters school

2047—Wave of the future—Genetic engineering today for your child's bright tomorrow. Genetex Corp launches new bioengineering company with steep price tag only the ultra rich can afford

2050—Family First League with support from Tiberius Security gets substantially lower tax bill passed for families with stay at home mothers of school aged children

2051—National DNA database established to help link separated families

2054—Genetex offers more affordable packages to appeal to wider market

2057—Ten year anniversary of Genetex launch—Celebration marred by several parents protesting at the gala event contending their children were turned into monsters

2059—New trend from history—the arranged marriage makes a comeback linking powerful families together—strengthens already wealthy families

2062—Right to vote rescinded to married women only

2063—Genetex closes doors—Biogenetic engineering outlawed—Black market genetic implants sees 1000% rise in profitability

2070—Only 13.7% of female population enrolled in college

2072—Marriage Law enacted—Fathers and legal guardians, if so desired, are allowed to arrange marriages for daughters if female has not married by age 25

2075—Tiberius Security given national award for being the longest standing company to promote a family first agenda

2076—Family First League along with Tiberius Security forms the newly created Tiberius Group in time for the Tri-Centennial

About the Author

Lara Santiago spends much of her creative time thinking up ‘what if’ scenarios to write about. In *The Prosecutor’s Paramour*, a prequel to the popular Wives Tales series, the question explored is, “What if a group like the Taliban took over the U.S.?”

Lara loves writing in this scary futuristic world because she’s so frightened of it herself. Yes, she knows. She was the one who created it, but it still scares her. She hopes readers enjoy her latest jaunt into the Tiberius-ruled future of love, betrayal, and surprise.

Visit Lara at LaraSantiago.com.

Also by Lara Santiago

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The Tiburon Duet: *Just One Embrace*

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