

*C
a
p
t
i
v
a
t
i
o
n
s
S
e
r
i
e
s*



All That Jazz

Book 2

Julie Lynn Hayes

All That Jazz

Julie Lynn Hayes

Copyright 2010 Julie Lynn Hayes

This work can not be copied without the authors permission.

Published by: Wicked Nights

www.wickednights.info

As far as Avery Deacon was concerned, the day keeper matter was finished the moment he walked away from the beautiful annoyance known as Jillian Nichols. An opinion which he confirmed with the slamming of his office door. There was nothing else to be said, and nothing he was willing to listen to. He had every intention of giving Father Christopher a piece of his mind, telling the priest what he could do with his insane ideas in the future. Not that he didn't respect the man, he most certainly did. Avery wanted to make sure there would never be a repeat performance of this little fiasco. The only thing which restrained him from placing an angry trans-Atlantic telephone call was the knowledge that for the priest it was the middle of the night, therefore an exercise in futility unless he wished to vent his spleen on the man's voice mail. Avery almost called anyway.

He had just clicked on his 30" flat screen computer monitor – one of his state of the art toys - when he heard his door open. He assumed it was Wohali with his coffee and his periodicals. An important part of his morning ritual, he loved the strong Creole coffee that the bartender blended so well. It was the closest thing he had found to what he had once enjoyed in his native France. Well, what passed for his morning for the past few centuries.

Avery waved the bartender in without glancing up, intent upon something on his screen. Therefore he was very taken by surprise when his cup of coffee was set abruptly onto the desk before him, the fine china cup sloshing some of its contents into its saucer. A mere few centimeters closer and it would have been gracing his lap. It wasn't Wohali. It was her. Again. She just didn't know how to take no for an answer, did she?

The nightclub had certainly become quieter now that Leonie had high-heeled her way out. Before Wohali could react to Avery's demands, the redhead had taken both the coffee and the newspapers and followed determinedly after him. Ben suspected that a storm of another sort was about to brew in his brother's office. He'd no doubt he'd hear a full report of everything which transpired within those four walls, probably at the top of Avery's lungs. He took his brother's vacated seat at the bar, grinning mischievously.

"What do you think?" he asked the bartender.

"About what?" Wohali's face was impossible to read, but Ben knew better, detecting more than a hint of humor in his tone.

"You know what. About that woman. How quickly do you think he'll throw her out of his office?"

Wohali shook his head, leaning against the back bar, his eyes roving the length of the bar as he kept an eye out for thirsty customers. "He'll keep her," he said, confidently.

"Why do you say that?" Ben asked curiously. "Weren't you paying attention? He doesn't want anything to do with her, and you know why."

"Maybe, but none of that matters anymore. He'll keep her because she'll make him," was the matter-of-fact reply.

“Make Avery? Seriously?” Ben scoffed. No woman had ever gotten the better of his brother. Avery was always in charge, and always had been. He’d always been able to control them, even in days long past, when they were living breathing young men, and the wards of the most powerful man in France. Even then, women had been his to use, even if Avery hadn’t quite mastered his ability to control them. Yet.

“She’s different,” the black man maintained. “There’s something about her. I don’t know what it is, but she’s gonna give your brother a run for his money. That much I can tell.”

“I think you’re an optimist,” Ben laughed. “Care to put your money where your mouth is?”

“I’m just a poor bartender.” Wohali’s eyes gleamed as he leaned across the bar, his gaze fixed upon Ben. “I’ll tell you what, though. I’ll bet you a day’s wages that he not only does not throw her out, but that she’ll be working here by the time she’s done in there.”

“You’re on!” Ben’s hand shot straight out. Wohali took it without hesitation, and the bet was sealed. “Aren’t you going to miss a day’s pay? You might have to take an extra shift to make up for it.”

“We’ll see.” Wohali winked as he turned to a customer, taking his order. Ben just shook his head.

“Do you always stay where you are not wanted?” Avery Deacon’s voice was crisp and cold and controlled. He pushed the cup back from its precarious position, noting her near attempt to emasculate him.

“Only if I’m needed,” she replied cheekily. She dropped into one of the plush guest chairs on the other side of his desk. The brocade cushions were hand embroidered, and very expensive. The man had good taste, she gave him that much. They were also very comfortable. She relaxed into their embrace. “And since I’m needed here, here is where I’ll stay. Until you’re ready to listen to reason.”

“Reason? By reason I suppose you mean if I do as you say because of who sent you here? Unfortunately for you, your being here is a mistake, one which can easily be rectified by you leaving immediately. I have no use for a female day keeper and he knows better. At least he should.”

“He being Father Christopher.” Not a question, but a simple statement. One not asking or needing confirmation, and receiving none.

Avery turned back to his monitor, glancing between several feeds. Political feeds, mostly, although others were possessed of more esoteric content. “I trust you can find the door without help.” He dismissed her with a wave of one elegant hand, not deigning to look up.

Jillian didn’t bother to answer, making herself more comfortable in the chair. She steepled her fingers, placing them against her lips, prepared to wait him out. Damn stubborn man. Father Christopher had warned her. She had thought he was exaggerating, but now she realized he had understated the vampire’s mule-like qualities. Avery Deacon was indeed a very stubborn, albeit handsome ass. She

gazed with inadvertent admiration at the man before her. He was disturbingly good looking. That was his problem, she decided. His looks only fueled his insufferable arrogance, his need to place himself upon a pedestal from which his contemptuous gaze could fall upon those lesser beings he was forced to deal with. She found his attitude rather surprising for someone who had once been in training to be a priest. Of course that was many years ago.

“How did you get the music to change?”

Avery’s head jerked up in surprise, both that she was *still* there, as much as her question. “What are you talking about?”

“The music. One minute it’s playing some kind of jazz, and then as soon as you show up, it’s all sieg heil Wagner. How did you do that?” She leaned forward just slightly in the chair. Her coat fell back enough to reveal her weapons, but she never touched them.

“Sieg Heil Wagner?” he repeated, his lip curled with disdain. “You have a distinct disregard for history, don’t you? And facts. Wagner was never a member of the Nazi party. He was simply the composer which the Fuehrer admired.”

“Yes, and the one he made the party members listen to ad nauseum. Not to mention that Hitler was a proponent of his warped ideology. So, is it your love of Wagner, your sense of superiority or your desire to make a grand entrance?” she persisted in baiting him. “And how do you time it so well? Is this some special vamp trait that I’m unacquainted with?”

Avery refused to take the bait. He kept his cool, despite the fact that he despised the word vamp and always had. It possessed distinctly cheap connotations. “Believe what you want to believe, Miss Nichols. I do not care. Now, do I need to get Darius and Dante to remove you from the premises? Or will you be a good girl and just walk out of my office and my nightclub?”

“And out of your life?” she countered, her hands brushing over her blades lightly. “Let’s make this a real cliché moment, why don’t we, while you’re working at sounding like a script from a grade B film. I guess my next line is - who says I’m a good girl? Well, I’ll tell you what I am. I’m a daykeeper, Mr. Deacon, and a very good one, or I would not be here. Anything else I am is immaterial and actually none of your business.”

“Miss Nichols, I’ve been as patient as I know how to be . . .”

She interrupted him with a snort. “I saw that, yeah. Yell at the help and stomp off to your room. Real mature attitude you have going on there.”

Avery gave her a withering glance. “You underestimate whom you are dealing with.”

“And you underestimate me, Mr. Deacon. Because I am a woman, you think that I am weak. You think that I am incapable of protecting you. For your information, I have been dealing with your kind for a very long time. I can more than handle myself in dangerous situations.”

“My kind? Do you have any real idea of what my kind is?” He held up one hand imperiously, in order to stem any reply she’d been about to make. “Do not mistake me for your garden variety run-of-

the-mill vampire. I am nothing like the others. I have knowledge and powers that go far beyond your ability to comprehend.”

“You’re wrong. I do know about you ,and your brother. And why you need a daykeeper so badly.” She lashed back at him without thinking first. She hadn’t meant to tell him that she knew so much about him, but he had a way of making her say things she hadn’t intended to say. He was such an infuriating man.

For once, Avery was speechless. She had gained his full attention now, whether she actually wanted it or not. She decided to press her advantage. “I’ll make you a deal,” she said, “let me stay here for a month. Let me prove to you just how valuable I can be. If, at the end of that time, you still think I’m useless to you, well, then I’ll leave. No arguments, no complaints. You can have another daykeeper. But at least give me a chance.”

“Out of the question,” he argued vehemently. “This is no game we’re playing, it’s a life and death situation. If you fuck up, even a little, Ben and I could die. I will not let you be the weak link that gets my brother killed!”

“Two weeks then!” she persisted, her hands gripping the dark wood of his desk. It was cool to her touch, like its owner. “It’s not like you have a lot of choice in the matter. Father Christopher has no one else he can send you right now that is anywhere near as good as I am. Be reasonable, and think about this for just a moment, please. Don’t you think he knew you’d react like this? Would he have done it if he didn’t have to?”

Avery drew his breath in a hiss, his temper beginning to show. “Like what? What did he tell you, exactly?”

“Just that you don’t believe in women being day keepers, you don’t like them. Unless there’s more to it than that. Is there something you haven’t mentioned?”

“There is nothing else you need to know!” he snapped, pounding his fist upon his desk, which sent the poor coffee cup flying. He rose as if scalded, the Creole coffee pooling into a stain on one trouser leg. “One week!” He held up his index finger for emphasis. “One week and one week only, do you understand me?”

Swallowing the angry retort that was on the tip of her tongue, Jillian contented herself with nodding. “I understand that in one week, if I have proven myself to you, you’ll stop making a fuss and let me continue to do my job.”

“That’s a big if,” he muttered coming around his desk, “and to be very honest, I don’t expect it to happen. But as I am a man of my word, I’ll be fair and give you that week before I fire you. Is that satisfactory, Miss Nichols?”

“Quite,” she nodded, biting back a smart remark. She rolled her eyes behind his back as she followed his long-legged strides from his office. He never paused, nor bothered to wait for her, assuming that she was right behind him. As he approached the bar, he found Wohali intent on cutting up fruit, while Ben

busied himself with something of great interest in his notebook. Avery knew better then to take either one at face value, but he didn't have the time or the desire to deal with them at the moment.

"Wohali!" he growled. The bartender looked up as if he'd been unaware of his employer's presence. "This is Jillian Nichols. She's going to be with us for the next week. She's taking Santos' place. You know the drill, show her around. Tell her what she needs to know, no more no less."

"Yes, Mr. Deacon," Wohali assented, his eyes moving speculatively between Jillian and Avery. He knew better than to ask, though. At least not while Avery was in earshot.

"Ben!" came the next command. His brother arched his brows, waiting. "I want the second floor on and ready. Five minutes!"

Ben swiveled toward his brother. "You want . . ." he began. His words were arrested in his throat, stillborn, as he forced himself to stifle a burst of laughter, his eyes affixed upon the wetness on Avery's inner thigh.

Avery growled at his brother. "Four and a half!" He turned his attention back to Wohali. "And clean up that mess in my office!" Not waiting for a reply, he disappeared in the direction of the spiral staircase, ascending it until he was lost from view.

Jillian found herself staring after Avery. She told herself it was to make sure he was truly gone, nothing to do with that gorgeous ass. Nothing at all. She turned back to the bar to find Wohali doing a little victory dance. Ben was staring at her with something akin to admiration.

"What did you do to my brother?" he asked.

"Just reasoned with him, that's all." She shrugged. "He needs my help, even if he's too stubborn to admit to it. Is he always like that?" She looked around for the suitcase she had left behind. As well as her hat. Wohali handed her the hat from behind the bar, where he had stashed it for her. "I've got your bag too, for safe keeping," he said. She set the fedora on her head, brushing back tendrils of red hair.

"Always," Ben averred, "but don't worry, he'll grow on you. He's not really the hard-ass he pretends to be, except when he needs to be. He's very protective of the people in his life. Please don't judge him on the basis of just one meeting. He's been under a lot of stress lately."

"I know, I know," Jillian commiserated, "I really do understand, believe me. I'll try to keep that in mind and make allowances for his pigheadedness." She faced Wohali, looking for some sort of a sign as to how he wanted to handle her tour of the facilities. She just wanted to become more familiar with her surroundings, and find where she was to stay. Sleep sounded so very good right about now.

"Why don't you have a seat for a few minutes?" he suggested, exchanging glances with Ben that she couldn't quite read. She didn't know them very well, but she could almost swear that they were up to something.

"I can look around on my own, if you're busy . . ."

“No, it’s cool,” he assured her. He opened the bar fridge, snagged a couple of bottles, adding some of their contents to a shaker as he spoke. “The relief guy should be here in just a few minutes. If you don’t mind waiting til he shows up, I’ll give you the Cook’s Tour.” A dash from another bottle, and he shook the mixture in a professional manner, before pouring the contents into a tall glass, adding some of the cut fruit for garnish.

“I can wait, sure.” She slid onto a stool, and was surprised when Wohali set the drink he’d just mixed before her. “But I said . . .”

“Non-alcoholic,” he assured her, “I know, you don’t drink on the job. It’s called an Afterglow. It’s just orange juice, pineapple juice and a touch of grenadine. On the house, of course. Employees drink for free. Right, Ben?”

“Right,” Ben nodded. “The offer stands with regard to alcoholic drinks, too. If you ever feel the need, I mean.”

Again with the exchanged looks. Jillian was beginning to feel positively left out.

“Um, Ben . . . the floor, remember? Do you really want a pissed off brother on your ass?”

“Oh hell no. Hand me the laptop, willya, Wo?”

From behind the bar, Wohali produced a sleek black laptop, which he gave to Ben, who immediately opened it, booting it as he did. Jillian watched with fascination. Boys and their toys. She was curious in spite of herself.

“I can control everything in the club from here,” he explained to her, as he brought up the program he wanted, pressing select keys. “Very convenient, actually. There are other controls, of course, back-ups. Never put all of your eggs into one basket, you know. There. Done.”

The excited murmurs of the customers drew Jillian’s attention. Turning she saw that one of the dance floors was now lit; the farthest one, the one with the strange pole. She was surprised at the subdued, almost erotic colors of the lights – deep blues and purples and even mauve. Somehow she had expected something more vulgar, or lurid, like a bright scarlet or orange. She was beginning to get an inkling of what the pole was about to be used for. Gyrating females of the busty persuasion, no doubt. She wondered if that was how Avery Deacon’s taste in women ran.

A sudden silence suffused the crowd. A collective holding of breath. The stage went black for just a moment.

A single trumpet broke the silence with a slow wail which rose and then fell in a haunting manner, even as the lights did, revealing a single figure upon the stage, his back to the audience, cloaked in shadows. It was a man, and a well built man he was at that, which was evident, even from behind. He wore a black jacket, and skimpy dancer’s briefs, revealing long well-toned legs. Upon his head a black brimmed hat sat, long dark tresses spilling out from beneath it.

Suddenly Jillian recognized the music. Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue. It had been given a ramped up beat which added a sensual quality to an already sexy melody. A shiver went down her spine.

The man bowed gracefully. Turning in profile, he approached the pole as he might a lover. He put one hand up to his hat, dropping it to his lips in a sensuous salute. Undulating gracefully, he stretched first his arms, and then his legs, posing briefly for the benefit of his audience. Wrapping one long leg about the pole, he spun about it, as upon an axis, his arm falling gracefully behind him as he did so.

The dancer's movements matched the music, as he took the pole into his intimate embrace, before relinquishing it once more, arcing his limber body into what Jillian would have thought were impossible positions to attain. When he turned toward them, his jacket fell open, revealing a broad well muscled chest, tapering to a slender waist. The hat shaded his face, cocked just so upon his head. Jillian had to remind herself to breathe.

This Gershwin was more primal than any version she'd heard before. The added drum line only served to accentuate the classic tune. The dancer's back was to them now. He shimmied the coat off, slowly, teasingly, before he shrugged it completely off, tossing it backward into the hands of the squealing women. They acted as if they were expecting him to do just that. His back was every bit as nice as his front. Though Jillian swore that she hadn't meant to check out his ass, she couldn't help but notice that in the small of that magnificent back was some sort of tattoo. At this distance, it was impossible to say what it was.

Now the music was even more frenetic, all the instruments having joined in, although the piano was clearly the lead player in this high strung jazz ensemble. The dancer tossed the hat in one elegant motion. It too was quickly claimed. And now the pole dance began in earnest as he twisted himself about the stationary shaft. Grasping the pole with his hands, he circled it, legs fully outstretched. He hooked one leg about the pole, dropping his hands, and continued to twirl.

Gershwin was replaced by something Jillian did not recognize, something that was filled with drums and bass and driving rhythms and a growing urgency. The dancer's movements kept pace with the music, just as driven as it was. His body made love to the pole, taking it in a loving embrace, twining about it. Sometimes his hands were the only point of contact, other times it was his feet or his muscular thigh. Higher, harder, faster. Jillian inexplicably felt her heart beat faster as she watched this man going through his incredible paces. She would have to compliment Avery later for having hired such a talented man.

The muted lights only served to enhance the heightened sexuality of the scene being played out upon the dance floor. Jillian had tossed off the Afterglow without realizing it. The glass sweated onto her hands, helping to cool the heated flesh. She could not take her eyes off the dancer. She suspected she was far from the only one with that particular problem, if problem was even the right word.

The dancer launched himself into what surely was his ultimate gyration, the music climaxing around him, before he fell to the floor, dropping gracefully into a bowed posture as the music died out and the applause began. Jillian raised one trembling hand to her forehead, surprised to feel actual beads of sweat. That had been quite the performance. She wasn't sure she could handle any more of the same. Luckily it seemed as though the dancer were done for, at least for now.

He came to his feet, rising to his full height, with a grace and agility she had not expected to ever see in someone so obviously masculine. His head was bowed in humility, as he gathered himself. She felt her own hands drawn together in applause, but she refrained from the whistling and hooting emanating from some of the women in the audience. He was a crowd favorite, for obvious reasons.

It wasn't until the man raised his head at last, the curtain of his dark hair falling behind him as the lights began to go back up that Jillian got the shock of her life, her jaw dropping down to her knees, her glass almost following it. That oh so talented dancer with the body and grace of an angel, the one who even now was making her heart beat far too fast for her liking, not to mention the other bodily reactions she was attempting to ignore – that gorgeous dancer was none other than Avery Deacon.

And now she definitely needed a drink!