



**Celia
Jade**

**Greek Playboys
2**

**The Greek
Tycoon**

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The Greek Tycoon
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The Greek Tycoon

By

Celia Jade

Dedication

*I dedicate this book to my sweet friends, Annie,
Maria, and Anita.*

“Greece is a romance of the senses.”

— *Celia Jade*

Chapter One

Brenna Linwood's hair whipped across her face as the yacht picked up speed in the open waters of the Aegean. She brushed the dark strands away and breathed in the scent of sea and fresh air. Out here, the temperature was perfect, unlike the unrelenting heat that had beaten down on her in Piraeus while she waited to board the *Cassandra*. She'd visited Greece once several years ago but had forgotten how hot it could be.

Her new employer, Markos Christakis, owned the vessel. If its opulence was an indication of his financial situation, the man was extremely wealthy. Her gaze moved over the gleaming aluminum and steel structure, teak floors and plush furnishings. Not that she expected anything less—Christakis owned five commercial cruise ships. What impressed her more was her present destination—Kalinós, located in the Aegean Sea, several miles from Skyros. It was Christakis' private island, where she'd operate as his personal assistant.

When she saw the job posting in one of the London papers, she'd immediately submitted her credentials. The position called for someone with a background in business administration, who spoke perfect English, basic Greek and was able to live on a small island for the months of July and August. A manager at the head office in Athens had contacted her about a week later. Eleni, a cordial and pleasant woman, had pointed out that the position was best suited to someone with no family obligations. This suited Brenna well, because she was quite single, didn't even have a boyfriend. Besides, she was between jobs and liked the idea of working on a beautiful Mediterranean island during the summer. And the commission was more than she'd make in six months' time. It would help with her continuous financial support of her brother's education back home.

Brenna was elated when she was hired and right now, she was looking forward to the experience. She hoped Markos Christakis was tolerable as she'd be working closely with him. Eleni mentioned that he worked hard, demanded a lot but was always fair and reasonable.

A young Greek man she'd been introduced to as Ilias came to stand next to her on the sun deck. He was one of the few other passengers on board

and the assistant chef at one of the tavernas on Kalinos.

"So, are you excited about your new job?" he asked with a bright smile and a charming Greek accent.

Brenna glanced up at the man, who was unusually fair for a Greek. She returned the smile. "Yes, actually. It should be quite interesting. I've never lived on an island before.

"Kalinos is lovely. It is quiet and the beaches are golden and soft...and all the Christakis guests are pleasant."

"Guests?"

He nodded. "Markos' family and friends stay on the island this time of the year. It is very fun. You will see. We are like one big family," he chuckled.

"That's amazing," she replied, awed by the fact that some people lived this way. "And what is Mr. Christakis like?"

Ilias pressed his lips together tightly and moved his hand in an exaggerated gesture. "Oh, he is very difficult. Hard to please as you will see yourself."

The serious expression on the young man's face made her mouth drop open. "Really?"

He broke into a deep laugh and touched her arm lightly. "I am teasing you. He is a good man.

He has many responsibilities though, so he works hard and he can have – how do you say – temper?

Brenna sighed in partial relief. “I see.”

He smiled. “But most Greek men have temper. Don’t worry, Brenna. I see you are a smart girl and will do a good job.” He paused and gave her a quick appraisal from head to toe. “Also, it is easier for beautiful women – they can do anything they want.”

Color seeped into her face at the underlying meaning. *Was Christakis a womanizer?* God, that’s all she needed.

A voice came through the speakers announcing that lunch was being served in the dining room on the main deck.

Ilias indicated a descending staircase. “Come, the food is delicious.”

Although Kalinos didn’t belong to that popular cluster of islands known as the Cyclades, it was characterized by similar mountainous landscapes and whitewashed buildings. It was definitely small, probably less than twelve kilometers in circumference.

The chauffeured drive to her accommodations consisted of a short climb on a winding cliff road with a magnificent view of sparkling blue sea. The Mercedes turned into a tiny neighbourhood and

stopped in front of a two-story villa. She stepped out and pushed her sunglasses to the top of her head. Her mouth parted in awe. The house was absolutely charming. Completely white except for the terracotta-tiled roof and dark blue window shutters and door, it boasted elegant arches on the sides and the front balcony.

The door swung open just as she approached the short flight of steps to the entrance. An attractive, middle-aged woman came out with a wide smile. "Welcome, Brenna. I have been waiting for you," she said enthusiastically.

Brenna approached and the woman took her hand.

"I am Niki Christakis. Markos' cousin. He asked me to help you settle in." Despite the pronounced accent, the words came out fluently.

"Nice to meet you, Niki, and thank you." She welcomed the air-conditioned environment of the villa. The inside was understated luxury, she noted as Niki showed her around. Modern furniture and fittings contrasted the traditional exterior. The living room and kitchen were generously spacious, the latter outfitted with good-quality appliances and granite counters. This wasn't just a holiday home—it could be a permanent residence.

The driver came in with Brenna's luggage and Niki spoke to him briefly in Greek. He nodded and carried the suitcases upstairs.

"I wasn't expecting this, I must admit. It's fabulous," Brenna said as her gaze went to the terrace at the back of the villa visible through the large glass doors of the kitchen.

Following her gaze, Niki smiled. "Let me show you the view from the veranda."

The veranda was long and wide with comfy patio furniture and clay urns full of colorful flowers. Wooden beams covered the top for protection against the sun. Quite impressive, but the endless expanse of deep blue sea dotted by a scattering of jutting rocks grabbed her attention. A portion of the island's hilly coastline curved out to the east. It was breathtaking. The distinct scent of pines floated in the air. She immediately looked forward to taking breakfast out here.

"The master bedroom has its own balcony," Niki said, pointing to a smaller veranda on the second level.

"It's stunning. I love it."

"Is this your first time in Greece?"

"No, I was in Athens and did some island hopping about five years ago," Brenna replied as they headed back indoors.

Before leaving, Niki gave Brenna two sets of keys—one for the villa and the other for the car

that was parked in the driveway. She also handed her a cell phone.

"All the numbers you will need are listed in the phone, including mine. Do not hesitate to contact me about anything. Also, I run the supermarket and convenience store, which are off the main road, just a couple of minutes away. There is a bakery next door and two tavernas, although those are further out. There is an administrative office that is responsible for the guest villas." She paused thoughtfully. "I think I have covered everything. Do you have any questions, Brenna?"

"None that I can think of at the moment." She saw Niki to the front door and thanked her once again.

Brenna had just stepped out of the shower the following morning when the phone started ringing. She grabbed a towel, folded it around her body and dashed into the bedroom. Luckily, there was a phone unit on one of the nightstands.

"Hello?"

"Brenna?" A man's deep voice came through the line.

"Yes?"

"This is Markos Christakis. Good morning."

Her new boss. His call surprised her as she'd expected one of the staff to contact her, but she

kept her voice calm. "Good morning," she replied pleasantly.

"I trust the accommodations are to your liking?"

She detected only the faintest accent in his otherwise smooth, masculine voice. "Everything is perfect, thank you."

"Excellent. I will pick you up in half an hour so we can go to the office together...just today so you won't get lost," he chuckled.

The sound of his deep laughter did something inexplicable to her senses, certainly not unpleasant. "Oh, yes...no problem. I just have to get dressed—I mean—get ready." She winced at her choice of words.

"See you soon," he said.

"Yes."

He ended the call without another word. She had to be ready before he got here so she didn't have much time to think about Markos Christakis, except to wonder what he looked like. He'd sounded young, mid-thirties or so. She rushed to dry her hair, a process that normally took at least twenty minutes because it was long. She settled for minimal styling, smoothing it into a ponytail. She chose a linen outfit she really liked, a beige knee-length skirt and a white sleeveless shirt. Slipping into a pair of low mules, she took a final look in the bedroom mirror. It was hard not to feel

a tad nervous, meeting her employer for the first time.

Brenna made her way down to the kitchen and hesitated in front of the coffee machine. She longed for caffeine, but the lingering flavor of toothpaste would ruin the experience. She glanced at her watch. A quarter past eight. She sighed as she looked out the kitchen window. So much for a lovely breakfast on the veranda.

When the doorbell rang, her pulse jumped. She walked to the door, opened it and met the gaze of one of the most handsome men she'd ever seen.

Chapter Two

An unexpected, warm shiver raced through her entire body as she continued to stare up at him. Golden-brown skin, thick, dark hair cut short except for a few locks that tumbled over his forehead and curled against the nape of his neck. *Oh my.* Warm brown eyes, a perfectly straight nose that flared out at the nostrils, high, sculpted cheekbones, a square jaw and a sinfully full mouth. *Oh God.*

She hadn't realized she was staring until his amused voice pierced the dazed cloud of her mind.

"Are you all right?"

There went the shiver again in response to his voice. It wasn't just the hint of accent but the texture—it was deep and velvety. She mentally shook herself. "Yes, I'm fine." She stretched out her hand. "Pleased to meet you, Mr. Christakis."

He smiled broadly as he wrapped his hand around hers and swept his gaze over her face.

"Call me Markos. It is a pleasure to meet you, Brenna."

She felt heat stirring under her skin and prayed it didn't show. Men did not affect her like this normally. She cleared her throat and politely extracted her hand. "I'm ready."

The drive to the office was uncomfortable for a few reasons. Sitting in close proximity to him in his narrow sports car was not a simple task. It distracted her from paying attention to what he was saying, catching only snippets. She kept nodding anyhow. One thing that caught her attention, however, was the mention of his residence.

"You won't be bored in an office all day. I host business parties and luncheons at my place and on the *Phoenix*. Actually, there is one scheduled this Friday in the evening. You will get a copy of my agenda," he added.

"The *Phoenix*?"

"Yes, my biggest baby. Three hundred twenty feet long."

"Wow. That is a big baby."

He chuckled and glanced at her. "She's beautiful...like a second home to me," he said proudly.

"Well, I can't wait to see her."

"You will, soon. Here we are." He cut the engine under a large pine tree.

Brenna got out of the car and glanced at the white building several yards away. Apart from the tiled roof, it was single leveled and plain, the company name printed on the glass door. Inside, the lobby was small, dominated by several framed pictures of the Christakis fleet.

She was introduced to the receptionist, a petite, pretty woman who'd gone platinum blonde. Angela's appearance was quite polished, from her flawless makeup to her manicured, red nails. A diamond-studded wedding band circled her slim finger.

Angela gave her a warm smile. "Nice to meet you," she said and answered the phone.

Markos showed her around the small building and left her to settle into her new office. Brenna was glad to have her own space. It would have been awfully difficult to work in the same room with him. It was a nice size and brightly lit thanks to a large window on one side with a view of pine trees. Markos' office was right next door.

Angela came by and took her through all the pertinent files on the desk and those stored on the computer. There were two simple software programs she needed to learn with the help of a manual. Angela also informed her that the office closed at two in the afternoon, which meant she'd be free the rest of the day unless there was an event scheduled.

"Markos mentioned there is one this Friday," Brenna said.

Angela nodded. "He is entertaining the Denazzi brothers. They have built the Alpha Liners ships. I'll be there, too. Markos likes his team to be present at these things."

"Of course," Brenna said. "Are you American, by the way?"

Angela smiled. "Yes, actually. Born and raised in Tampa, Florida. I met my husband while I was vacationing in Greece four years ago. He and Markos are good friends."

"And now you live here?"

"Only during the summer. We live in a small town just outside of Athens. And you are from London, right?"

Brenna nodded. "Yes, and I've never lived anywhere else."

"I love this island. It's a second home to me and I'm sure you'll love it too—once you get to know your way around and meet more people."

"I look forward to it."

When Angela left, she retraced her steps to the kitchen and prepared a large cup of coffee. Since she hadn't had breakfast, she filled a small plate with some tasty-looking Greek biscuits that were on a tray. She returned to the office and set about familiarizing herself with her new work environment. A few hours later, she was

practicing on one of the software programs when Markos knocked on the door. Her pulse instantly fluttered when she met his gaze.

"How are you doing?" he asked.

"Very well. I'm making a nice start."

"Good. I wanted to go over a few things with you."

"Certainly." Brenna picked up a notepad and pen and followed him into his office, which was considerably larger than hers. Unconsciously, her gaze traveled the length of his body from behind. The man was very nicely built, too, and looked sexy in a polo shirt and cotton slacks. Tall, lean and packed with tight muscles if his bare arms and the shape of his buttocks were anything to go by. She scolded her wayward thoughts and dragged her eyes from him. Lowering herself into a chair near his large desk, she flipped the pad open to a new page.

He leaned back in his chair with the air of a man who was utterly comfortable and confident. "Alpha Liners is a dream come true for me. I have been in love with boats and the sea my whole life. The company is ten years old and highly successful. There are five ships in the fleet, all servicing the Mediterranean with different routes...you have the cruise catalogue, yes?" At her nod he continued. "Summer is our busiest season, of course, which is why I can't take a full

vacation around this time. But it is the best time to enjoy the sea, which is next to impossible in Athens. So, I bought this island, built this building and combined the two." He paused and took a sip of Greek coffee from a demitasse cup.

Brenna forced her eyes away from the sensual shape of his mouth and scribbled a note. The heat she had sensed earlier today was rising under her skin again.

"The cruises are already fully booked until September. You will be my eyes and ears whenever I'm not here, so be prepared for anything, although my team in Athens is well trained and at your disposal. Your main function, as Eleni discussed with you, is to be my personal assistant. Handle my appointments, take minutes during meetings, attend functions and the typical things. I'll email you a list of people you will be in contact with regularly, both local and foreign. These are people of top priority—anyone else, except for family of course, is insignificant."

His gaze brushed over her shoulders and breasts subtly before returning to her face, which Brenna was certain had turned a shade pink.

"How is your Greek?" he asked.

She spoke Greek with her mother occasionally, so she could hold a conversation. "It's functional."

"Where did you learn it?" he asked in Greek.

"My mother is Greek. She began teaching me when I was a child, but she was born in London of first generation Greeks, so she isn't fluent. I can only speak it, unfortunately," she responded in the same language.

He inclined his head. "Not bad. I can understand you, at least," he chuckled. The phone rang and he answered. He spoke so rapidly Brenna only understood the gist of his conversation.

When he hung up, he turned to her. "My parents are arriving next week. They spend July and August here. I've also got a brother, whom you will meet soon, as he is already here with his wife and children." He drummed his fingers on the desk. "Ah yes, before I forget. I'm entertaining the Denazzi brothers this Friday at nine in the evening, my place. Their company built the Alpha ships. They are powerful businessmen, very Italian and proud of it. You will meet them."

His gaze swept over her again. "Wear something feminine and flattering."

"Excuse me?" she practically blurted.

"Don't misunderstand me. This is Greece, not England. Women here are not shy about their appearance, Brenna. These men like being around beautiful women," he stated in a matter-of-fact tone.

She felt her cheeks burning and didn't know how to react.

His mouth quirked up into an amused smile. "You know the *Cassandra*? The boat you traveled on yesterday?"

She nodded.

"That was a gift from the Denazzis."

His meaning was clear. "Yes, em...I understand," she said. Did he think her unfeminine? Prudish?

"Excellent. I have something to take care of, but I'll be back before two to drive you to the villa."

She assumed it was his way of subtly dismissing her, so she stood up. "Okay."

"Thank you," he replied with an easy smile and turned to his computer.

She smiled tightly and left.

In England, a comment like the one he'd made would likely be professionally inappropriate. But this was Greece as he'd pointed out. A country with a very different mentality. She sighed, uncertain about what bothered her more—his forward manner or the idea that she wasn't feminine enough in his eyes. Or was he just giving her some fashion advice? Then again, he had insinuated that she was beautiful. This shouldn't mean anything, but her female ego enjoyed the indirect compliment. Especially coming from someone as good looking as Markos Christakis.

Chapter Three

Markos glanced over at his quiet passenger, her small hands folded in her lap, her gaze fixed on the passing scenery. He sensed she was a little uncomfortable in his presence, perhaps shy, although he suspected it was something else. He turned the radio on to lighten the mood.

The first time he saw her, she struck him as a natural beauty, almost devoid of makeup. Her complexion was fair even though she was a brunette, with a supple radiance that begged to be touched. Large, violet eyes practically dominated her heart-shaped face. Her small nose had a slight upward tilt while her mouth was full, the color of red wine. She was generally small but not lacking in curves—full breasts, round hips and shapely legs. He really liked brunettes and this one had long, silky, straight hair. He'd even experienced an erection sitting next to her in the car, which surprised him as he'd been with a woman just two days before. Maybe her looks had caught him off

guard or the sweet lilt of her English accent. Then again, his sexual appetite was more than healthy.

He cleared his throat. "Do you have any plans for tonight?"

She turned toward him with those wide eyes. "Tonight?" She paused and gave him a curious look. "Nothing in particular."

"I think it's a good idea for you to start socializing. I don't want you feeling lonely here. Come to my brother's for dinner." Her mouth parted in surprise and he couldn't help looking at it as he stopped the car at her villa. He instantly wondered what those full lips would feel like crushed against his.

"Well, I don't know really..."

He dragged his gaze away from her mouth. "It's common courtesy in Greece, so don't worry about imposing. I'll pick you up at eight."

She nodded. "All right then...thank you."

He followed the movement of her legs as she stepped out of the car, hoping she'd wear a dress tonight.

Markos didn't like his train of thought. He'd been keeping a modest distance, talking with almost everyone except his new assistant. It wasn't like him to avoid a lovely woman, but she was his employee and he was having very unprofessional

thoughts of her. He felt the muscle in his jaw clench as he tried to focus on what his brother was saying, but his gaze kept going to Brenna. She was talking to his sister-in-law, Katia, her occasional laughter teasing his senses like a soft caress.

"Our folks are coming next week," Panos said.

"I know." He took a long sip of wine.

"Mom mentioned that her friend Dimitra will be visiting...along with her daughter."

Markos frowned. "I can't believe Mom is pursuing this matter. She knows I have no intention of getting married." He shook his head. "She's just wasting that girl's time."

"*That girl* really likes you," Panos emphasized. "And although it's not my style to play matchmaker, I agree that she would make a good wife."

"Panos," Markos warned.

His brother grinned. "All right. I'm backing off." He paused and glanced at Brenna. "I like your new assistant. She's friendly...and nice to look at."

Markos slanted him a sober glare. "You're the one who's married."

Panos chuckled. "And very happily, but a man can admire from a distance."

For some reason, the idea of any man looking at Brenna didn't sit well with Markos. Why did he care? She wasn't his property for God's sake—

probably had a boyfriend waiting for her in London. He downed the rest of his drink quickly. However, he couldn't avoid her forever, so he excused himself and walked over to the women. "Dinner was delicious, Katia," he said.

Katia touched his arm. "It was my pleasure, Markos. I'm happy you invited Brenna—she's very sweet."

Brenna smiled. "I'm glad that I met you and your family," she said in Greek and turned to him. "Thank you for inviting me."

Hearing her speak his mother tongue seemed sexier this time. "You are more than my employee, Brenna...you are a guest and your company is welcome." He enjoyed the play of color on her smooth cheeks. It expressed a certain amount of modesty, perhaps innocence as well.

"I'll leave you two for now, because I have to check on the children. I'm sure they're up to something," Katia said.

Markos gestured to the veranda. "It seems everyone's stepped outside."

"Yes, it's a lovely evening," she replied.

A handful of guests had made themselves comfortable around a long table where they exchanged light-hearted banter. Markos wasn't in the mood for sharing his present company and easily claimed the two empty chairs at the far end

of the veranda. He had the sudden urge to learn as much as possible about Brenna Linwood.

He watched her cross one slim leg over the other as she settled into the cushioned seat. Her dress hitched a few inches higher, revealing a delicate knee. The summer dress she wore emphasized the feminine shape of her body and revealed elegant shoulders and arms. The silky screen of her hair hid most of her neck, although he knew it was equally appealing having seen it before.

"Tell me about your life in London," he began once he caught her gaze.

"Well, I live in a western suburb of London with my mother and brother. My father passed away when I was fifteen. We've been through hard times, but we stuck together and things are better now. My brother is studying law and I'm helping with his tuition."

He inclined his head. "Family helping family. I admire that. So, how did this job catch your interest?"

She turned her body toward him slightly and leaned her arm on the armrest. "I wasn't working and the job fit my skills. Also, the thought of spending time on a Greek island was attractive."

"Hmm, I hope you aren't disappointed—this isn't exactly Mykonos," he chuckled. She smiled brightly, making something shift inside him.

"This is perfect actually. I'm a little past the Mykonos age."

He felt his eyebrow quirk up. "You are quite young."

"I'm twenty-eight...starting to appreciate the finer things in life," she laughed.

His mouth curved thoughtfully as he wondered what other things she appreciated. What made this woman happy? What made her tick? "Then I must make it a point to show you the finer things on Kalinos.

Her mouth formed a reserved smile. "I mustn't impose on your hospitality too much," she said.

Before he had a chance to respond, his cell phone rang. It was a call from Athens he'd been expecting, but the timing was bad. He didn't want to end his conversation with Brenna just yet. Reluctantly, he excused himself and stepped inside to take the call.

* * * *

Brenna smoothed the creamy sunscreen on her skin again. She couldn't be too cautious with the Greek sun. Angela had told her about this lovely beach, tucked away in an inconspicuous, small cove off the main road. Most Greeks took siesta at this hour, affording her the luxury of her own beach with the exception of a family of four. She

lay back down on her towel, closed her eyes and thought about *him*.

Markos Christakis.

Somewhere between dinner at his brother's and yesterday's party with the Denazzis, he'd begun flirting with her. It was subtle, skillful flirting but flirting nonetheless. She couldn't help the smile that tugged at her mouth. It was flattering, even though it wasn't wise to feel this way, because he was her boss. He was a man, though—a handsome, successful man. Without a doubt, a man's man. She was getting to know him quickly. Eleni's description of him was accurate. When it came to business, he was tough as nails but treated others with respect. He had a soft side, too, which she'd glimpsed when he'd interacted with his niece and nephew.

She wondered why he hadn't been snatched up yet—surely there were dozens of women vying to be his wife. Or was he one of those sworn bachelors who didn't want to part with the freedom of single life? Her mind wandered to the party at his villa. Normally, she wasn't impressed by huge homes, but the architecture of the sprawling villa was surprisingly charming. The Denazzi brothers were charming as well, dynamic and attractive men in their late forties who seemed to enjoy chatting her up. At one point, she'd caught Markos' brooding gaze during those

moments and couldn't understand his obvious displeasure. Jealousy had crossed her mind, but she dismissed it. He may have flirted with her mildly, but she wasn't his type, surely. His type would fall into the very sexy and exceptionally polished category. The kind of woman who spent hours at the spa and looked amazing first thing in the morning. Not her. She was a simple English girl who maintained the basics of her appearance and did her own nails occasionally. She loved clothes and shoes, of course – what woman didn't? She just preferred understated feminine styles to bold, sexy ones.

The heat became overwhelming and she stood up and crossed the short distance to the water quickly, sighing as the refreshing silkiness enveloped her. It was a translucent blue, the dark pebbles clearly visible around her feet. Decent beaches were far from her hometown but swimming came naturally to her. She broke into a steady butterfly stroke for several yards and ended by floating lazily on her back. This was paradise.

By the time she returned to the beach, the family had gone. She supposed she should follow suit because Angela had invited her to a live-music night at one of the tavernas. She packed her things and climbed up about fifteen rocky steps to

the narrow road where she'd parked, grateful for the little Fiat. She was back at the villa in minutes.

Chapter Four

The distinctive notes of the bouzouki, accompanied by a lively trio of instruments, filled the dim atmosphere of the taverna. According to Angela, the musicians were friends of the Christakis family and came to Kalinos almost every year. The combination of fresh seafood and traditional Greek side dishes was absolutely delicious. Brenna had grown a particular fondness for the unusual vine-leaf rolls called *dolmathes*, filled with rice, meat and herbs.

She sat at one of the cloth-covered tables with Angela and her husband and another couple. She'd been delighted to encounter Katia and Panos here earlier and instinctively looked for Markos. To her disappointment, he didn't seem to be around. She was tempted to ask about him but refrained.

When the band struck up a *tsifteteli*, a Greek form of belly dance music, Angela and the other young woman pulled Brenna onto the small dance

floor despite her reluctance. The sensual, exotic beat of the drum called for an exaggerated movement of hips and arms she wasn't accustomed to. With some encouragement from the women, she managed to dance without making a complete fool of herself.

A warm hand took hers and turned her in a different direction. She looked up into the blue eyes of a tall, attractive man. It took her a few seconds to recall that she'd met him briefly at Panos' home and that the two were old school friends.

"Brenna, so good to see you again," he said above the music.

She smiled hesitantly, not able to recall his name. "It's nice to see you, too, but I'm afraid I don't—" she began, as he took her other hand and lead her into a dance with him.

"It's Andreas," he laughed and spun her around once.

"I'm sorry. I've been introduced to so many people recently."

"I understand," he replied in a thick accent.

It seemed to take forever for the dance to end and when it did, Andreas leaned closer and told her he'd like to see her again.

He seemed pleasant, but Brenna rarely dated men she hardly knew. She thought quickly, not wanting to offend him. There was a party planned

aboard the *Phoenix* on Tuesday. She assumed that Andreas would be invited since he was a close friend of Panos', so she mentioned that she would be present.

He nodded, looking pleased and kissed her on both cheeks before leaving her to her waiting companions.

"Who is he?" Angela asked when they had returned to their table.

"A friend of Panos'."

"He likes you."

Brenna's eyebrows curved upward. "Really? What gave you that idea?"

Angela responded with a knowing look that conveyed her answer, which made them both giggle seconds later.

* * * *

If Brenna could use one word to sum up Markos' parents, it would be classy. Apart from their fine clothing, the couple's manners were refined as they spoke calmly in English and Greek. She admired their youthful appearance, guessing they were in their early sixties. Sophia Christakis was a dark-haired lady with Greek features that reminded her of the opera singer, Maria Callas, and Leonidas Christakis was an attractive man with salt-and-pepper hair and a warm smile. This

family belonged to Greece's elite and they wore their wealth well, she thought.

"London is one of my favorite cities," Sophia said shortly after Markos had made the introductions. "In fact, we were there a couple of months ago. I believe we toured just about every museum," she laughed softly.

"Yes, and my poor legs still ache," her husband added.

"Well, you will have your chance to rest for a while before we go on our next trip," Sophia said with a hint of teasing.

"And where is your next destination?" Markos asked.

"Rome...I can't wait. All those magnificent cathedrals."

Leonidas shook his head. "I can't keep up with your mother."

Markos and Brenna laughed.

"Don't listen to him. He enjoys every minute." She gave her husband a loving smile and touched his arm.

"Yes, *agapi*." Leonidas reached up and covered her hand. "Would you like to join us for a refreshing drink?" he asked, directing the question at his son and Brenna.

"I would love to, but I have some business to take care of first," Markos replied and turned to

Brenna. "Actually, do you mind helping me with this?"

"Not at all," she replied.

"We'll meet you at the bar shortly," he informed his parents.

They went down to the main deck and crossed a long boardroom that ended in an open, cozy study. He motioned for her to sit at the desk where a laptop was set up. He came to stand beside her and leaned over to pull the computer toward him. Brenna instantly picked up his personal scent, clean with subtle masculine undertones. Awareness brushed over her swiftly and her gaze fell on his long, lean fingers on the keyboard. She'd envisioned his hands on her body many times, followed by his sensual mouth.

"There's an English document I wrote this morning that I'd like you to proofread. It's not too long." He opened the file and glanced down at her. "You do a good *tsifteteli*, by the way."

She shot him a surprised look. "You were there?"

His mouth curved into a slow smile. "For a short while."

Her face grew warm, recalling the sensual way she'd been dancing. "I see. Well, you didn't come to say hello." She infused a note of seriousness in her voice.

He turned the laptop toward her. "I didn't want to disturb your...private dance."

More heat rushed to her face, although she knew there was nothing to be ashamed of. Her physical reaction to this man was, unfortunately, beyond her control. She cleared her throat. "It was just a dance." She saw amusement tugging at the corner of his mouth. He was enjoying this form of teasing.

"Read it to me first, please," he said and walked around the desk, settling into one of the leather armchairs.

She felt the intensity of his gaze on her as she read aloud and didn't dare raise her eyes to his for fear that he'd notice how much he affected her. Even her breasts felt heavy, the nipples sensitive.

They spent about fifteen minutes working on the document and in that time, she'd never been more aware of another person. Like nothing and no one else existed. The feeling didn't seem to be one-sided. An intangible force moved between them constantly.

"Perfect. I'll send it off now and make a couple of calls." They stood up at the same time. "I don't want to keep you from the entertainment. My parents are at the bar on the sun deck. I'll be there as soon as I finish," he said.

She could definitely use a drink, if only to cool the heat under her skin. "A cocktail sounds

lovely,” she replied with a smile and headed back upstairs. On her way to the bar, Andreas, who’d been trying to get her attention ever since they boarded the yacht, intercepted her. The young man was eager and she didn’t want to crush his ego, so she suggested they have some appetizers in the lounge.

Chapter Five

When Markos saw Brenna sitting cozily with another man, he felt gut punched. His gaze went to the man, recognizing him from the taverna. The urge to grab him and toss him overboard was strong. His reaction was unfounded, of course. The woman was single or so he assumed—free to do as she pleased. What disturbed him the most was the fact that it wasn't for lack of any sex, something he could have almost anytime he wished. He paused in his train of thought, realizing that he hadn't even thought of having sex with another woman since he met Brenna.

The muscle in his jaw worked agitatedly as he scanned the deck for his brother. Spotting him, he marched over. Panos must have registered his mood because he was about to take a sip of his drink and stopped.

"Panos," he clipped.

"Is there a problem?" his brother asked.

Markos jerked his thumb in the direction of Brenna and her companion. "Who is that?"

Panos looked over. "The man with Brenna?" At Markos' nod, he replied, "Andreas Kostopoulos. We went to high school together."

"Why is he here, on Kalinos, I mean?"

Panos shrugged. "We lost touch after school and when I ran into him recently, I suggested he vacation here for about a week."

"Well, tell him his vacation's been cut short. He's leaving tomorrow morning," Markos said.

His brother's eyebrows lifted in surprise as he glanced in his friend's direction. An amused smile hovered around his mouth. "Since when have you become territorial with your employees, brother?"

"That's none of your damn business," Markos snapped and strode onto the sun deck.

Shortly after, he caught sight of Brenna as she approached. She looked incredibly lovely in a white, strapless dress that hugged the full swell of her breasts, the narrow curve of her waist and flowed delicately about her legs. Her smooth skin glowed with the start of a golden tan and the light picked up the healthy sheen of her long hair. She easily stood out among the passengers.

God. He wanted this woman. Wanted her more than any other. Awareness curled into a tight knot in his groin, making him shift on the barstool. She

took the empty seat next to him and his nostrils flared as he inhaled her sweet scent once more.

The rocky, almost barren mountains of Skyros were etched against an azure background as the *Phoenix* turned and headed north, tracing the island's coastline from a distance. The capital town was a picturesque cluster of white buildings perched on a stony peak. The landscape softened as they rounded the northern tip of the island toward the west coast. The rough terrain gave way to a surprising amount of lush vegetation. It was breathtaking.

Too bad Markos wasn't enjoying the view, Brenna thought as she looked at his handsome profile. He was in a foul mood, that much was obvious. He'd barely muttered several words before claiming one of the cushioned wicker chairs with a stiff drink in hand. She felt the surprisingly strong urge to walk over and smooth the tension from his face.

Sophia Christakis sighed as she touched Brenna's arm. "See if you can lighten his mood, *koritsi mou*," she said as she slid off the barstool. "He rarely tells me what's on his mind."

Brenna smiled and nodded. "I'll try."

She got up and took the vacant chair next to him. "The scenery is lovely, isn't it?"

His dark gaze studied her face for a moment. "Yes, it is."

She frowned. "You're not even looking."

His eyes fell to her mouth. "I wasn't referring to the island."

A bubble of conflicting emotions rose inside her. "Why do you do that? Why do you flirt with me?" she demanded.

"Do you want the truth?" he asked huskily.

Brenna wondered if she could handle the truth.

"Because I can't help myself. I find you too beautiful to ignore," he replied.

There it was. His meaning as clear as the sky above them. But he was her employer. How was she supposed to react? A long moment of silence stretched between them before she spoke. "It's not right."

He arched an eyebrow. "Because of our professional relationship?"

She lowered her eyes. "Yes."

He leaned forward and placed his drink on a round, glass table. "What if the situation were different? How would you feel?"

He was looking at her in a way that made her blood rush hotly and her senses stir. She longed to reach out and touch him. "Feel?" She paused. All she was doing now was feeling, little thinking. "I..."

"Yes?" he pressed.

"I don't know." Her voice trembled slightly.

He leaned closer and her gaze fell to the full curve of his mouth. God, how she wanted to press her lips against it. Her breath caught.

"Brenna...I think you do know," he said softly.

The tiny voice in her head screamed and broke through her clouded mind. She gave herself a mental shake and grasped the arms of the chair. "Stop it," she stated firmly, got up and walked away as fast as she could.

That evening, the ship anchored off the southwest coast of Skyros. All of the twenty-eight passengers gathered in the spacious dining room for dinner. Art deco was the general style of the room and it was tastefully done. The food was delicious, though Brenna barely took notice. She was still too riled up from her conversation with Markos and had purposely seated herself as far away from him as possible. Despite this, she felt the heat of his gaze on her many times. She fixed her eyes on her plate and shoved her food around, eating little.

Her feelings for her boss were unprofessional. And shameless if she really thought about them—no innocent kisses in her fantasies. Hardcore groping and grinding was more like it. She'd even

been plagued by erotic dreams of him. How was she going to get through the next six weeks?

When dessert came rolling in, she didn't have the stomach for it. She risked a glance at Markos and noticed he wasn't eating either. He was in deep conversation with Panos. She sighed in relief when it was over and people started filing out. She could use some rest and decided to go to that quiet nook she noticed during her initial tour of the yacht. With most of the passengers on the upper decks, she hoped to find some privacy there. It was on this level, just through the lobby.

Her low heels tapped softly against the ceramic floor of the lobby and were muffled by the burgundy carpet of the empty saloon. It was a stately room, furnished in rich earth tones, a black bar and a black piano. She found the nook at the far end. Thankfully, it was empty.

She was about to sink onto a loveseat when he called out her name. She recognized his voice instantly. It was his personal brand. Her skin stirred in response and her heart rate picked up. She turned and met his gaze as he closed the distance between them.

"Brenna, why are you here alone?" he asked with a look of concern.

"I felt like a quiet rest."

His eyes searched her face. "Are you seasick?"

"No, not at all." Lust sick was more like it.

Tension was evident at the corners of his mouth. "Look, I didn't mean to upset you earlier. I was only..." He hesitated and inclined his head.

She held his gaze, waiting for him to continue.

He raised his hand and caught her chin lightly. His thumb brushed over her skin. "You've got a smudge here," he said huskily and bent his head toward her.

Brenna's breath snagged. Was he going to kiss her? She felt her body softening, leaning toward him just as she heard something to her left. She turned and saw a woman walking out of the saloon. Her brows came together. "Was that your mother?"

He let out a low sigh. "Yes." He motioned to the sofa. "Let's sit."

His leanly muscled frame was outlined under the thin linen of his shirt and she couldn't help drinking the sight of his tanned, bare arms with their sprinkling of dark hair. They sat together, his knee brushing against hers. She crossed her legs and folded her hands in her lap in an effort to remain composed.

"I have a problem," he began. "My parents, particularly my mother, have a strong desire to see me wed. However, it's not *my* desire." He paused briefly. "They've gone so far as to invite the daughter of a friend to Kalinos to encourage a union."

The thought of Markos with another woman twisted her insides into knots. *Was she here now?* She swallowed tightly. "And...do you plan to go ahead with it?"

He shook his head. "Of course not."

Brenna controlled her sigh of relief. "What's the problem, then?"

He held her gaze. "They'll persist until I give in."

She frowned. "They don't seem so stubborn or overbearing."

"You don't know them. If I could deter them for some time, by assuaging them perhaps, it would make my life easier."

"How would you deter them?"

Something mischievous flickered in his eyes. "By having them believe I was in love."

Her brows arched. "With who?"

"You, Brenna."

A shocked gasp escaped her. "Me?"

He reached out and clasped her hand. "Yes. We have undeniable chemistry." He held up his hand to silence her. "I know how you feel about our relationship. Work is work and we can keep it completely professional. But we are adults and outside of work, we are free to do as we please." He squeezed her hand. "Brenna, I really would enjoy dating you."

She didn't know whether to slap him or kiss him. Angry color rushed to her face. "It's preposterous," she finally blurted.

"Come here," he pulled her closer and before she knew it, his warm breath was fanning her lips. He released her hand and buried his fingers in her hair. He murmured something in Greek and closed his mouth over hers.

An audible sigh broke from her as pleasure sizzled through her like an electric current. He tasted delicious. When he angled his head and deepened the kiss, her senses went haywire. Her body's reaction caught her off guard. She hadn't realized how strong her attraction to this man was. He moaned into her mouth and thrust his tongue inside, exploring, claiming. He'd swept his hand down to her waist and brought their bodies together. The hard planes of his abdomen and chest pressed into her, making her wish their clothes would dissolve so that she could feel his naked flesh. She curled her fingers in the thick hair at his nape, something she'd wanted to do from the first time she saw him. There was so much pleasure in this kiss that continued fervently.

Which is why she gasped in disappointment when he broke away, pressing his mouth to her cheek. Their breath came out raggedly for long seconds.

"*Glikia mou...*you see how good it could be?" he murmured.

His statement pierced her erotic haze. She pushed away from him a little. It could be very good indeed. She couldn't deny that she wanted this man very much. Still, she hesitated.

His eyes smoldered with dark desire as he looked at her and seemed to sense her hesitation. "Brenna, there would be no sex. Just dating." Desire lingered in his voice.

"No sex?"

A corner of his mouth quirked up. "Unless you wanted, of course—"

She jerked away from him. "No, I don't!" She glared at him, confused by a range of emotions. "Why me? Why not choose one of your female friends to play the part?" She wasn't naive. She'd seen the way women gravitated to him.

"Because those women aren't the kind you present as a potential wife," he stated bluntly.

She looked away, choked by emotion—good, bad, she couldn't tell. "It's deceitful and wrong."

His fingers turned her face toward him and her skin instantly stirred under his touch.

"I'll triple your salary. It would help you finance your brother's education."

Her mouth dropped open. It would cover the entire tuition. My God, he was willing to pay her

to be his make-believe girlfriend. Everything inside her jarred and she shook her head. No.

"Brenna, I need to find a solution." He paused thoughtfully. "If it's too much for you, I'll find someone else."

Her gaze shot to his as panic gripped her. Another woman? She couldn't handle seeing him with someone else. Pretend or not. Were her feelings for him so obvious that he'd use this trump card? Her lips clenched together and she pushed herself up from the sofa. She couldn't believe what she was about to do, but she'd made up her mind. "I'll do it," she said flatly.

Markos stood up and approached but she held up her hand. "Starting tomorrow."

"Brenna..."

She gave him a cool look and walked away, acutely disappointed in herself.

Chapter Six

Markos leaned back in his chair and listened to Brenna as she talked with his parents in their home. He'd suggested a small get together and his mother was delighted. Brenna had avoided him the rest of the trip on the *Phoenix*. Her reaction was understandable even though she'd accepted the arrangement. The idea had occurred to him when he realized that his mother had walked into the saloon, most likely with the intention of discussing her friend's daughter. He'd taken advantage of the moment with an intimate gesture that worked. Brenna was marriage material. A relationship with her would dissuade further attempts of matchmaking. It was perfect.

He was well aware that his motives were not driven solely by this reason. In fact, his real agenda was his desire for Brenna. It was more than simple desire, however. He felt unusually possessive about her and he'd be damned if he let another man have her. As for her morals, they

were a temporary barrier that would crumble. Under the prim exterior was a sensual and passionate woman and the attraction that drew them together was potent.

His mouth curved into a satisfied smile. It was time he wooed his beautiful girlfriend. He walked over to his mother and kissed her cheek. "Thank you for the lovely meal, *mana*."

"Don't thank me for things like that," Sophia said good naturedly.

"It really was delicious, Mrs. Christakis," Brenna said.

"It was my pleasure. We must do this again." Sophia kissed Brenna on both cheeks.

In his car, Markos turned to Brenna. "That wasn't so bad, was it?" When she looked at him, he read the censure in her eyes and it stung.

"You know how I feel about it, Markos."

"You agreed to it. I didn't force you."

Her violet eyes flashed warningly. "Don't push your luck."

He grinned. "Have I told you how sexy you are when you're angry? It must be the Greek genes." Her lips pursed in response, making him chuckle. "I have a surprise for you."

He took a winding road to the western side of Kalinos and stopped on a high promontory. The sun would set in about half an hour.

"Oh, Markos...it's stunning," Brenna exclaimed and got out of the car.

"Careful now," he said and caught up with her, taking her hand. The edge of the cliff jutted out over the sea and afforded an uninterrupted view of the horizon where the sun would set. Skyros was a gray shadow in the distance to the right.

She looked at him. "This is a wonderful surprise. Thank you."

As the sun made its swift decent toward the velvety sea, he pulled her into his arms and kissed the top of her head. She didn't resist. Her body relaxed against his, the soft curves molding perfectly to him. Streaks of deep gold, pink and orange lit up the sky while his need for Brenna increased with every passing second.

When the last bit of sun disappeared, he eased away from her and lifted her chin. He saw the slight tremble of her mouth, the expectant look in her wide eyes and a current of heat shot through him, making him hard. He moaned and brought her against him, crushing her sigh with his mouth. He kissed her urgently, tasting the sweetness of her mouth, inhaling her soft, feminine scent. He demanded her surrender and when she moaned and wrapped her hands behind his neck, he lifted her off the ground and walked to the car.

He touched the hood to make sure it wasn't hot and lowered her onto it in a sitting position,

placing himself between her legs. He continued kissing her and grasped her hips, pulling her flush against his groin. A tiny cry sounded in her throat. He dragged his mouth away. "That's how I feel when I'm with you," he said, holding her gaze. She was so damned beautiful. He kissed her again and eased her back until she lay on the hood. He tasted her throat with soft nibbles and licks, lingering at the rapid pulse. It thrilled him to sense her body's reaction to him. He slid his hands around her waist and she arched her back. "*Thee mou,*" he moaned and nuzzled the soft valley between her breasts.

"Markos..."

Hearing her gasp his name accelerated his loss of control. The urge to take her here and now was overwhelming. He slid his hand down her body and pushed the hem of her top up, over her breasts. The full, pale mounds almost spilled over the strapless bra, promising to be more than a handful. He swept his palm over the flat, silky plane of her belly and the curve of her small waist. He held her gaze for several heartbeats, reading the heady desire in the violet depths and his cock pulsed.

He lowered his mouth to her belly and traced a path over her soft skin. He ground his erection against her as he rose over her right breast and tugged the bra downward. Her flesh popped out,

round and supple, topped by a dark pink nipple. He moaned and claimed the tip, working it into a hard bud.

She gasped loudly and arched, grasping his shoulders. "Markos...please!"

Her plea was a mixture of desire and resistance. He released her breast and hitched her skirt up. When he cupped her sex, he felt her moisture through the thin material of her panties. It flamed his arousal. He stroked her and she whimpered, closing her eyes.

"You're wet for me, Brenna," he said. "You want me."

Her eyes opened. The violet depths brimmed with longing. "You promised..."

"Promised?"

"No...sex," she said between ragged breaths.

He had and now he was practically ravishing her on the hood of his car. His mind balked at the intensity of his desire for her. It shattered his control. He let out a shaky breath and adjusted her clothing modestly. Brenna deserved better than this. He took her in his arms and lowered her feet to the ground. His cock throbbed almost painfully, but he clenched his jaw and ignored it. He cupped her face and dropped a soft kiss on her lips. "I'll take you home," he said.

* * * *

They began making appearances as a couple, much to the delight of his family and friends who believed he was finally in love and serious about it. They dined at the tavernas, hosted small soirees at his villa and even spent a day on Skyros. He'd never enjoyed the company of a woman this much. It was killing him to keep his hands off Brenna, not wanting to press her so quickly. The situation required a sensitive approach. After all, he was paying her to play the role of a doting girlfriend, which wasn't easy on her pride.

Panos had come by his place late last night. It seemed sleep was evading them both. He swirled the red wine in his glass and drank. "Mmm, good stuff."

"The Denazzis brought it from Italy," Markos said.

His brother was quiet for a moment. "You've made a good choice with Brenna. When I saw you together, it seemed right." He paused and met Markos' gaze evenly. "She's not anything like the women you've dated before. The old folks are thrilled."

Markos understood his brother's comment. The women he'd known were self-absorbed and shallow. He nodded. "Brenna is special."

"She is, which is why I'll ask you point blank if you're playing with her," Panos said.

His eyes narrowed. "Why would I do that?" he demanded curtly.

Panos didn't back down. "Because you've made your feelings about marriage quite clear."

Markos felt the tic in his jaw. "That's not your concern."

"It's my right as your brother. Don't hurt her, Markos."

His body tensed dangerously. He didn't like being told what to do with his private life. He kept his tongue in check, though. *Hurt Brenna?* God, he could never...*could he?* He downed his drink. "Good night, Panos," he said and walked away.

Markos brushed the thoughts from his mind and watched Brenna board the *Cassandra*. He'd arranged to take the yacht out himself today, so it was just the two of them. They'd spend the day at the best beach on the island. It was also remote, accessible only by boat. When he'd told her about the caves at the beach, she'd been enthusiastic.

She joined him in the wheelhouse as he pulled out of the marina. "I admit that I'm impressed," she said.

He grinned. "It's easier than it looks." He focused ahead because she was too tempting in her navy shorts and white tank top.

The cove was near the tip of the island, which they reached in under fifteen minutes. Markos cut the engine and went about lowering the jet boat to

the water. With Brenna and their supplies safely on board, he took off toward the beach.

* * * *

Her hair danced gently behind her as the boat entered the mouth of the cove. It was one of the most beautiful things Brenna had ever seen. Shaped like a horseshoe, the thick boulders that plunged into the water were grayish-white, arching into hollow caves in some spots and topped by a carpet of green shrubs. Nestled deep within the curve was a small, sandy beach.

Markos brought the boat up to the shore and she slipped off her flip-flops and stepped into the water. "This is absolutely divine, Markos!" She smiled brightly.

He grinned. "I had a feeling you'd like it."

She helped him set up the umbrella and other beach accessories. She slipped out of her clothes, aware of his gaze as it traveled the length of her body, covered only by a turquoise bikini. Not long ago, she would have blushed at his open admiration, but she'd grown comfortable in his presence.

"I'll race you to that cave," she challenged, pointing to the furthest part of the cove. He hadn't removed his shorts yet and she took advantage with a head start.

"Little cheat!" He laughed.

Brenna swam quickly, but Markos was a seasoned, powerful swimmer. He passed her easily and stopped under the arch. He was tall enough to touch ground, the water reaching just under his chest. She dove under with a few strokes and came up next to him. She pushed her hair away from her face and sighed blissfully. The water was silky and warm. The pale stone seemed to have an effect on the color of the water, turning it baby blue and crystal clear.

His eyes flickered deviously. "Cheaters are punished on Kalinos, you know," he said huskily.

Her nerve endings stirred excitedly, welcoming any kind of attention from this man. Her gaze moved over his strong, handsome features, the column of his throat, his wide, solid shoulders, the bulge of firm muscle on his chest with its sprinkling of dark hair and a few inches of corded flesh on his abdomen. He was richly tanned. Unable to resist, she reached out and placed her hand on the indentation of his chest. She felt his breath hitch and met his gaze. Unmistakable desire glowed in the depths.

"What kind of punishment?" Her voice came out huskily.

He pulled her closer. "Only the naughty kind."

Tension coiled between her thighs. She slid her hands up to his shoulders and tilted her head back

to look at him. She couldn't hold back any longer, having fought her desire for too long. "Show me."

He growled something incoherent and tangled his fingers in the loose ends of her hair, tugging her head back gently. Her lips parted on a sigh and she felt his teeth graze them, sucking her bottom lip into his mouth with a soft bite. He nipped along the line of her jaw and pulled her earlobe between his teeth. A delightful shiver ran over her skin. She liked his punishment so far. His tongue delved into the groove near her collarbone, multiplying her shivers, while his hand cupped her breast. His fingers caught the taut nipple through the bikini and squeezed firmly, making her gasp in pleasure. He ran his hands down her back, cupping her buttocks. She arched against him, folding her hands behind his neck for support.

He lifted her up against his body, his erection swelling full and hard against her mound. *Oh, my!* She felt her sex slicken.

"Keep your leg on my hip," he said.

His hand slid between her legs and his fingers teased the skin along the edge of the bikini. The sensation was very sensual, heightened by the silkiness of the water. She pressed her mouth to his cheek and held her breath as his fingers slipped under the material and touched the naked flesh of her sex for the first time.

He inhaled sharply. "Oh, baby...you're so soft and wet," he murmured against her ear.

This was the most erotic experience of her life. She craved more of it...more of him. As if reading her mind, he explored her thoroughly, stroking with more pressure, teasing her sensitive bud. Her nails curled into his skin and she clung to him tightly as incredibly sweet sensations spread out from that spot.

"I want you so much it hurts," he said and eased a long finger between her folds. He thrust inside her as deep as he could go, sending spirals of tension and pleasure through her flesh. "This is what I want to do to you...on the shore."

She trembled with the force of her arousal. *Yes...God yes.* She needed him inside her, heedless of any consequences. She'd already shed a few basic ethics—what was one more? A weak moan escaped her, communicating her surrender.

He growled in satisfaction and picked her up. He carried her to the shore and lowered her onto the wet sand, stretching out beside her. His gaze followed his hand as he caressed her body in long, leisurely strokes. "You're the loveliest woman I've ever seen, Brenna," he said huskily. His hand paused on her belly. "I've had sleepless nights fantasizing about this."

So had she. Even daytime fantasies working in the office next to his. Something pricked her

conscience, though, which she needed to clear. She met his gaze. "Markos, I want you to know something about this...about us. It has nothing to do with money. Do you understand?" She longed to say more, to tell him exactly how she felt about him but refrained, because he couldn't reciprocate the sentiments. For him, this had begun as an arrangement for the sake of convenience and that's how it would end. His desire for her was obvious, but that's all it was. When she'd gone home that night, after accepting his deal on the *Phoenix*, she'd cried. Not only had she fallen so low as to play the part of his girlfriend in exchange for money, but she'd also agreed to it for fear of losing him to another woman. She'd felt pathetic.

Tears pricked her eyes and she swallowed the knot in her throat.

His expression tensed, his eyes flickering with an emotion she couldn't read. "I know that, sweetheart." He thumb brushed her cheek soothingly. "God, you must think I'm—" He winced and exhaled sharply. "Brenna, I would want you no matter what." He caught her mouth in a quick, urgent kiss. "And not just this once. Many times...*Thee mou*...even that's not enough. I just want you." He punctuated those last words, sending her heart into an erratic flutter.

Not sure exactly what to make of his response, though appeased to a large extent, Brenna curled her fingers into his hair and brought his mouth to hers again. Everything went into overdrive. He reached behind her neck to undo the fastening of her bikini, tossing the slip of clothing to the side. He looked at her breasts but didn't touch them. He hooked his fingers under the band of her bikini bottom and slid it down her legs, tossing that onto the sand, too.

The gentle tide lapped around her body as he moved between her legs. She sighed with pleasure as he scooped up a handful of water and let it drip onto her breasts and tummy. Her nipples tightened. He lowered the hard length of his body on hers, fit his hands to her breasts and pulled one erect nipple between his lips. She arched and pressed his head to her while he flicked his tongue over the sensitive peak. Wonderful little shivers darted over her flesh. He moaned in pleasure and focused on the other breast.

She ran her hands over the smooth, tight muscles of his shoulders and back. Her body had become pliant under his. Her belly trembled as he loved it with warm, wet kisses. He straightened between her legs, spreading them wider, exposing her intimately. Her sex clenched in anticipation. His gaze traveled the length of her body slowly

and came to rest on the swollen flesh between her thighs.

"Beautiful," he murmured. He stroked her and she whimpered.

His fingers were well tutored and his mouth promised to be just as—"Ooh!" His mouth and tongue were on her, devouring in a series of licks and thrusts. Her hips bucked in response to this wonderful assault. He spread the flesh around her clit and continued. Bursts of exquisite sensation erupted from that tiny bud. He penetrated her with two fingers and stroked the area behind her pubic bone. *Oh my!* Her climax was swift, unfolding in waves of intense pleasure that shook her entire body. It left her trembling and breathless.

Markos stood up and removed his swim trunks. Her eyes went wide as his flesh rose high and hard. He was well endowed in every way. She had a fleeting moment of doubt that she could take him in. He came down on his knees and pressed the round head of his erection between her folds. When he eased himself in a few inches, he came closer, his mouth hovering over hers. She wound her fingers in his hair and gasped as he slid inside her completely. Her womb contracted to adjust. The union was amazing.

He began moving inside her, stretching her. “Brenna...*moro mou*,” he breathed against her mouth and increased his thrusts. “You’re mine.”

It thrilled her to hear him say that because she wanted to be his in every way, just as much as she wanted him for herself. She wrapped her legs about his hips and took him deeper. His mouth closed over hers, their sounds of pleasure mingling. The water that caressed her skin could have been cool—she had no idea. Hot frissons went through her as he brought her closer to climax with every deep stroke. He’d thickened, nearly overwhelming her. She sensed he was prolonging his release as he drove into her relentlessly, his flesh both smooth and hard. She broke into a thousand pieces, calling out his name. His body tensed against hers as he let out a ragged moan and pulled out.

She meant to protest but realized why he’d done so. She was momentarily shocked by her carelessness. Swept up in a whirlwind of desire for Markos, the use of protection had slipped her mind. He nuzzled her throat with rapid breaths. Her hands caressed his back lovingly while she stared up at the cloudless sky and thought that this had to be the closest thing to heaven.

When they got back to the yacht, they ate lunch and made love again, this time on dry bed sheets. Markos was sexually voracious, but unselfish. He

took his time and aimed to please. She'd been nervous at first because she hadn't had many lovers, but loving him came naturally to her. She was delighted with his response to her touch and enjoyed exploring every inch of his lean, chiseled body. She loved feeling the silken steel of his flesh in her hands, between her lips and hearing his broken gasp as he climaxed. They fell asleep wrapped in each other's arms and returned to the village in the evening.

Chapter Seven

Sophia Christakis had just said something in Greek that Brenna didn't quite understand, except for one word that jumped out at her. She must have looked as stunned as she felt because the older woman repeated herself in English with a patient smile.

"Engagement, Brenna. Surely, you and Markos have discussed an engagement?"

Her brain froze. This was totally unexpected. "Engagement?" she blurted stupidly and felt her face redden. Oh God. "Em, well..."

Sophia touched her arm. "Don't let him drag this on. I know how he's felt about marriage, however, you are right for him." Her eyes lit up as she looked at Brenna. "He needs someone like you in his life, Brenna."

Brenna tried to smile but it felt stiff.

Sophia laughed softly. "Oh, don't look so worried, *koritsi mou*. I will help you arrange a beautiful party."

"Yes, of course," Brenna responded. Markos' mother kissed her on both cheeks and walked away.

With her heart in her throat, Brenna started looking for Markos. Not an easy feat given the size of his house and the fact he'd disappeared somewhere. She finally found him upstairs in his bedroom. He raised one dark eyebrow in surprise when he saw her.

She closed the door and approached him. "It was bound to happen," she began.

"What are you talking about?" he asked.

"Your mother thinks we're getting married."

His handsome features stilled briefly and then he laughed.

His reaction chafed her. "This isn't funny, Markos. She wants to plan an engagement party." She shook her head. "I knew this was a bad idea from the start. Lying to everyone..." Tears pricked her eyes. "It's bloody awful." Her voice trembled.

He closed the distance between them and lifted her chin. "Brenna, what did we lie about?"

She met his eyes. "Everything," she uttered, feeling her heart clench.

Something flashed in his eyes. "Everything?" He cupped her cheek, brushing his thumb across her skin. "I didn't lie about how I feel about you."

How he felt about her? She stepped back from him, feeling her eyes swim. "It's an arrangement."

He clasped her shoulders tightly. "Don't say that. What we shared the other day was no lie. I didn't have to sleep with you and I don't give a damn about the arrangement."

Her heart skipped hopefully. "What are you saying, then?"

His eyes fell to her mouth. "That I want you, regardless of anything. And when I'm not with you, I want you even more," he stated bluntly, huskily.

He was talking about physical need. Sex. Disappointment managed to stab sharply even though she'd known from the start that Markos' interest in her was purely physical. He was a bachelor and intended to stay that way. She could never have him exclusively, conventionally and the fact hurt deeply. She wiped her eyes and looked away so that he wouldn't see her pain.

She sensed his hesitation or surprise, perhaps.

"I have something for you," he said and took her hand, leading her to the dresser. He picked up a flat, square box and held it up.

Brenna's breath hitched when she realized it was a jewelry box. He flipped the lid up to reveal a stunning necklace. The delicate chain was completely inlaid with tiny, dark blue stones. She stared at it speechlessly.

"I was considering diamonds, but I know you like modest styles."

"This is hardly modest, Markos. What are these stones?"

"Sapphire. Oh, there are matching earrings, too." He opened the other box.

Brenna pressed her hands to her cheeks. "When did you get these?"

"When I was in Athens last week. Do you like them?"

"My God, they're beautiful...but expensive! You shouldn't have...I can't—"

He pressed a finger to her mouth. "Sh. You will accept this gift without another word."

His mouth replaced his finger for several long seconds, leaving her breathless again. When he pulled away, she looked up at him. "Thank you, Markos." She touched the necklace in wonder. His gesture pleased her very much, though she wasn't jumping for joy.

She took the boxes from him and planted a kiss on his mouth. "I'll cherish them. There still is the issue of the *engagement*, however. I'll let you handle that." She smiled brightly and left the room.

* * * *

If Markos was troubled by the dilemma that had arisen from their false relationship, he hid it well. She watched him as she took minutes during a

meeting. He had been somewhat reserved lately, though. Sophia didn't bring up the subject of the engagement again and she wondered if Markos had talked to his mother. If so, what had he said? The meeting came to an end and the small group of employees dispersed. She took a few steps to the door.

"Brenna," Markos said.

Her body stirred in response, as always. It was a wonder she could concentrate on work.

He came around the long desk of the conference room, looking handsome in a white shirt that emphasized the rich color of his skin. He stopped a few feet from her and held her gaze. "I'll be going away for a couple of days on business."

Her heart sank a bit. "Athens?"

He nodded and caught a wisp of her hair, twirling it about his finger. "I leave tomorrow morning." He paused. "I need your help at the villa."

She nodded. "Did you speak to you mother?" The question had been nagging her for the past three days.

He released her hair and swept his gaze over her face with a shuttered expression. "We'll discuss it some other time."

They drove to his place in the relative silence of private thoughts. When they stepped inside,

Markos took her hand and lead her to his bedroom.

She placed a hand on her hip and raised a questioning brow. "You need me to help you in here?"

He clasped her waist. "I just need you. Period."

The timber of rough sensuality in his voice nearly had her limbs melting. He kissed her hotly and began removing—practically tearing—clothes off her body. He raked his gaze over her nakedness and dispensed with his own clothing in seconds. This time, his passion was swift as he readied her. She heard the faint tear of foil and a single cry of pleasure broke past her lips as he thrust inside her to the hilt. He took her with primal need. She raked her nails over the rippled muscles of his back as tension coiled in her womb.

"Brenna..." he growled and turned her on her hands and knees.

A sharp gasp escaped her as he plunged into her from behind. At this angle, he reached the furthest depths and stimulated a particularly sensitive region of her womb. She matched his thrusts with her own and felt wonderfully wicked when he tugged on a handful of her hair. Her body shook in the grip of climax and she cried out while Markos pulsed inside her, his pleasure mingling with hers.

* * * *

It wasn't business that took Markos away from Kalinos for a few days. It was the need to distance himself from Brenna and a situation that had taken an unexpected turn. First, Panos had sent him a warning where Brenna was concerned, then his parents expected him to make his relationship official. Marriage never interested him. He enjoyed his bachelorhood. His initial annoyance was directed at his family for interfering. However, once he'd cleared his mind, the truth of the matter was apparent. He was deeply in love with Brenna Linwood. And he didn't know what to do about it.

He'd slept miserably last night when he arrived in Athens and felt weariness around his mouth and eyes. He raked a hand through his hair, still not able to understand how he'd let this happen. He'd always been a man in control of his emotions, actions. Now he was entangled in his own deception. He gazed at the Parthenon illuminated in the distance and felt the corner of his mouth tug into a half-smile. Ironical how he'd purchased this apartment for the main purpose of entertaining female guests. Ever since he laid eyes on Brenna, he couldn't think of any other woman. None could compare to her. She had rare, beautiful qualities inside and out. Her smell, the

taste of her was imprinted on him. She'd even turned into a little tigress in bed over time. A little before dawn yesterday, he'd woken to her bold caresses, her full mouth loving his cock and sending him over the edge. Just the thought of her made him hard with longing. God, he'd never get enough of her. It wouldn't be fair to drag this situation on longer, though. He couldn't put Brenna through that, which meant he'd have to stop seeing her. He'd lose her. *You'll lose her anyway at the end of August*, said a voice from inside his head. Something tugged painfully in his chest. *No*. He never lost anything he wanted so badly.

He extended his stay in Athens by a few days. As soon as the plane touched ground on Skyros, he made for the *Cassandra* waiting in the marina for him. Once he was on Kalinos, he drove to Brenna's at high speed. He rang insistently until she opened the door, the traces of sleep lingering softly on her lovely face. He'd disturbed her siesta, which she'd recently started taking.

"Markos? Everything all right?" She looked concerned as she stepped to the side to let him in.

He took in her sleepwear, the slender curves of her body outlined in minimal pink top and matching briefs and felt the jolt of desire arc through him. He crushed it for the moment. "Perfect...Come here." He took her to the living

room and pulled her onto his lap. He couldn't resist kissing her and delighted in her sigh of pleasure. He held her wide, inquisitive gaze. "Brenna, I think we should get engaged," he said.

Her eyes widened further. Several emotions moved over her face, not exactly ones he'd hoped for. Finally, she gave him a puzzled look.

"I don't understand, Markos," she said in a low voice.

A fist clenched his heart. *What didn't she understand?* He circled her waist with his hands. "I want to be with you without feelings of guilt."

Her mouth tightened. "Are you proposing marriage?" She asked with a note of incredulity that chafed him.

He was. God, he could hardly believe it himself. "Yes." He frowned when she extricated herself from his arms and stood. Her eyes were shining with moisture. Tears of joy or —?

She shook her head briefly. "You told me you had no desire to wed."

He stood up. "I did, but I've changed my mind." He reached out for her hand but she snatched it back.

"What is this—plan B or something? Do you feel so much pressure from your parents that you'd go to such lengths?" Her voice had risen, thick with unshed emotion.

She was pushing dangerous buttons. He dragged in a calming breath and exhaled slowly. "It has nothing to do with them, Brenna. I want you."

She stared at him in silence for a long, unbearable moment. She swallowed visibly. "You mean, sexually. You want me sexually—I know that already," she replied in a hollow tone that stuck a knife in his heart. *Thee mou*, couldn't she see how much he cared for her? A bitter laugh nearly choked him. Women had been pursuing him ever since he started shaving with their sights on marriage. Now, the one woman he had ever wanted was throwing his proposal in his face.

Brenna was visibly holding back tears. "You don't love me," she said.

His hands clenched into fists as his mood took a dark turn. "I do—with every fiber of my being, damn it!" He turned around and stormed out of the villa because he felt like breaking things. He heard her muffled sob as he slammed the door behind him. This was his fault. He'd made the deal without considering the consequences.

You would have fallen for her anyway. The muscle in his jaw ticked rapidly as he gunned the engine. "Yes, I would have." Her reaction changed nothing. If anything, he wanted her more. In all honesty, he couldn't live without her. He got home, changed into his swim trunks and sliced

through the pool in several continuous laps. He leaned his arms on the lip, breathing hard and stared into the blue horizon. Perhaps he needed a plan B, after all.

Chapter Eight

Brenna was heartbroken. She wept for almost an hour after Markos had gone. How could he treat her like a chess pawn...like some plaything? God, if she didn't love him, it wouldn't hurt as much, but she did and the pain was unbearable. If the pressure to marry her was too much, he could have ended their public relationship. She'd be back in England in a month, anyway. The charade couldn't go on forever. She choked back another sob. How could she go on with her life as before? She'd miss him terribly – already did.

For a few wonderful seconds, she'd felt his proposal was genuine. It didn't make sense, though. The man was paying her a considerable amount of money to help him steer clear of marriage altogether. It seemed he had another ulterior motive and she suspected it had something to do with the fact that he enjoyed their intimacy a great deal. It could very well be that Markos wanted to have his cake and eat it, too.

Break off the engagement when he got bored of her.

He said he loved you, piped that inner voice. She bit her lip skeptically. Markos was a powerful, determined man, capable of manipulating situations to his advantage. She shook her head, not wanting to believe he could be so calculating. She wiped the moisture from her cheeks and gave up thinking. It was pointless torture.

* * * *

They gave each other space over the next few days, interacting only at work. Markos seemed busier than usual and it hurt to suspect that he was avoiding her. A hollow ache had formed around her heart. She really missed the ease of their companionship, their intimacy.

Brenna was about to log off from the computer when she noticed a new email. She read it and sighed. Another business event, this one at Markos' villa. Formal attire. She wasn't in the mood—and she'd run out of evening dresses. *Wonderful*. When she walked into the lobby, Angela stopped her.

"Oh, just a second" she said, reaching toward the wall-mounted clothes hanger. She walked over to her. "Here you are. It's for the party on Saturday."

Brenna looked at the gown though its clear plastic cover and her brows came together. "Where did this come from?"

Angela smiled. "Markos. He wants you to wear it."

It seemed she had little choice. She took the gown. "Thanks." No matter her present feelings toward Markos, it was quite thoughtful of him, she thought as she drove home. When she removed the cover, she touched the material gingerly. The fine silk blend slid softly under her fingertips. It was a beautiful, unusual shade of violet. She held the dress in front of her and looked in the mirror, surprised to see how closely it matched her eyes. Perhaps it was his way of apologizing. She put the gown away and decided not to dwell on the thought.

* * * *

That Saturday, Brenna was on edge. It was inevitable that the situation with Markos would get to her. She wasn't sleeping well, eating less. Well, she didn't feel like a million bucks, as the Americans say, but she looked pretty good in the dress. It even fit perfectly. She blushed, recalling how intimately he knew her body. Walking over to the dresser, she opened the jewelry cases and donned the sapphire necklace and earrings. The

look was stunning. She afforded herself a smile, feeling better.

When she arrived at Markos' home, he escorted her through the strangely quiet rooms on the first floor and out into the backyard, which had been converted into an oasis of glowing candles, magnificent white roses in tall urns and soft, Greek music. Pine and jasmine perfumed the evening air.

He paused and turned toward her. "You look amazing, Brenna," he said, kissing the corner of her mouth.

The feel of his warm mouth on her skin made her heart skip excitedly. He looked awfully sexy in a black suit and tie and she longed to feel his arms around her. She forced the feeling away and looked around. "Where is everyone?"

"Mmm, they should be here soon. Hopefully." His tone was oddly light hearted.

"What's going on, Markos?"

He grinned. "Let's relax with some wine." He placed his hand at her back and she acquiesced. They walked across the tiled floor and came to a large table laden with all kinds of appetizers. He removed a bottle of white wine from an ice bucket and poured some of the golden liquid into two glasses. "Cheers."

"Cheers," she replied, touching her glass to his. The cool drink managed to soothe her nerves a bit.

He placed his glass on the table and cleared his throat. "I want to apologize, Brenna." The intensity in his dark eyes trapped her. "When I asked you to marry me, I didn't do it properly."

Oh God, not this again, she pleaded silently. "Markos—"

"Sh...I'm not finished." He took the glass from her and enveloped her hand in the strong warmth of his. "I love you, Brenna. *S'agapo*. And I want to spend the rest of my life with you."

Her emotions jarred. She felt faint. *Why was he doing this?*

He reached into the pocket of his jacket and produced a ring. A sparkling diamond ring. He lifted her hand and slid it onto her trembling finger. "If you'll have me as your husband, that is." He held her gaze unwaveringly.

She glanced down at the brilliant stone and her breath snagged. Then her eyes filled. One thing she was sure of was that she couldn't live without him.

When she'd been speechless for a while, he tilted her chin up and met her gaze. "You doubted my sincerity about my feelings for you and I can understand that. But do you think I would lie to you before my entire family?"

She glanced around. No, he wouldn't do that, but..."No one's here."

"They're here."

"I don't know what to say." She felt her voice tremble.

Markos took her other hand. "Brenna, forget about the arrangement—forget about every silly little thing. How do *you* feel? Do you love me?"

She saw the glow of hope in his eyes and felt her heart squeeze. "Oh, Markos...I do love you...so much."

He pulled her into a tight embrace and she wrapped her arms around his neck and gazed up at him with a heart so full of joy she thought it would burst.

"Brenna Linwood, will you marry me?"

She beamed. "Yes, Markos Christakis. I will marry you."

He claimed her mouth triumphantly for several heartbeats. When he ended the kiss, he grinned and got his cell phone out. He spoke briefly in Greek. When he was done, he placed a hand at the small of her back. "Time to celebrate," he said.

The sound of laughter and voices reached her ears and she turned to see a small group of people flock toward them. Soon, she was embraced by members of Markos' family and close friends.

Sophia's eyes danced with tears of joy. "You've both made me so happy." She kissed Brenna and then Markos. "Now, let's talk wedding plans before you change your minds." Laughter erupted briefly.

Markos kissed Brenna tenderly. "I'm not changing my mind," he said huskily.

"Neither am I," she replied.

* * * *

After the party, Markos took his time making love to Brenna. His eyes devoured her naked body as she lay on his bed, waiting for him with the look of an eager lover. He removed the last of his clothes and lowered his body over hers with the support of his arms. He explored the sensual shape of her mouth, nibbled her earlobes and the soft skin of her throat, teasing the rapid flutter at the base. He trailed kisses along her shoulders, sensing her shiver. He cupped the pale curve of her breasts and took the erect, rosy nipples into his mouth. She sighed and arched, pressing her hand to his head. His nostrils flared as he inhaled the sweet smell of her skin. She intoxicated him. He nibbled the tight buds gently before soothing them with his tongue. He went lower, brushing his mouth over the silky skin of her tummy. He raised himself slightly to look at the swollen flesh of her sex and felt his cock jerk. He dipped his head and took her in his mouth as she cried out. He swirled his tongue over the slippery folds, tasting her thoroughly, thrusting into the silken orifice. He parted the dark pink flesh, exposing her clit,

which he teased with rapid flicks of his tongue, mindful of her climax. He wanted to be inside her when she came.

At the first sign of her quivers, he straightened and slid his throbbing flesh into her. He shut his eyes as pleasure shot through him. Her muscles contracted around him and relaxed. He caught her gaze and began moving inside her slowly, indulging himself. He found the swollen bud at the tip of her sex and stroked it with his finger. Sounds of ecstasy broke from her lips. Her violet eyes were heavy with arousal and her long, dark hair had tumbled wildly across the pillow. She was breathtaking. And she was his. He increased his thrusts and her womb clenched around him, milking him. Heat surged in his cock insistently. He swelled inside her with the need to come. The muscles in his body tensed from his exertion to hold back. It was almost impossible, but he paced himself until pleasure claimed her. He smothered her cries against his mouth as he drove into her, finally surrendering to the fire that consumed him.

He went limp and slowly pulled out of her wet heat. He wrapped her in his arms and rolled over onto his back. She sighed blissfully and closed her eyes. Markos stroked her hair, feeling a sense of peace and fulfillment that was new to him. He smiled, knowing that he'd be spending the rest of his life with this amazing woman. He caressed her

back lazily, imagining their wedding, the days he'd spend making her happy, satisfying her every whim. Endless nights making love to her. He thickened with arousal.

Markos looked at Brenna, her lips parted in sleep. He fought the urge to wake her and love her again. His hand slid down to the curve of her pert bottom and he kissed the top of her head. "Rest, *agapi mou*. We have all the time in the world," he said as he dozed off.

About the Author

Celia Jade lives in Montreal and loves her wonderful family, outdoor cafés, gardening, animals and just about anything chocolate. She feels blessed with a passion for literature and has been reading and writing for years. Every book she writes turns a new page in the story of her life, doing what she most enjoys.