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ROADSIDE  
STRANGERS 2

CHANCE MEETING



MARIE ROCHELLE

*Roadside Strangers 2:*

*Chance Meeting*

*By*

*Marie Rochelle*

## **Roadside Strangers 2: Chance Meeting by Marie Rochelle**

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### **Roadside Strangers 2: Chance Meeting**

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**Dedication**

This book is for anyone who never thought they would find love again.

--Marie

## **Chapter One**

Dexter Thornheart drove down the slick, deserted road through the pouring rain wondering how quickly he could fire his cocky know-it-all agent. How many times did he have to tell Anthony Seltzer he wanted to do more than high-budget action movies? So many times over the years that he had truly lost count because Anthony kept turning a deaf ear to his complaints. All his agent cared about was filling up his pockets with ten percent of his earnings.

For Christ's sake, he was a damn actor, which meant he was versatile enough to do any good script that came across his overpaid and overweight doughnut-eating agent's desk. Nevertheless, his old buddy Anthony seemed determined to keep him doing the same type of movies because they were always a box office success.

For the past five years, he had been thinking about getting a new agent, but he felt a little loyalty to Anthony because he had helped him break into the movies as an extra with a speaking part.

However, that was years ago, and Anthony hadn't changed any of his auditions since then. It was almost like his agent was giving him the same old scripts on purpose.

Why couldn't everyone see that he wanted to star in a variety of movies like Will Smith and Leonardo DiCaprio? They seldom played the same roles over and over.

He was positive now that after his much-needed vacation was over he was going to fire his lazy agent without feeling bad about it. Anthony

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had to go, and that was that. He was better than Anthony's business skills, and it was past time he proved it.

Without a doubt, Anthony would try to bully him into not firing him or come up with an excuse why they shouldn't part ways, but it wasn't going to work. Dexter was smart enough now to know when to cut his losses. That is what he was going to do.

He didn't know why it had taken him so long to see Anthony's true colors. Sure, he believed in loyalty but not to the point it would ruin his current career and future movie deals.

He did feel bad that Anthony wouldn't be a part of his everyday life anymore, but his need to stay loyal to the person who'd helped him couldn't and wouldn't be more important than hopefully winning an Oscar one day. The only way to achieve his ultimate dream was for him to make better movies.

A sudden thought crossed Dexter's mind as he turned onto a different side road. Why should he wait until his vacation was over to tell Anthony he was fired? It was best to do it now. Then, when he got back home, the worst would be over.

Taking his eyes off the road, Dexter reached for his cell phone lying in the change console. It would only take him a minute or two to make the call, and then he would do his best to enjoy the rest of his well-deserved vacation.

A sound of a thunderclap followed by a flash of lighting jerked his eyes away from the phone and back to the road in time to see a deer blocking his path.

"Shit!" Dexter cursed as he swerved to miss hitting the animal. He went off the pavement, crashed into a ditch, and then ran into a tree before his head hit the steering wheel, knocking him out.

\* \* \* \* \*

The feel of the rain on the side of his face jerked Dexter awake. Moaning softly, he moved away from the steering wheel and winced in agony when a pain shot through his head and the entire length of his

body.

"What in the hell happened?" he mumbled as he put his fingers to his forehead. He instantly felt a sticky wetness there which had nothing to do with the rain soaking his already drenched clothing.

Bringing his hand away, Dexter glanced at the blood staining his fingertips. He shivered as rain came through the window.

*I have to get out of here and get some help*, he thought as he worked to block out the pain shooting throughout his banged up body.

He pushed against the driver's side door, but it wouldn't open. So he slowly inched his way across the seat to the passenger's side door. It took a few times, but the door finally swung open, and he fell out, hitting the cold, wet ground.

Holding the side of the door, Dexter pulled himself up and struggled to get his bearings but all he could see was trees and darkness. Taking a couple of deep breaths, he swallowed down the nauseous feeling in the pit of his stomach. Now wasn't the time for him to be getting sick out here in the middle of the woods. He had to find a way to save himself since no one knew where in the hell he was. He hadn't told anyone he'd decided to leave for his trip tonight instead of tomorrow.

Hell, how far had his car traveled off that side road when he tried to avoid hitting that damn deer?

Okay, he couldn't stay out here in the weather. He had to get some help. Since he didn't know the way back to the road, he guessed his best bet would be to move forward and prayed he wasn't making a mistake.

Dexter wiped at the blood which was still dripping down the side of his face as he made his way into the woods. He feared that if he didn't get some kind of help he might actually bleed to death. There was no way in hell he wanted his crappy agent saying any final words over his dead body.

Ripping the bottom of his T-shirt, Dexter balled it up and pressed it against the side of his head before he continued his adventure into the unknown. He didn't have a clue where he was walking but one thing was for sure: he couldn't give up trying to find his way out of here because no one was coming to find him.

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Dexter had secretly hoped the downpour of rain would stop and give him a bit of a rest. Instead of the rain slowing to a drizzle, it seemed to come down even harder.

Now, he was regretting his decisions to toss a bag in the trunk and take a drive to see where he would end up. He had always been bad about jumping into things at the spur of the moment.

However, it was too late to go back now, so he continued on and thought about the real reason left his nice, comfortable home and ended up lost, hurt, and alone out in this damn storm.

Shit, he should have been man enough to handle he'd lost his last audition to Orlando Bloom. He should have taken it like a professional and tried out for something else.

Instead, he decided to take off to lick his wounds, but not getting the role wouldn't have hurt so much if he hadn't been positive the upcoming suspense thriller would have been the *perfect* breakout role for him. Sure, it was an independent film, and the part would have been a totally different venture from his usual action movies. The tormented male lead would have given his fans a chance to see another side of him.

Yet, once again, Anthony hadn't given him enough time to prepare for it, and that's why he'd lost it. He was positive it hadn't come from his acting abilities but by not being in touch with the character enough to make the casting agent feel his deep lingering pain.

God, he shouldn't be still thinking about the movie role he lost two weeks ago while he was out here in a fucking rainstorm injured, lost, and about to catch pneumonia. He had to find some kind of shelter soon before he ended up passed out on the wet ground.

*How could I have been so stupid to leave the car?* Dexter thought the second after a low-hanging tree limb smacked him in the side of the face when he pushed on through the forest.

Was he out of his mind? Had it come from the blow to his head? He wasn't a cocky twenty-one-year-old who believed he could take on the world without breaking a sweat anymore.

He was a thirty-nine-year-old man with a bad divorce under his belt. He should have known better than to jump into a situation without



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thinking first. Not thinking about the consequences was what had landed him into a hellish two-year marriage in the first place.

But he had learned to put his past behind him and become something, so if he could get through a less than happy childhood, he could get through this shit too without breaking a sweat.

*Fuck!* He had too much going on now just to give up without a fight.

Brushing his wet hair off his forehead, Dexter pressed the rag harder against the side of his head and continued through the forest. He wasn't sure how long he had been walking. It seemed like days instead of hours.

He stumbled and fell against the side of a tree, scratching his arm. He was so tired he didn't even feel the pain. All he could think about was getting out of this forest, yet he couldn't muster the energy to move another step.

He never really thought about dying before because he was enjoying living his life too much. Nevertheless, this spot might be where he took his last breath.

As Dexter was about to fall to the ground out of sheer exhaustion and loss of blood, a faint light in the distance caught his attention. He blinked a couple of times to make sure his mind wasn't playing tricks on him.

"If I see light, that means there's someone out there," Dexter whispered to himself, fighting through the agony his body was in.

His heart jumped at the thought he might have found some help after all. Now he had to shake off how truly worn down he felt to get there.

Pushing away from the tree, Dexter quickened his pace until he cleared the forest and almost shouted for joy when he saw a small house in the distance with smoke coming from the chimney.

*Please God, let there be someone home,* Dexter prayed as he staggered toward his last hope in the remoteness of the woods.

## Chapter Two

Evangeline Jackson glanced down at the illustration she was working on for her latest children's book. Her editor wanted the next part of the Pinky and Rudy series in her office by the end of next week, so she was working steadily trying to add the final touches to the pictures. She wanted to make sure that both girls had the perfect sparkle in their eyes her young readers loved so much.

She never would have guessed when she started this story about two young sisters it would turn into an overnight sensation and her publisher would sign to her a multi-book series with even the talk of a Saturday morning cartoon in the works.

The publishing world was a hard place to get into, and she expected to get rejection after rejection, but the Children's Rainbow Publishing Company had offered her a contract within three months of her sending *Pinky and Rudy's First Trip to the Zoo* to them.

She would never forget the rush of emotions she felt after holding her first book cover in her hands. She had shed so many tears. She thought she might not ever be able to cry again. The same day she received it, she placed it in a picture frame which now was hanging on the wall above the desk in her office. God, it was amazing how Pinky and Rudy's first book held so many good and bad memories for her.

She quickly blinked away the sudden tears in her eyes. No, she wasn't going to cry. It had been over four years, and he wouldn't want her to still be in mourning, but it had been so hard to let him go.

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Tossing the pen down on the side of her desk, Evangeline took off her glasses and ran her hands down her face as the rain continued to beat on the roof. Ever since she could remember, the rain always found a way to soothe her pain, making her forget about all of her problems. Tonight, the magic of the tapping against windows wasn't working for her.

So maybe she needed to do something else to help her relax. A hot cup of coffee sounded pretty good right now and might ease some of the stiffness in her back. She knew better than to stay bent over in the same position for too long, but she continued to do it again and again.

Pushing her chair away from the desk, Evangeline got up from the seat, stretching her arms above her head trying to loosen up some of the tired muscles in her overworked body. She walked away from her work area, took a quick glance at the apple clock on the wall near the door, and was surprised to see it was after six o'clock at night.

No wonder her body was so uncomfortable and tired. She had been working in her office since twelve o'clock that afternoon without any food. It was way past time for her to get something inside of her body. The pot of chili she'd placed in the back of the refrigerator yesterday was calling to her empty stomach.

Walking out of the room, Evangeline made her way toward the kitchen when a faint scratching sound coming from the front door caught her attention. She stopped in her tracks as she tried to figure out what the noise was.

There was no way anyone in their right mind would be out in this weather. This was the second rainstorm in the last two months, and she had heard about a third coming the end of next week.

She paused in front of the door, waiting to see if the sound came again or if it truly had been her imagination playing tricks on her because of the storm raging outside. Just as she was about to walk away and head back to the kitchen and the chili waiting for her, the sound came again, a little fainter this time.

Okay, now she knew that her mind wasn't playing tricks on her. There was really someone or something outside her door.

Should she open it or pretend that she wasn't inside? All the lights

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being on inside her house didn't matter. They were just on for a security purposes. She still could be gone.

*No!* She wasn't going to be frightened inside her own house. She would see what was going on and protect herself if she had to do it.

Picking up the baseball bat she kept against the wall, Evangeline unlocked the door and slowly cracked it open. She gasped at the motionless man lying at her feet. Where in the world had he come from?

The clothes covering his muscular body were torn and covered in blood. Her gaze raked over his body, noticing the gash on his forehead and dirt that covered his jeans like he had crawled to her porch instead of walked.

God, she had to help him.

Her mother had always gotten on to her about wanting to take in every stray or lost cause on the street, but she couldn't leave him lying out there in this weather. Why did he have to find his way to *her* porch? Well, it was too late now to be worrying about why he was here. She had to help him into her house.

Evangeline reached out and shook the stranger on the shoulder. He was too big for her to drag inside all by herself. She just hoped he was conscious enough for him to help her get him inside of the weather.

"Sir, can you hear me?" she shouted as she dropped the baseball bat and got down on her knees as the rain soaked the sweatshirt and jeans she was wearing. "Can you stand or get up on your own?"

If this guy was totally out of it, there was no way she would be able to get him inside the house. She had to wake him up. Evangeline continued to shake the man on her porch, but he wasn't responding to her at all.

*Shit!* What was she going to do now? Maybe she could go inside and call Sheriff Perry for help. The way the rain was coming down, the roads were probably covered in debris, which meant it would be hours before he got here, and she wasn't sure how bad this guy's injuries even were, but it was the only thing she could think of at the moment.

She turned her head away from him. She started to get up when a hand shot out and wrapped around her wrist. Her scream rang out

through the forest, but it was covered up by the sound of the rain.

Taking several deep breaths, Evangeline got her nerves back under control and locked gazes with the deepest pair of blue eyes she had ever seen. Lance's eyes had been blue, but they were nothing like this guy's.

"Please...help me," he groaned in a low voice.

She admittedly pushed her initial fear aside and jumped into action. This guy needed her help, and she was going to give it to him.

"Sir...can you stand? I need you to help me get you inside out of this weather or you're going to get sick."

"Yeah, I can stand and try to walk," the guy whispered as he let go of her wrist.

Scrambling to her feet, Evangeline helped him slowly struggle to stand. He fell against her body and almost made her lose her footing as she helped him into her house, kicking the door closed with her heel behind them.

"My head is killing me," he complained, his words slurred together.

*No!* Her mind screamed. He couldn't pass out on her again, not before she got him into the bedroom. He had to stay awake and on his feet or she was going to be in a lot of trouble.

"Listen, you have to stay with me. Can you manage to do that a little longer?" Evangeline asked as she inched her way to the guest bedroom with most of the guy's weight leaning into her right side.

He nodded as he tried to stay awake and alert for her, but she could tell from the way his feet were dragging it was getting more and more difficult for him. It was harder on her not to fall over from his body weight.

After what seemed like the longest ten minutes of her thirty years, Evangeline got her surprise visitor into the guest bedroom and laid out across the bed a second before his gorgeous blue eyes closed and he passed out.

Placing her hands on her hips, she stared down at the sleeping figure wondering had she made the biggest mistake of her life. Now what was she going to do? Had she just actually helped a strange man into her

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house and then brought him into the spare bedroom during a storm that might last well into the morning?

Most of her friends and family told her she was crazy for not moving into town after Lance's death and after what just happened tonight, she was beginning to think they were right, and she was a bigger idiot than she ever thought.

### Chapter Three

Cool, soft fingers brushing against his forehead slowly dragged Dexter back from the darkness trying to hold him down, but he kept fighting the pull until he cracked his eyes opened and stared at the most beautiful woman he had ever laid eyes on.

Thick rich brown hair was fixed back into a messy ponytail at the back of her neck; mahogany caramel skin was enhanced by a midnight blue T-shirt over a pair of jeans. A soft floral scent filled his nose as her hands moved away from his forehead and her slim fingers tugged the sheet over his bare chest.

*Whoa!* Why was he naked? Where in the hell were his clothes?

"Did you take my clothes?" he asked in a raspy voice, causing his mystery woman to jump back from him.

"Oh my God," she screamed, looking down at him with her hand over her heart. "You scared the shit out of me. I didn't know you were awake. I was getting concerned about you." She looked him in the eyes and then smiled.

"Where am I?" Dexter asked, glancing around the well-furnished bedroom. He didn't know how in the hell he had ended up in some strange bed with an absolutely gorgeous woman standing over him.

She frowned. "Do you not remember anything about last night?" Dexter tried to focus his thoughts on all the events that occurred during the rainstorm. The last thing he recalled was walking through the forest and then noticing a faint light in the distance; after that, it was all a blur.

"No, I can't say I remember much. I ran off the road trying to avoid hitting a deer, and then I slid into a ditch. I might have hit my forehead because the next thing I knew I was waking up with rain pounding on me through a broken windshield.

"I got out of my car and tracked my way through the forest to find help. I guess I found it with you. Who are you anyway?"

"Sorry, I'm Evangeline Jackson. You ended up on my front porch late last night. I almost didn't hear you knocking over the storm. I was shocked out of my mind to find you out there. I didn't think I would be able to get you on the inside, but you woke up enough to help me get you on the inside and into the guest bedroom.

"I think the blow to your head could be affecting your memory a little, but it should come back slowly since you're awake now. I cleaned the wound and bandaged it up."

Dexter touched the side of his head, feeling the bandage on the right side of his head. "Did you give me any stitches? Will it leave a scar?" he asked, dropping his hand.

God, he hated he couldn't remember anything at the moment, but Evangeline told him his memory should come back. How did she know that anyway?

"Yes, I gave you about three. I was a nurse for a little while, and I fixed you right up. No, it shouldn't leave a noticeable scar. After I cleaned away all of the blood, the cut wasn't as bad as I first thought it would be, and then I got you out of those wet clothes."

He never had a problem showing off his body to a woman before, but he wasn't comfortable with a woman he didn't know undressing him. It didn't matter how breathtaking she might be.

"You stripped me naked?"

"I told you I used to be a nurse, so I have seen a naked man or two before," she answered, moving away from him, heading toward the bedroom door. "By the way, I laid some clothes out for you at the bottom of the bed. If you can get out of the bed, the bathroom is through the door on your left. I'll be outside in the kitchen fixing us something to eat. I'll see you in a few minutes, sir."



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“Dexter.”

Spinning back around, Evangeline glanced at him with a frown on her face. “What did you say?” she asked.

“I told you my name was Dexter,” he answered.

“Nice to meet you, Dexter.” Evangeline smiled. “When you’re ready and if you don’t think you can make it, yell for me if you need some help, and I’ll come back to get you.” She turned around and then walked from the room leaving him alone with his scattered thoughts.

## **Chapter Four**

Moving around the kitchen, Evangeline started to gather stuff together for soup and sandwiches. Her house guest had slept through the night and breakfast, so she didn't doubt a man his size was starving by now and would need something to fill him up.

Her Lance had nowhere the height or bulk as Dexter, but he always seemed like a bottomless pit most of the time. He'd loved her cooking and never had a problem telling her what a wonderful wife and cook she was.

God, she shouldn't have saved Dexter last night. It had been a while since a man was under the same roof as her, and it was making her miss her late husband even more. Lance filled up a part of her life that was so empty now.

Placing all of the items on the table, Evangeline started to build the perfect grilled cheese sandwiches. A grilled cheese sandwich was the one comfort food that her mother could make for her, and it always found a way to cheer her up no matter what her problems were back then.

Turning on the stove, Evangeline cut off some butter and dropped it into the skillet. After that was done, she went back to making an extra sandwich for Dexter because the sooner he regained his strength, the quicker he could leave and she could go back to her regular routine.

She picked up two of the sandwiches and placed them into the sizzling skillet, then turned on the tomato soup at the back of the stove. She had made more than enough soup to feed her and her unexpected house guest.

Evangeline was glad she decided to fix chili and tomato soup earlier in the week and then put the extra portions away inside the deep freezer. Her mother had taught her making extras was a good idea because it saved on cooking a new meal every day of the week.

Lance used to love coming into the kitchen and watching her while she prepared a week's worth of food and then froze it so they would have it as an easy meal later on. She never knew when she was twenty-one she would meet and marry the love of her life only to lose the same amazing man before she turned thirty.

Lance turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to her. He was a good man and even better husband during their short marriage. She still didn't understand why he couldn't have gotten better and stayed with her.

God, she loved him and missed so much.

Tears filled Evangeline's eyes as the memories came rushing back to her. She brushed them away with the back of her hand. Now was not the time to get caught up in the past. She had to take care of Dexter and then finish up her latest book for her publisher before starting on the next in the series.

"Hey, what smells so good?"

Evangeline jumped at the sound of Dexter's voice. *Damn!* That was the second time today he had scared the hell out of her. She had to pay better attention to him because he barely made a sound when he moved.

Turning away from the stove, she looked over her shoulder and found Dexter sitting in a chair by the kitchen table pulling on his boots and then typing them up.

"It's grilled cheese and tomato soup," she answered, facing the food again. Evangeline took out the two grilled cheese sandwiches, adding them to a plate before placing the last one into the hot skillet. "I hope you're hungry. I have enough soup here for an army."

"Truthfully, I'm starving," Dexter answered, touching the front of his chest. "Thanks again for the shirt. I know mine was ruined from the weather along with blood. It's a little snug, but it's better than nothing at all."

"You're welcome. It was my husband's. Your shoulders and chest are wider than his, but I'm glad you can still wear it." Evangeline removed the last sandwich from the skillet and then worked on dishing up the soup into two medium-sized red bowls.

"Tell him I said thanks or better yet I can tell him myself. Will he be home soon?" Dexter asked her.

Evangeline quickly blinked away fresh tears. "No, you can't tell him."

"Why not?"

"My husband is dead," she said as she brought the bowls of soup over to the table. She placed the soup down first and then went back for the sandwiches.

"Oh God. I'm sorry," Dexter apologized as he stood up and came toward her with hurt in his voice.

"Thank you, but it has been almost four years now." Evangeline gave Dexter his two grilled cheese sandwiches, then went over to her chair and took a seat at the table at the same time Dexter returned to his.

"This really does smell amazing. Thank for taking such good care of me last night and feeding me this morning. As soon as I finish eating, I'll be out of your hair."

"You might as well take your time eating the food and get comfortable because you won't be going anywhere for at least two days," Evangeline informed Dexter, glad to be talking about something else beside her late husband.

Dexter's hand stopped in mid-air as he reached for his grilled cheese. His shocked blue eyes locked with hers, "What in the hell are you talking about? Why can't I leave for two days?"

"Another rainstorm is forecasted within the next two hours, plus the main roads are probably covered with trees limbs and other debris. The sheriff will make sure the storm is completely over before he orders the roads cleared up, and the city will do the most important roads first before making their way toward the side road you probably had your accident on."

"Fuck!" Dexter cursed under his breath. "I need to get out of here. I

can't be here for two days."

"Sorry," Evangeline said. "I wish I could do more for you, but that's the way it is when you live in a rural area. At least you aren't outside anymore but inside a nice warm house. I would be happy about that if I was you."

"Great...I know you're right...but..." Dexter sighed. "Okay, can I use your phone? I need to make a couple of phone calls to let people know where I am."

Evangeline shook her head as she tore her sandwich in half. "Sorry, you can't. The phone lines are down because of the weather, and my cell phone can't even pick up a signal."

Placing his elbows down on the table, Dexter dropped his head, mumbling under his breath, but she couldn't make out his words. Evangeline knew that Dexter had to be frustrated, but there was nothing he could do so why worry about it.

"I'm sure you might be able to use the phone in a couple of days. It's not going to help you any stressing out about it. Now, why don't you eat before this delicious food gets cold? You need something inside of you anyways. Dig in."

Dexter moved his hands away from his face. "I guess you're right, but I hate I can't tell anyone where I am."

"I'm sure your wife and family will understand once you get a chance to explain everything to them. They will just be happy you're alive and safe."

She watched as Dexter stopped eating his food, then looked her for a few seconds before finally answering her. "I don't have a wife or a girlfriend. My job keeps me too busy for either one at the moment."

Evangeline was stunned by the news. She couldn't believe a guy as good-looking as Dexter was single. God, if she still wasn't devastated over her husband's death, Dexter would be the type of guy she would have asked out on a date in a hot second...but those days were over.

## **Chapter Five**

Dexter pretended like he was looking at the pictures of Evangeline and her late husband on the wall, but his entire attention was on the woman wandering around the kitchen singing softly to herself.

Most women would have started coming on to him the second he confessed he was single, but Evangeline only smiled at him and then went back to eating her food. He hated to be suspicious, but he was having a hard time believing she didn't know who he was.

His celebrity could be the main reason she'd invited him to stay longer. How did he know the phone was really dead? She could be lying for all he knew. Spotting a phone on the side table near the couch, Dexter eased over to it and picked it up. Instead of hearing that annoying beeping sound, he got dead air. He placed it back down before taking a seat on the couch.

It seemed like Evangeline was telling the truth, but he was a cautious person and he had to check things out for himself. In his business, most people weren't that upfront and honest with him a majority of the time.

"What were you doing out in that storm yesterday away?"

Hearing Evangeline's voice, Dexter focused his attention back on her and off his personal thoughts. "What did you say?" he asked.

"I was wondering what drove you to be out in such bad weather yesterday. Do you remember why you went for a drive? Everyone here in Market knew about the storm for the past two weeks."

"I'm not from around here. I drove in from Los Angeles," Dexter said, catching Evangeline's eyes with his. "I needed a break from my job, so I decided to take a little road trip to clear my head. However, I'm beginning to think I should have paid better attention to the news before I left out."

"You took a road trip to another state to clear your head?" Evangeline frowned. "Isn't that a little odd? Is there something you aren't telling me about yourself?"

Dexter heard the sudden fear in Evangeline's voice, and he wanted to put her at ease. He wasn't going to hurt her.

"You don't to be afraid. I'm not a serial killer or anything crazy like you might be thinking. I truly wanted some time to myself to think over my future. I thought a road trip and fresh air would be the perfect way to get it.

"I can see now what a mistake that was," he answered right before the rain started coming down on the roof again. "I guess you were right about the rain."

"I wish I wasn't," Evangeline replied. "The weatherman had been warning us about it for a while, but we needed the rain so badly. My garden and flowers in the backyard were about to die from the heat."

Dexter had secretly hoped Evangeline's prediction about the rain wouldn't come true because he was eager to resume the plans he had set out to do during his drive which was fire Anthony as his agent and find a new one ASAP.

He had always been confident in his abilities to get things done correctly and in a timely manner. He was usually the happiest and the most secure with his life when he was the person calling the shots. So he was controlling his future toward his worthwhile goal of a better career. A career he would work harder for to prove to the industry he was more than just an action star.

"Do you need me to get you anything else?" Evangeline asked as she walked out of the kitchen. "I'm rushing against a deadline, and I really should get back to work. Feel free to look at the television. I believe it's still working despite the fact the phone is dead."

"Thanks. I'll think about doing it."

"All right, if you should need anything, I'll be in the office at the end of the hallway." Turning away from him, Evangeline continued on down the hallway until he couldn't see her anymore.

Getting up from the couch, Dexter wandered over to the bay window and looked out at the rain, watching as it danced off the leaves. As he stared out into the weather, he thought about the attractive woman allowing him to stay in her home until the rain stopped and he would be able to go on his way.

He only could think of a handful of his acting friends back in Los Angeles who would think about offering a stranger help, let alone shelter from a storm. No, they would have left him outside on their porch and not have given him a second thought.

Evangeline was a very unique woman who he found extremely attractive. He only was able to get a quick look at her this morning in the bedroom because he wasn't fully awake yet.

However, while she was seated across from him at the dining room table, he stared at her all he wanted and truly like what he saw. Her face wasn't covered in a ton of heavy makeup, but there were traces of it there, which only added to her natural beauty.

She was very self-confident by the way she carried herself but not so much that any of his friends would call her a bitch.

Half the women he came into contact with through his work were too wild, wore too many artificial things to enhance what they didn't have, and were extremely too showy for his taste.

He wasn't even going to think about how they sometimes smoked or drank too much for attention. They really thought they were turning him on when in reality their bad attitudes and lack of respect for themselves was a huge turn-off.

Those women failed to understand he was a little shy sometimes, and it took him a while to warm up to new people who weren't involved in an acting job with him.

If any of those women truly gave him enough time to get to know the real them instead of the images they thought he wanted to have tossed



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at him, the situation might have turned out differently instead of him walking—no, running—away every single time.

Truthfully, none of those women possessed any authenticity about them. He seriously doubted they could spell the word or give him a clear definition of it. He was done partying and dancing with a stunning woman whose only dream was to end up in *Playboy* magazine.

In his later years, he was starting to seek out that one special woman who had something more in common with his own passions and goals, a female who would want to stick by his side through thick and thin.

He wanted someone intellectual to talk with after he was passed over for a movie role...a woman like Evangeline Jackson

*Wait a minute!*

He was getting in way too deep. He shouldn't be thinking about having a woman in his life at all with the way his career was going. Plus, he'd just met Evangeline. He didn't know that much about her. All he knew was that she had been married but her husband died, and she was one hell out a cook.

Anyway, there hasn't been a female in a very long time that has drawn his attention. He was just grateful to her for helping him, and there was nothing more to it. In addition, it didn't matter how attractive he found her. She hadn't tossed any signals in his direction that she was even mildly interested in him or she found him remotely attractive at all. She was only being a good hostess to him and nothing more. So he might as well wait out the storm and move on. He wasn't about to start a relationship with Evangeline.

Now all he had to do was figure out was if he was happy or disappointed that Evangeline wasn't trying to come on to him.

## Chapter Six

She was supposed to be in here putting the final touches on her book, but she couldn't get her mind off the handsome man in the living room. What in the hell was wrong with her? She shouldn't be lusting or even attracted to another man so soon after Lance.

Lance wouldn't be looking at another woman right now if she had been the one who had died instead of him.

However it was so hard not to stare at Dexter. He was just so gorgeous and his deep rich voice would stop a woman in her tracks. She couldn't get over how his defined muscles ripped under the black T-shirt she gave him made her pulse quicken and then get out of control.

His powerful, well-muscled body moved with an easy grace, like he was proud of who he was and didn't care who knew about it.

*Shit!* Evangeline couldn't believe she was actually sitting in her office thinking about a man she barely knew and how his tempting, attractive male aura was turning her body on. Maybe Dexter caught her attention because he was the polar opposite of Lance.

Dexter exuded confidence, like he owned this inner power which could make a woman follow him anywhere. Sex appeal was a hard thing for most men to pull off, but he had it down to a science.

Could her interest come from because she had enjoyed his looks? She'd tried her best not to be caught staring at him over lunch. Dexter's compelling dark blue eyes, the set of his jaw, and the way his smile lit up his face just kept her captivated throughout their meal.

She even had to find ways to keep her hands busy so she wouldn't reach out to touch his thick, dark brown hair that was cut in the typical bad boy hairstyle with a little spiked hair at the top.

Yeah, Dexter was the kind of man you would never think about tossing out of your bed because he was so hot. This meant she would have to keep enough distance between the two of them before she acted on her urges because she wasn't a spontaneous person by nature. In spite of this, Dexter came across like the type of man who would make her alter that part of her personality. She liked who she was and didn't think she could change if she had to.

For as long as she could remember, she'd yearned to feel like she was part of a greater whole. Her sensitivity along with her need to help others made her become a nurse, but she left that career after meeting Lance at the hospital and getting engaged to him six months later.

Two years into their marriage, she confessed to Lance she felt like she wasn't living up to her childhood dreams of becoming an author and illustrator of children's books. After hearing this, he pushed her, despite the fact his colon cancer had returned and he was getting sicker and sicker with each passing day.

After her first book was published, it was like a whole new world opened up to her. She knew without a doubt the euphoria she had experienced. She wanted that high more than once in her life. Why should she put limits on herself when there were so many possibilities out there?

She never realized how much she thrived on having plenty of change and variety in her life until her children's books started taking off. It was the one thing that kept her sane after Lance passed away in his sleep.

Evangeline learned very quickly how she must be adaptable when it came to her writing because sometimes things changed around her like it was night and day.

Her editor nicknamed her "the chameleon" because she had a natural ability or knack for understanding her world along with everyone else's at the same time. God, it was such a shame that she had more of a connection to her books than to a man...and she wasn't happy about it at

all.

What was going on with her? Once she might have tried to figure out how to get away from Dexter. Now, she was back to wondering about him and if she could have a change with him.

Could it be time for her to finally put Lance to rest and move on with her life? Did he send Dexter to her for that purpose? Was her late husband trying to tell her something or was it all in her mind?

A knock at the door stopped her from going any deeper into her thoughts about her life and why Dexter was inside her mind so much.

"Come in," Evangeline called out, picking up a pencil off her desk.

"Sorry to bother you, but I was getting stir-crazy out there by myself," Dexter said, coming into the room. "Do you mind some company?"

"No, I don't mind at all." She wasn't about to admit to Dexter how his presence made her think about stripping him naked.

"Did you do these?" he asked, picking up a sheet of paper with a sketch of Pinky and Rudy on it, oblivious to her inner thoughts. "My niece Corrie loves this series. I promised to buy her the newest book when it comes out next month."

Evangeline couldn't believe Dexter knew her work and was a fan of it. Her fan base was mostly mothers or grandparents not *hot* looking men like the one standing next to her smelling way too good. Who knew soap could smell so tempting?

"I'm the author and illustrator of the series. I'll be more than happy to autograph a book for your niece. I love working on Pinky and Rudy. It has been a dream of mine for a very long time."

"You're Chassie Jones?" Dexter replied, clearly shocked as he laid the paper back down on her work area. "I pictured you looking a lot different."

"How did you think I would look?" Evangeline asked, spinning around in her chair so she could get a better look at Dexter.

"I thought you would older with a little gray hair and a pair of glasses. Instead, you're stunning, I mean, like you could be a Playmate. No wonder I have been attracted to you since our first meeting."

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“There is nothing sexier than a good-looking woman who has made her mark in the world and loves to achieve something. Brains and beauty have always been a turn on for me in a woman. I really like you have both.”

Evangeline sat in stunned silence at Dexter’s compliments. She didn’t know what to do or say. She was already attracted to him but fighting it off. How was she supposed to keep doing it now that she knew he was thinking the same way about her?

## Chapter Seven

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have blurted that out to you," Dexter apologized. "I have made you uncomfortable and that wasn't my intention at all, but it's hard for me not to give you a compliment."

Evangeline got up from her seat and walked over to the other side of the room. She needed to put some distance between them. He was saying things to her he shouldn't because they didn't know each other all that well.

"It's okay," she said, pretending to straighten up some things on her bookshelf. "Stuff happens all of the time, so I understand it was just a mistake."

"No. My words weren't a mistake," Dexter corrected, his voice suddenly directly behind her. "I meant what I told you." Placing his hand on her shoulder, he turned her around to face him. "You're a very attractive woman, and I felt I should tell you. I'm only sorry that my compliment made you move away from me. I liked having you close."

"How about we just drop it and move on to something else?" Evangeline suggested, removing Dexter's hand from her shoulder.

Dexter's eyes studied her with a curious intensity, like there were several things running around in his head but he wasn't sure if he could tell her. "What do you want to talk about?" he asked, changing the subject, making her sigh in relief.

"Why don't you tell me more about yourself? You know what I do for a living. So what do you do to pass the day away? What takes up most

of your time?"

One corner of Dexter's mouth pulled up into a slight smile as he continued to look at her. "I guess I could tell you a little more about me since you've been so forthright with me," he said, moving around the room, glancing at the pictures on the wall as he went over to the window.

"Are you ready to tell me?" Evangeline questioned, excited that she was going to learn more about the handsome man walking around her den. "I would like to know a little more about the gentleman I'm giving shelter to during this storm." She could tell Dexter wasn't a labor kind of guy or a doctor or a lawyer. She was pretty good at reading people, but she couldn't figure him out at all.

He was a mystery, and she couldn't wait until she got a chance to unravel all of his secrets.

"Okay. I'll tell you who I am, but you have to promise not to tell anyone."

Evangeline frowned. What in the world was he talking about? What was he about to tell her? Should she be scared that she might be harboring a killer or something? The phone lines were down and it was still coming down in buckets outside. Dexter could be sure of one thing: that was she wouldn't be giving away his secrets anytime soon because she couldn't.

"I promise I won't tell."

"Honesty is essential to me. Once a person lies to me, I have a hard time trusting them again. Since I'm assuming you're being truthful and straightforward with me and you aren't lying to my face, I'll tell you who I am."

"Tell me," Evangeline insisted.

"I'm Dexter Thornheart."

Evangeline wavered, trying to comprehend what she was hearing. *Dexter Thornheart*. Should that name mean something to her? It didn't at all. "I'm sorry. Your name isn't ringing a bell with me."

Dexter stiffened as though she had struck him, and she instantly regretted being honest with him.

"Are you sure you don't know who I am?" he asked

"I'm positive," she told him again, wondering what in the hell she was missing about his name. It must be something important because Dexter was definitely upset by the fact his name meant nothing to her.

"I'm an actor. I have starred in over ten action movies in the past eight years."

*Okay...now she was getting it.* She knew why his name wasn't sounding familiar to her at all.

"Dexter, I wouldn't know who you are. I don't remember the last time I saw an action movie. Honestly, I don't recall the last movie I watched. I was taking care of my sick husband and then I was starting my children's series."

She should have figured out someone as hot and perfect as Dexter was in the entertainment business.

"I'm more upset that you don't know who I am, not the reasons you don't." Dexter sighed, shaking his head. "My agent needs to get my name out there, and he isn't. I need more of a female fan base because ninety percent of my fans are men."

"Is that why you were on the road during the first rainstorm?" Evangeline questioned, coming back over to Dexter.

"I'm not following you."

"My late husband always went for a drive when he had to think and when I asked him why, he would tell me it was a guy thing."

Laughing, Dexter closed the last bit of distance separating their bodies. "If I had you in my life, I wouldn't go on a drive about anything. I would stay at home and find ways to cuddle with you on the couch, among other things."

Reaching out, Dexter slid his hand behind her neck holding her still as he looked into her eyes. All of the laughter was now gone from the room while the sexual tension built up around them. He slowly ran his free hand down the side of her arm, sending small goose bumps across her skin.

Her eyes darted down from his intense look to his mouth, and she did wonder what it would be like to kiss him.

"I want to kiss you so badly," Dexter confessed as he moved his



hand back up to her mouth. He brushed his thumb over her bottom lip.

"No, we can't. I barely know—" She was cut off midrant when Dexter hauled her close, leaned down, and covered her lips with his.

Teasing her mouth with his, Dexter captured her moan in his mouth; he kissed her seductively, making her feel pleasure her body hadn't felt in years. He eased his hand between their bodies and undid her shirt, freeing her breasts. He lowered his head, easing her nipple into his mouth along with her lacy bra.

Evangeline gasped he slipped his leg between her legs, rubbing it against her and the friction of her jeans brushed against her damp underwear. He opened his mouth even wider, sucking more of her cloth-covered breasts into his warm, hot mouth.

"Dexter," Evangeline whimpered, shoving her fingers through his thick hair. "That feels so good...please!"

Suddenly, Dexter shoved her away from him and ran his hands down his face. "We can't," he groaned.

"What's wrong?" she whispered, trying to get her body back under control.

"Shit, I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have kissed or touched you like I just did." Dexter gave her one last hungry look and then hurried from the room as a clap of thunder pounded outside.

Evangeline didn't know how long she stayed there wondering how she'd allowed herself to get so caught up with Dexter's kisses. She had been fighting off advances from men ever since her husband had died because she hadn't been interested in them.

*Whoa! Stop!* She wasn't interested in Dexter either.

Why was she even trying to think about him in that way? He was only some guy she helped out and when the storm was over, he would be out of her life, and everything would turn back to normal.

Pushing the kiss to the back of her mind, Evangeline walked over to her desk and took her seat. She needed to finish up the last of these drawings for her publisher so she could send them in by her deadline.

Dexter wasn't going to sidetrack her anymore with his good looks, killer body, and toe-curling kisses. Nope. She was going to stay in this

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room until it was time for her to start supper.

## **Chapter Eight**

Pacing around the living room, Dexter tried to get his mind off the woman who has spent the last several hours avoiding him by locking herself away in her office. Evangeline wasn't like the other women he usually found himself around. She wasn't fake, pretend, or just hoping he would further her career.

She oozed a sweetness which almost had an enchanting factor about it. She exuded a type of harmless personality that made him feel safe around her. Like he could tell her all of his secrets, and she wouldn't ever think about betraying his confidence.

Without a doubt, he sensed if Evangeline had bad news for a person, she wouldn't just toss it out there. No, she would try to deliver it as gently and kindly as possible to avoid stomping on anyone's feelings.

So why would he treat a woman he thought was so sweet the way he just had by forcing a kiss on her when she wasn't interested in him at all.

Evangeline wasn't prepared for him to come on to her like he was a horny teenage boy with his first girlfriend. He'd practically undressed her right in the middle of her own office.

God, if he hadn't come to his senses in time, the two of them would be making love right now. Then where would they go from there? He really liked Evangeline, and he didn't want to ruin things with her before they even got started.

He hadn't wanted to have hot mind-blowing sex with a woman in

such a very long time because he had been focusing on his career so much over the past couple of years, and starting a meaningful relationship was at the very back of his mind.

Evangeline wasn't like any of the models and actresses his world was usually filled with on a daily basis in L.A. She came across like the type of female who would release her boundaries and have fun with him. All he had to do would be get her out from living in the past with her dead husband. Lance was gone, and she was alive. Why didn't she want to live instead of hide away in the house in the middle of nowhere?

Dexter regretted coming on so strong with Evangeline, but he wasn't going to stop. He was attracted to her and he only had to work more slowly at winning her over. He really didn't know how he was going to get her out of her shell, but he was going to do it.

She would get a free pass for now; however, before he went back to his fast-paced life, he was going to make love to her, maybe more than once. All he had to do was seduce Evangeline into his arms. After everything was said and done, he might be able to talk her into coming back home with him.

At first, he was beyond pissed as hell that his car had gotten wrecked outside of Market, Colorado, but now things were looking up for him. He would start the first step toward his plan to win over Evangeline and get her more open to the two of them testing out their undeniable chemistry.

Whistling softly, Dexter made his way into the kitchen because he suddenly thought of something that would make him look better in her eyes after his unwanted kiss. Acting wasn't his only gift, and he was about to prove it to Evangeline.

## Chapter Nine

"You didn't have to cook supper," Evangeline said, staring at Dexter inside of her kitchen as she pulled her hair back into a ponytail. She was trying her best to push down how much she wanted him to kiss her again. "I was coming out here to do it, but the smells coming from here dragged me away from my work to see what was going on."

While she had been hiding in her office, all she could think about was how good it felt to have a man's lips against her again...no, *Dexter's* lips. His kiss had her wanting them to take things further, but how could she tell him after he stopped and ran away from her?

"I don't mind at all," Dexter said, taking the pot of spaghetti from the top of the stove. "I saw the package of shrimp in the refrigerator and decided to do shrimp scampi. I haven't made it in years and when I saw you had everything I needed, I couldn't resist fixing this."

"It does smell really good. I can't remember the last time I had this. I'm surprised you can cook."

Dexter stopped working on the meal and took a quick glance at her. "Why would you find it so surprising?"

She nibbled at her bottom lip, trying to figure out how to answer his question. She couldn't tell him the truth, but she didn't want to be a liar either. "You have to know you're a good-looking guy, and most guys like you don't cook."

"My mom taught me how to cook. She was a single parent and worked a variety of hours. She didn't want me to go to bed hungry so,

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soon as I was old enough, she taught me how to cook, and I love it. It's given me something relaxing to do after a long day at work. My mom is a wonderful woman. I think she would like you a lot," he told her before getting back to work on their meal.

The more Evangeline found out about Dexter, it made him look so much better in her eyes. They had to stay at a distance. Yet, it was hard to keep that thought in her mind when her body wanted something totally different.

She was going to be single for the rest of her life. She made that decision the day Lance died. How could she still be thinking about stripping Dexter naked in the same house she'd shared so many wonderful memories with her husband?

Yes, Dexter kisses made her knees melt and panties soaking wet, but he wasn't ever going to know about it. Evangeline knew she could stay strong.

Couldn't she?

"Can I help you do anything?" she asked, trying to find anything to do to get her thoughts totally off of having sex with Dexter.

He shook his head as he continued to work on their meal. "No, I don't need any help. How about you go and wash up and while you're doing that I'll place everything on the table. At least, we don't have to listen to the rain anymore. Maybe the storm is over, and the phones will come back on. I really do need to make some important calls."

"Sorry, you're stuck here with me. I hope the phone does come back on so you can call your family and agent to let them know you're safe." Spinning around, Evangeline left the kitchen and went to the bathroom so she could wash her hands.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dexter stopped working on the food to watch Evangeline leave the kitchen as fast as her legs could carry her. How could he be making so many mistakes with her? He was an actor. He should be able to read a woman better than this. Evangeline actually offered to help him, and he

pushed her away.

Was he out of his mind? He was doing everything wrong when it came to her.

*Shit!* He hadn't been around her a total of forty-eight hours, and he was having intense feelings for her. However, she thought he probably couldn't wait to get away from her because he kept bringing up how much he wanted the phones to start working again.

The second he heard Evangeline's voice behind him, it made him think about nothing else but turning off the food and carrying her back to the bedroom so they could spend the rest of the day getting to know each other without any clothing in their way. Evangeline had a body made for sin, and he was so ready to get *sinful* with it for hours. He would make sure she understood he was single and very interested in getting to know her better, but he wanted more than that from her.

Yet she probably needed him to demonstrate more than his enticement attraction to her. He would do it in a second. His actions were going to speak so much louder than any words could.

Evangeline was the most selfless woman he had ever met, which made her a keeper plus ten in his book. He was surprised another man hadn't already snatched her up by now but selfishly he was thrilled about it too.

Because he wasn't going to let it bother him too much since it meant Evangeline was still single for a reason...and the reason was him!

Yeah, he was going to make another move on her tonight. He only hoped she wouldn't shove him away from fear more than anger. Evangeline was too perfect to be out here in the woods all by herself.

She needed to get out more.

Sure, she was a bestselling children's author, but he was positive she didn't have anything else going on in her life, and she should have it. She might not want honesty from him, but Evangeline was going to get it.

For once in his life, a woman had been into him just for him and not a chance to be able to walk down the red carpet or a movie premiere next to him. He knew that it might sound a little silly to someone else but he placed a high value on being loved and more than that it came totally

from without strings being attached...which meant *I don't do something for you and then you do something for me.*

When he saw his friends who weren't in the business with their families, it made him envious of how richly rewarding their relationships were with their wives. Seeing the unconditional love they shared made him want to find someone who was able to exude the same sweetness, kindness, and most of all their love to him.

He wasn't saying he wanted to be babied or find a stand-in mother. All he was asking for was a woman who was thoughtful, affectionate, and honest. Evangeline fit the bill he desired to have in his heart and bed. She could be the woman his friends kept telling him he was searching so hard for.

"Is everything okay?" her soft voice asked from behind him.

"I was about to call you," Dexter said, turning away from the counter. "Take your seat while I get something for us to drink."

"Okay. Thanks again for cooking dinner. I hope it wasn't hard to find everything in the kitchen."

"No, you're very organized. It only took me a minute or two to find everything I needed in here," Dexter said. He worked on getting his mind focused on dinner by plating their food and not the sexy scent of Evangeline's perfume as she walked around his body and took a seat at the table.

Grabbing the plates off the counter, he carried them over to the dining room table. "Here you go. I hope you like it," he said, placing one plate in front of her and then other one down for him.

"Thank you," Evangeline replied, giving him a little smile, which lit up her face and made his cock jump in his jeans. "I have no doubt it won't taste as good as it smells."

"You're welcome."

He had to calm down or he wasn't even going to be able to make it through dinner. He wanted to show Evangeline another side of him, but he was going to ruin it before he even got out of the gate.

Dexter wiped his palms down the front of jeans so he wouldn't yank her out of her seat, against his body, and kiss her the way he was



dying to since she came back into the room.

Spinning around on his heel, he hurried back into the kitchen. He grabbed the bottle of wine and wineglasses off the island before making his way back into the dining room. "I hope you don't mind I opened this," he said, holding up the bottle of white wine.

"It's fine. I wasn't saving it for anything special," she replied, folding her napkin in her lap.

Good. He wasn't fond of the idea of Evangeline sharing a romantic dinner over a bottle of wine with another man. Not when he was starting to think of her as his woman only after one kiss. No, that didn't sit well with him at all.

"That's good to know." Dexter poured them both a glass of wine and then took his seat. "Okay, dig in, and let me know what you think." He waited to eat while Evangeline swallowed her first bite.

"Oh my God, this is so good," she moaned, making his semi-erect cock stand up at full attention.

*Shit!* He had it bad if Evangeline's voice was getting him hard from just complimenting him about his cooking skills. Taking a deep breath, Dexter blew it out through his teeth. Okay, he had to get himself under control or his plan wasn't going to work.

Evangeline needed to trust him to be able to open up more about her life so he could figure out if he fit in. He took several bites of his shrimp scampi wondering how to approach her, but in the end Dexter decided that being direct would work out the best for him.

"Evangeline, I know you were married. Tell me about your husband. How did he die?"

## Chapter Ten

The fork dropped out of Evangeline's hand, hitting the edge of her plate before falling onto the table. "Why do you want to know about Lance?" she questioned. Her husband wasn't any of Dexter's business. He was a guest in her house, but that didn't give him the right to ask about her personal life.

"I see you have pictures of him all around the house. It's amazing how strongly he resembles Hugh Jackman. I was just curious about him, that's all," Dexter told her. "Have I stepped over my bounds by asking about him?"

"I'm not going to talk to you or anyone else about Lance," she whispered.

Why was Dexter asking about Lance? This dinner was going to be over very soon if he didn't move on to something else.

"How about I tell you more about myself?" Dexter suggested when she continued to stare at him without saying a word. "I really haven't told you that much, have I?" He took a sip of his wine and then got more comfortable in his chair by leaning back into it some more.

"I would like that," she answered quickly.

"I'm the oldest of four children, but my dad took my three younger siblings, leaving me with my mother because I didn't want to go with him and leave her alone. I haven't talked to my father or my three brothers in years because we never got along that well. My childhood wasn't the best when my father was around, so I was thrilled when my mother divorced

him and got sole custody of me.”

“Do you miss them?”

“Not really,” Dexter answered. “I was surprised none of them tried to contact me after I started getting famous, but they didn’t, and I guess it’s for the best.”

“What made you decide to become an actor?” Evangeline was feeling more comfortable asking Dexter questions about himself than answering anything about her marriage or Lance.

“Honestly, Anthony found me working at a gas station and thought I had the ‘actor look.’ At first, I thought he was trying to come on to me when he gave me his business card. I just took it and slipped it into my pocket.” Dexter laughed. “Later on that night, I told a group of my friends about it, and they dared me to call him back to see if he was being honest or trying to pick me up.

“I called him the next day, and a week later he sent me on a casting call. Well, I went to it. The producer and director liked my look, and the rest is history. Since I told you a little about myself, can I ask you something about you now and get an answer?”

“All right.” Evangeline sighed. She already knew what he was going to ask her about. “What do you want to know?”

“How did you meet Lance? I find it odd that you would meet him at a children’s book signing.”

Evangeline smiled at the memory of how she first met Lance touched her mind. “I was a nurse, and he had come into the hospital for some blood work but after he saw me, he told me he needed his heart checked instead because it had stopped once our eyes connected. After that, I knew I had found the perfect man for me. I loved him until the day he died.”

“How long has Lance been dead?” Dexter asked, softly reaching across the table he placed his hand on top of hers. “What did he die from?”

Evangeline glanced down at Dexter’s large hand covering her small one, but she didn’t move it away. This was the first time in a long time she allowed herself to talk about Lance without getting choked up.

"He died from colon cancer almost four years."

"Do you think he would have wanted you to spend the rest of your life inside this cabin away from the rest of the world? You're a very attractive woman. He would have expected you to grieve for him but to move on after a while, too."

She hated what Dexter was telling her because she knew it was true. Lance wouldn't want her to make her life a memory to them and their love, but why did Dexter have to be the one bringing this to her.

He was the first man she found extremely attractive since Lance. God, he probably had tons of women tossing themselves at him all of the time because he was famous. So why was he wasting his time kissing a widow who spent every moment of her life locked away in a cabin?

*What could she offer him that they couldn't?*

"Why did you kiss me?" Evangeline asked before she could stop herself.

Dexter's eyebrows shot up to his hairline as he removed his hand from hers. "Don't you know why?"

"If I knew the answer, I wouldn't have asked you the question," she replied, wanting the truth.

Pushing his chair back, Dexter stood up and slowly walked over to her side of the table. He grabbed her and pulled her body up from the chair, tugging it closer until they were inches apart.

Evangeline could feel the heat of his body radiating through the shirt she'd let him wear, drawing her to step closer although her mind was warning her against it.

## Chapter Eleven

"What man in his right mind wouldn't want to kiss an intelligent, beautiful woman? You're the total package, and you don't even know it. I find that very sexy. Are you telling me you didn't enjoy the kiss? I don't mind trying again if you had a problem with the first one."

Evangeline didn't know what to tell Dexter. She'd thoroughly loved their kiss. There hadn't been one thing wrong with it, but could she tell him the truth? What would he think about her now?

"Evangeline, answer me. Did you not like our kiss?" Dexter asked, trailing his fingertips down the side of her arm.

"I like it a lot," she admitted softly.

"I did, too, sweetheart. I found it so damn good that I think we should try it again. How about you?"

The first kiss just happened, but if she agreed to a second one she would be telling him that she did want it as much as him. *Could she do it? Was she ready to open herself up like that?*

God, why was this happening to her now? Everything was going so good for her and now Dexter appeared out of nowhere messing up her well laid plans.

"No, we can't do it again." She squirmed in Dexter's hold, but he didn't let her go. "Will you just go away?"

"Baby, I'm not going anywhere." He lowered his head and planted a kiss on her neck right where it met her shoulder. "It's not wrong for you to feel something when we kiss. It's all right."

She felt the shock of Dexter's words all the way down to her toes. How did he know what she was thinking? It wasn't possible she had a connection with this man. Lance was the only man who knew what she was thinking before she said it. Dexter wasn't going to take that special intimacy she'd shared with Lance away from her.

"I'm not going to do anything with you, and I mean it," Evangeline said, her voice firm.

Instead of arguing with her, Dexter jerked her to him, planting a hard kiss on her mouth before backing up against the nearest wall. He pushed his thigh between her legs, holding her in place while his mouth devoured hers in a wild, hot kiss.

Dexter grabbed her hips dragging her back and forth over his jean-clad thigh. Her moisture soaked through her clothing onto his but instead of scaring her, the scent of her arousal filled the room, turning her on, driving her to shove her fingers through Dexter's thick hair so he wouldn't stop kissing her.

Her nipples were tight and hard, begging for Dexter's lips. Tearing her mouth away, Evangeline looked up into his desire filled eyes.

"Touch me," she whispered. "I need you to touch me."

Dexter's eyes darkened to a deep shade of blue before he grabbed her shirt, ripping it open, sending buttons flying onto the table, then onto the floor around their feet.

Evangeline gasped at Dexter's roughness. She knew she should be scared, but she wasn't. She thought about telling Dexter to stop, but she didn't. She liked the way he was with her.

It was a huge turn-on.

She wanted Dexter, and she didn't doubt he wanted her with the same crawling need. This was the one time she wasn't going to be level-headed and follow the rules she had set for herself. The moment was for her, and she was going to live it to the fullest.

"You're so damn beautiful," Dexter complimented, running his fingertips over the tops of her breasts exposed by her pink bra.

"Thank you," she whispered.

"Sweetheart, you don't have to ever thank me for speaking the

truth." Dexter planted another kiss on her already swollen lips, then swung her into his arms.

"What are you doing?" she asked, wrapping her arms around his neck.

"For the things I want to do to you, only a big comfortable bed will do," he told her. Leaving the kitchen, Dexter carried her toward the guest bedroom and deposited her in the middle of the king-size bed. "Do you know how many fantasies I have had about doing this since I opened my eyes and saw you standing near my bed?"

Evangeline didn't want to admit the truth, but she couldn't keep quiet any longer. "I have thought about you, too."

"That's good to know, sweetheart. I would hate all of this sexual attraction to be one-sided." Dexter winked at her before he stripped off his shirt and then undid his belt buckle.

The first time Evangeline saw Dexter's bare chest, she wasn't focusing on how fine his body looked because he was sick. However, now that he was well, she couldn't stop staring at his wide, muscular chest and washboard abs.

Dexter looked so good he could have been a model for one of those online dating infomercials that replayed every hour after ten o'clock at night. Every lonely woman in America would have raced to their computers to sign up for a typical six-month trial membership.

"You look *so* good," she praised, taking in Dexter's perfectly sculptured body. He was more muscular than a swimmer but not as bulky as a bodybuilder. He was just right in her eyes.

"Not better than you, baby," he corrected before dropping to his knees.

Slowly, Dexter slipped her shoes from her feet, tossing them somewhere behind his back on the floor; then he worked on removing her underwear and jeans, adding them to her other discarded clothing.

"Sit up so I can get rid of this bra. I want to see your beautiful breasts."

Moving around on the bed, Evangeline got in the position Dexter requested as her heart sped up in her chest. She liked how he was a little

bit dominating in the bedroom.

Dexter leaned into her and unsnapped the last piece of her clothing slowly inching it completely free of her body. "Umm...you smell so sweet and delicious," he whispered against her neck. "Will you let me make a meal out of you?"

Evangeline didn't care what he did as long as he kept making her feel this sexy and appealing.

"Please, please...make me feel—"

Her words were swallowed as Dexter pushed her gently on the bed, and his thigh eased between her bare legs. The roughness of the fabric from his jeans touching her skin was a sexual combination.

He wasn't even completely naked yet, and he was driving her out of her mind. How was it possible? A man she barely knew had the uncanny ability to touch her body just the way she wanted him to without her saying a single word?

Good lord! How was he going to make her feel when he was making love to her?

"Do you know how beautiful you are?"

"I'm all right," Evangeline answered, her attention more on how good Dexter's bare chest felt against her than anything else.

"You're better than all right." Lowering his head, Dexter ran his tongue over her collarbone. "You're unbelievable, and I'm not the type of man to lie to a woman or tell her words I think she wants to hear so I can get her into bed with me."

Moving his mouth over her heated skin, he nibbled and kissed until his lips hovered above her nipple.

"Do you want it?" he taunted, driving her crazy as his hot breath blew over her sensitive flesh. "Tell me what I want to hear, and we both will get the pleasure we want." Dexter glanced up from her body, holding her eyes with his.

"Yes, I want it more than you know," Evangeline confessed.

Lowering his head, he sucked her nipple into his warm mouth. She cried out as white-hot pleasure shot throughout her entire body stopping between her thighs.



"So, delicious," Dexter moaned, licking her nipples one last time and started to ease back from her.

"No! Don't go." She reached for him, but he brushed her hand away.

"Evangeline, I'm not going away. I'm not done with you yet. But I need to get out of my clothing, or I won't be able to continue. I'm surprised my cock hasn't ripped through my jeans."

He kicked off his shoes, then unzipped his jeans, removing them along with his boxers. Evangeline rested on her elbows, taking in the gloriously naked body standing proudly in front of her.

She loved her husband, but his body was nothing like Dexter's. She saw why he was an action star.

He was hot, hard, and all hers...at least for tonight.

Excitement built up inside of her as Dexter rejoined her back on the bed. Against her will, Evangeline ran her finger over his chest touching his nipples. He groaned deep in his throat, drawing her eyes back up to his face.

"Are you okay?" she asked.

"I'll be doing a lot better if you tell me you have condoms somewhere in this house. I'm about to lose control and not having protection isn't an option in my book."

Hell yeah she had condoms. Tonight wasn't going to get ruined by lack of protection.

"There are some in the dresser drawer by the side of the bed," she told him, counting the seconds until Dexter finally made love to her.

"That's all I need to know. Now how about we get back to where I left off?" Dexter suggested, his voice deeper now from desire.

He eased his tall body back between her legs.

Recapturing her mouth with his, the tip of Dexter's tongue traced the side of her mouth before sucking on her bottom lip, drawing it back into his waiting mouth.

Squirming around on the bed, Evangeline tried to fight off the dormant sensations coming alive in her after close to four years. He eased his hands down over her stomach, working two thick fingers inside of her

wetness.

She tore her mouth away, crying out when Dexter eased a third finger inside her. "Baby, you're so tight. Has it been that long for you?"

Evangeline whimpered softly, working her hips in tune with Dexter's talented fingers. She was almost there. All she needed was a few more minutes and she would get what she had been needed for a while now.

"Has it?" he asked again, slipping his fingers out only to push them back in again.

"Yes!" The orgasm broke free, shooting down her body and thighs as her head tossed back and forth on the pillow.

Evangeline was so caught up in her overdue passion that she didn't feel Dexter moving away from her to dig a condom out of the drawer by the side of the bed. By the time, she came back down from her earth-shattering release, she found him positioned between her thighs, looking more than ready to take care of business. God help her. She couldn't wait until he shoved his big, beautiful cock inside of her.

"Sweetheart, are you ready for me?" Dexter asked in a heated voice. "I know that I'm not through with you yet by a long shot."

## Chapter Twelve

The excitement racing through Evangeline's body was almost too much for her to handle. Never before had a man made her come with only his fingers. Lord, what was going to happen when he got inside of her?

Yeah, she was ready to find out was Dexter as good of a lover as he looked.

"I'm ready," she answered, confidence in her soft voice. She would be able to handle anything that he wanted to give to her tonight since she had let her bad girl side make a surprise appearance.

Nodding at her with a sexy smile on his face, Dexter spread her legs even wider slowly giving her his thick erection inch by inch. *This man was a packaging something good between his thighs.*

Evangeline's hand shot out, touching Dexter in the middle of his chest. "Oh wait, you're so big, and it has been a while for me. Give me a few minutes to get used to you."

"I can do that," he whispered, then planted a kiss on her forehead.

She took several deep breaths and then nodded for Dexter to continue.

He slowly eased the rest of his cock inside of her until she was full to the hilt, and a low growl came from him. "Damn, baby. You feel so amazing. I don't think it has ever felt this right before with a woman."

Grabbing her legs, Dexter wrapped them around his waist as he slowly began to thrust in and out of her like he had all the time in the world, which was making her go insane little by little.

This isn't what she wanted from him.

Evangeline wanted the man who ripped her shirt open outside in the dining room. The rough side she could feel him keeping locked away because of her.

"Dexter, give me more. I need more. Don't hold back on me."

"Are you sure?" he asked as his hand latched onto her wrists. "I don't want to give you more than you can handle."

"I'm not fragile. I promise you I won't break."

Seconds later, Dexter's grip tightened on her wrists as he pulled them farther above her head. His thrusts sped up, rocking the bed under their sweaty bodies.

Lowering his head, he drew her nipple back into his mouth. The familiar tingling started in the base of her spine, sending sparks all through her body as another heart-stopping orgasm started to take over.

Before her second ultimate pleasure of the night hit, Dexter's took his mouth off her breasts. "Yes. Oh God, you feel so fucking good!"

He gave her several hard thrusts, making her orgasm shoot throughout her entire body, then minutes later his loud cries filled the bedroom, signaling their passion had sent them over the edge into ecstasy.

## **Chapter Thirteen**

"Sweetheart, can we go and check on Evangeline since the storm has passed over? I'm concerned about her. You know that she doesn't get out of the house since Lance died," Sienna complained, moving away from the window.

"I don't want you going out there yet. The roads aren't completely clear yet. How about I go check on Evangeline?" Jacob suggested. "I might even try to talk her into coming back to our house."

"Jacob, I'm able to go with you. There's no need for me to stay home because I'm pregnant. We both know your truck will be able to make it through any water left out there."

Crossing his arms over his chest, Jacob gave her one of his famous I-don't-think-so looks, but Sienna didn't doubt that she would get her way as usual.

"No, you aren't going with me. I'm not going to risk you or the baby," Jacob told her. "You aren't going to get your way."

"Jacob, I'll be careful getting in and out of the truck. But I'm tired of being inside of the house. Besides I was hoping Evangeline would give me a sneak peek at the new book she's working on. Please let me go with you."

Walking over to her husband, she placed her hands on his folded arms. "You know that you won't be able to stay firm with me for long. Anyways, it's only like a forty-five minute drive from our house to Evangeline's."

Sighing, Jacob unfolded his arms pulling her to his chest. "Why can't I tell you no and stick with it? You always have a way of making me change my mind."

"Baby, you love me and want me to be happy. Now let me change clothes so we can get on our way. I want to get back early because I have to make chocolate cake to go along with our dinner tonight."

Sienna gave her husband a quick kiss and started to move back, but Jacob grabbed her by the arm, preventing her from leaving.

"How are you feeling? Is the baby doing okay?" Jacob asked, placing his hand on her baby bump, smiling when their baby kicked.

"We are both doing wonderful. This has been an outstanding pregnancy. I can't wait until I see our little boy."

"I know. We only have three and a half months left. I have to finish working on the nursery. The crib is supposed to be in next week that we ordered." Jacob removed his hand from her stomach, then kissed her on the cheek. "Go and get changed into something warmer than your T-shirt and shorts."

"Okay, sweetheart. Give me thirty minutes, and I'll be ready." Sienna smiled at her gorgeous husband and then left the room excited about going to see her friend.

## Chapter Fourteen

"Are you okay?" Dexter asked, kissing the back of her neck. "You haven't said much to me since we made love last night and then early this morning."

What could she tell Dexter? She had never made love like that to another man, not even her husband. What was she doing? The wild, sex-crazy woman who came out last night with Dexter wasn't really her...was it? She was usually more in control of her feelings than the way she'd acted last night in this room.

"Evangeline, I know you're awake. Please answer me. Was I too rough? Did I scare you? Tell me what you're thinking about. Just don't shut me out not after what we shared."

"I'm fine," she answered, pulling the sheet tighter around her breasts.

"Look at me," Dexter encouraged in a low calm voice.

Instead of doing what he asked, Evangeline kept her head turned away. She wasn't ready to face him yet. She hadn't known him for that long, but his opinion mattered a lot to her for some odd reason. He was the first man she had wanted to be with in a very long time.

She wasn't sure if she was more upset that she'd made love to Dexter or how much she'd enjoyed it and wanted to do it again and again.

For years she wondered if she would be the type of woman who might spend her life alone. Truthfully, she had gotten used to the routine and was pretty happy with it most of the time.

Now out of the blue, Dexter appeared, making her think about things she shouldn't. Could he really be the man she could start a life with after being out here by herself for so long?

He had found a way to get into her head in such a short period of time. He was the type of guy she swore to stay away from when she was in her twenties because they constantly found a way to make the rebellious side of her come out more than she cared for. It was one of the reasons she'd decided to take her life in a different direction.

"Evangeline, are you even listening to me?" Dexter whispered in her ear as he wrapped his arm around her waist pulling her closer to his warm, naked body. "You don't have to look at me, but I still want to talk to you. I want you to know I don't make a habit of making love to every woman that I meet. The last relationship I was in ended five years ago, and I was ready to marry her, but in the end—"

"What happened? Why didn't you get married?" Evangeline asked, spinning around to face Dexter. He seemed like a wonderful guy to have as a boyfriend and to be in a relationship with. She wasn't so caught up in the past not to notice that about him.

"My ex-girlfriend turned out to be untrustworthy. She acted like she hated all of the cameras in our faces, but she was the one telling the paparazzi where we were going at all of the time."

"She was even about to sell our wedding plans to a big tabloid until I came home early from a movie set and overheard her on the phone. I couldn't get her out of my heart and life fast enough."

Her heart went out to Dexter. She almost had the same thing happen to her with one of her ex-girlfriends when her writing career started getting hot. So her trust level was more guarded when it came to people wanting to know too much about her career.

The only person who wasn't a part of her writing circle that she talked about her writing with was Sienna Powers. She had become fast friends with Sienna after a barbeque her husband, Jacob, threw a few years back. Sienna's husband and Lance had become friends after playing basketball at the gym years before Lance had been diagnosed with cancer.

"Dexter, you shouldn't have gone through something like what



your ex-fiancée did to you. It was horrible that she broke your heart like she did." Evangeline touched him on his chest. She couldn't get over how good she felt when he was this close to her.

"Can I ask you something?" Dexter inquired, brushing his fingers down her arm.

An instant no was on her lips, but Evangeline didn't say it. Instead she nodded her head. She had to stop hiding from people and find a way to open herself up more. "Yes."

"I know that you loved your husband a lot, but do you think you could get involved with another man again? I mean, someone who found you extremely beautiful and might be starting to feel like you could be a woman he would want to get to know better."

"What are you saying?" Evangeline asked, sitting up in the bed. "You know nothing about me. How can you be having these emotions about me? Maybe you're thinking you feel something because I saved you during the storm."

Pulling her to him, Dexter placed her on his chest, rubbing his hand up and down her back. "Evangeline, I know this sounds crazy, but I do have feelings for you. I'm usually more guarded since my breakup with my ex. I just feel so comfortable with you."

"Do you think you might want to give us a chance? I wouldn't mind starting out slow as long as you will give it some thought."

Evangeline nibbled at her bottom lip as she ran Dexter's suggestion through her head. He was giving her something to fantasize about. God, it would be so exciting for her to unwrap all of the layers that made Dexter who he was. She would love the thrill of getting to know him better.

"Dexter, I—" The ringing of the phone next to the bed made Evangeline jump, causing her to fall off Dexter's hard body.

"I can't believe the phones are back on," she said, reaching for the cordless phone as Dexter got out of the bed, walking past her in all of his naked glory to the bathroom.

Evangeline couldn't take her eyes off how perfect Dexter's ass looked with each step he took. God, how did she get so lucky to have that hunk in her bed last night.

## Chapter Fifteen

"Hello," Evangeline answered after the phone rang a second time. She took one peek at Dexter's firm butt before he closed the bathroom door behind him.

"Van, are you okay?" Roz, her publisher, yelled over the phone. "I heard about the rainstorm and when I couldn't get a hold of you, I started to get scared."

Falling back on the bed, Evangeline relaxed in the warmth left there by Dexter's big body. "Roz, I'm doing fine. I told you before when we get storms sometimes the phone lines go down."

"Sweetie, I hate for you to be out there all alone. Have you given any thought about what we discussed the last time we had dinner a few weeks back?"

Roz would be on the first plane down here if she knew that she wasn't alone and who she'd spent the night making love to.

"You know much I love the cabin. I'm staying here. It's a part of me. I won't ever sell this place. Besides, you know I do my best work from here. Now, do you want the Pinky and Rudy series to suffer from lack of creativity on my part?"

There was a long pause on the other end of the phone before Roz finally answered her. "Van, you know how much I care about you. I'm not worried about getting a new book released. Have you thought about going out for a few hours into town? It would do you some good. You can't stay in that big house twenty-four seven all by yourself."

"Roz, are you trying to tell me I need to find a man?" Evangeline laughed, then sat up in the bed when Dexter came out of the bathroom wearing only a towel around his trim waist, looking sexier than any man had the right to in her opinion.

"No, I'm telling you that you need to get laid by a fine ass man. Girl, I don't know how you went this long without having hot, steamy sex."

Evangeline chuckled at Roz's comment, then stopped when Dexter glanced back at her over his shoulder lifting one eyebrow.

"Listen, Roz, I really should go. I don't want or need a sex lecture from you. When I'm ready to have sex, I'm sure the perfect man will appear at my door."

Roz sighed at her. "Have you thought about leaving children's books and writing a romance book because with this nonsense you're talking about it would be a bestseller."

If Roz only knew the truth, she wouldn't believe she'd spent the night making love to an ultra-hot man, but she didn't have time to get into that right now. She needed to finish talking to Dexter.

"Roz, I have to go, but I'll call you back later on."

"Van, you better. You aren't going to hide from this conversation like you usually do. Do you hear me?"

Evangeline couldn't help but smile at her overbearing friend. Roz came off as bitchy to people who didn't know her, but Roz was like an older sister to her, and she loved her dearly.

"I hear you. Bye." Evangeline hung up the phone and then got out of the bed, wrapping the sheet around her body. She made her way over to Dexter.

"Sorry, I couldn't get off the phone quicker, but Roz was worried about me."

Turning away from the dresser, Dexter wrapped his arms around her, pulling her to him. "Who's Roz?" he asked, running his fingers through her hair.

"My publisher, but she's also like one of my best friends. She has been worried about me since Lance died. She was telling me I need to

leave the house and find someone.”

“You aren’t planning on going out and doing as she suggested?” There was a hint of intensity and jealousy in Dexter’s lowered voice. “If that’s the case, I might need to promote myself a little better to you because I sure don’t want you looking for another man to fill the empty space in your life.”

Evangeline felt a bottomless peace and satisfaction at Dexter’s comment.

“I can’t promise you a lot, but I’m willingly to give it a chance if you are,” Evangeline said, trying to break out of the cocoon she had built for herself. “How about you get dressed while I take a shower in the other room? I’ll get dressed while I’m there, too.”

She looked at Dexter and saw a man who was beginning to touch a part of her. “If you want something different to wear check the closet. I left a few of Lance’s things there. Do you mind wearing something else of his again?”

“Sweetheart, I’m an actor. So I’m used to wearing other people’s clothing. Go and take a shower. I’ll start breakfast for us while you’re getting dressed, but let me give you a kiss first.”

His mouth closed over hers, brushing back and forth against her lips. In slow strokes, he traced the tip of his tongue over the seam of her lips. The magical touch of Dexter’s tongue made her gasp, giving him the opening wanted.

Moaning, Evangeline wrapped her arms around Dexter’s neck, tangling her tongue in a sexy dance with his. He pulled her tighter to against him until her breasts pressed into against the hot warmth of his chest.

Easing one hand farther through her hair, he held her in place while his mouth still made her weak in the knees and then his free hand slipped around her hip, cupping her butt through the sheet.

His cock hardened and rubbed against her stomach, drawing more mewling sounds from her, then just as quickly as it started, Dexter stopped the wonderful sensations he was making her body experience.

He gently moved her away from him. “Okay, you better go before I

get carried away which seems to happen when you get within touching of me. Besides, I want to call my agent to let him know I'm all right. I'm pretty sure he has been going crazy trying to find me. He has control issues, and it's one of the reasons I'm going to fire him."

"Are you sure that you don't want to kiss some more?" Evangeline played with the tucked in part of Dexter's towel. "I wouldn't mind at all."

Shaking his head, Dexter moved back. "No, I want to treat you to breakfast, and then I want us to talk some more."

"Do you want to give me a hint what it is about?"

"Now where will the surprise be if I tell you beforehand?"

Evangeline saw that she was fighting a losing battle. So she decided to leave it alone and just be surprised.

"Fine, I'll leave because I should really get dressed not because you told me to."

Spinning around, she grabbed the side of the sheet, lifting it more so she could walk better. She wanted to look back at Dexter since she felt him staring at her. Instead, she opened the door and went out without glancing at him because if she did she might beg him to make love to her again.

## Chapter Sixteen

"Dexter, where in the hell have you been the past couple of days?" Anthony, his agent, shouted at him over the phone. "Why are you calling me from this phone number? You're damn lucky that I even answered my phone."

Dexter took a deep, calming breath, hoping he would be able to last through this conversation with his soon-to-be-ex agent. Anthony wasn't even acting like he truly wanted an answer. Instead, he wanted to give him the riot act. Well, pretty soon it was going to be over between them.

"Anthony, I'm on a much-needed break. I told you before I left that I had to sort out a few thing and make some decisions about my career."

He heard the sound of a lighter opening and closing on the other end of the phone as Anthony lit up one of those cigars he loved so much.

"You have a hot career going on right now. Millions and millions of fans, so what in the hell do you need to sort out at this point in your life? Just swallow your pride about losing the role. You know that happens a lot in this business. I already have several excellent scripts on my desk waiting for you to look at."

Dexter knew what Anthony's answer would be to this question, but he would ask it anyway. "Are any of those scripts anything but action films? Isn't that what we discussed before I left? What you were doing to try to find me other movies to star in?"

"Dexter, you're an action star. The public thinks of you as the next Jason Statham. Why do you want to ruin it by doing a romantic comedy

or a chick film? Stay in the field you're best known for."

"Anthony, you're fired!" Dexter shouted, fed up with Anthony's attitude.

Damn it! He wasn't staying anywhere he didn't have a voice.

"Wh-what in the fuck are you talking about?" Anthony sputtered. "You can't fire me! I made your ass. You would still be working at that run-down gas station if I hadn't pulled into there for some gas and discovered your worthless ass wiping down a car window. You can't fire me. You owe me!"

He could fire Anthony, and he just did it. God, it felt so good to have that money-stealing bastard gone. He wasn't going to waste any more time with Anthony when he could be spending it with Evangeline doing something more enjoyable.

"Listen, I will have my lawyer draw up something ending our business arrangement when I get back to Los Angeles. I'm done, and don't call this number trying to find me either."

"You cocky little—"

Dexter hung up the phone before the rest of the words left Anthony's mouth. He was done with him and not a moment too soon. He made his way over to the closet and grabbed a pair of jeans and a sweater. He quickly got dressed and left the bedroom.

Since that was done and over, he was going to fix his sexy hostess a breakfast meant for a princess. Dexter was amazed in the short period of time that he had known Evangeline how much she was changing his life.

A huge part of him always loved exploring interests and passions most people would find too crazy or boring, but Evangeline had him gravitating into another direction that he'd never thought about before.

Past girlfriends never shared his creative gene like Evangeline. She could talk with him about wanting to go further in their careers along with the disappointment of hearing the word no over and over.

He was thinking about starting something deeper with her, but his biggest obstacle was how much Evangeline still held back by her past. Yes, she had spent the night in his arms, and he experienced a soul connection with her that his former relationships lacked greatly, but was

that enough to make her look at him as a future love interest?

He had never fallen this hard for a woman before so he knew Evangeline possessed something very special about her.

Making his way around the kitchen, he got everything he needed for his famous omelettes, then headed over to the stove. He turned on the burner, grabbed the eggs off the counter, and broke them inside a large silver bowl.

Snatching a whisk out of the utensil holder in front of him, Dexter seasoned the eggs before he started beating them. Just as he was about to pour the eggs into the skillet, the doorbell rang. He glanced toward Evangeline's closed bedroom door. He felt kind of strange answering her door, but it could be something important.

Turning off the stove, Dexter made his way toward the front door. "Evangeline, someone is at the front. I'm going to answer it," he yelled right before he opened it.

"Who in the hell are you, and why in the fuck are you answering Evangeline's door?" A tall, dark-haired man hollered, advancing toward him with a hard look in his eyes.



## Chapter Seventeen

The unyielding wall hit him hard in the back as the guy slammed his body against it. "You're going to answer me. Who in the hell are you?"

"Jacob, let him go. He wouldn't be inside of Evangeline's house unless she knew him," the woman told the guy.

Dexter was trying his best to answer, but the man's hold was so tight he could barely breathe. *Fuck!* Who in the hell was this man? Was it a jealous boyfriend Evangeline failed to mention to tell him about?

"Sienna, go and call the police, then go look for Evangeline. I'll take care of him. He's going to answer me one way or another."

He tried to pull Jacob's arm away, but that only made his grip even tighter. How much more could he get embarrassed? He was an action star, but off a movie set he couldn't even defend himself. There was something really wrong with this picture.

"Jacob, stop it!" Sienna yelled, looking at him, then back at the man holding him against the wall without a problem. "This guy looks familiar to me. I know I have seen him somewhere before."

"Sweetheart, you say that about everyone. Please do as I say. I need to protect you and the baby."

The sound of a door opening and closing echoed in the room, then a second later Evangeline's voice yelled at them. "Jacob, what are you doing to Dexter? Let him go!"

"Who is this man?" Jacob asked Evangeline but kept his gaze on him.

"Jacob, let him go, and I'll tell you," Evangeline said, walking up to them. "I know him."

Minutes ticked by before Jacob eventually took a step back from him. Bending over at the waist, Dexter gasped a couple of time while he tried to get some much needed air back into his lungs. *Shit!* He was glad none of the people from any of his movies saw him like this. They would have a good time teasing him unmercifully about it.

"Dexter, are you okay?" Evangeline asked concerned as she bent down next to him.

"I'm fine." He coughed as he slowly stood back up. God, he couldn't let Evangeline see him down like this. It was bad on his pride. "He just caught me off guard. I'm okay, really."

Evangeline nodded, then moved away from him until she was standing next to Jacob and Sienna.

"Since you're okay now, I can introduce you to my two best friends in the world, Jacob and Sienna Powers," Evangeline said. "Jacob and Sienna, this is Dexter Thornheart. He had an accident during the rainstorm and somehow found his way to my house. I'm letting him stay here until the storm is over."

"Are you serious?" Jacob demanded, glaring at him. "He's a stranger that you invited into your house. Have you lost your mind? He could have hurt you."

"I heard a sound at my door and when I opened it, I found him lying on my doorstep semi-conscious. I helped him inside and well, the rest is history."

Dexter finally got his breathing back under control just as Evangeline finished telling her friends how they'd meet each other. He slowly made his way over to where Evangeline was standing with her friends.

"Nice to meet you, Jacob and Sienna," he said despite the fact Jacob had almost choked the life out of him.

Jacob didn't respond to him at all. He only looked at him like he wanted a second chance at getting his hands around his throat again. However, his wife was starting to give him the look that he knew all too

well. The light bulb was beginning to go off above her head.

"You're the Dexter Thornheart from all of those *Perfect Kill* action movies," Sienna said, excited.

Smiling at Sienna, Dexter nodded. "Yes, I am. Are you a fan?"

"Oh my God, I love them. You're a fantastic actor and even more gorgeous in person than you are in the movies. Would it be wrong of me to ask for an autograph?"

Most of the time, he hated when fans raced up to him asking for an autograph because it usually happened when he was out having dinner or coming home after a long day on the set. But Sienna was so sweet and cute that he couldn't resist giving her an autograph.

"If you follow me to the kitchen, I think I noticed a pad and pen. I'll be happy to give you one."

Sienna's pretty face broke out into a huge smile as she moved around her stunned husband. He knew now he had just planted himself on Jacob's most hated list for the rest of his life.

"Sienna, I'm sure Dexter doesn't have time to give you an autograph," Jacob butted in, glaring at him with a hint of jealousy in his eyes.

"Sweetheart, it will only take a minute. You know how much I love his movies. I might not ever get a chance to meet Dexter again."

Dexter grinned at Jacob, then looked down at Sienna and touched her on the elbow. "Let's go and find something for me to sign. I bet you might even be able to sell it for about five bucks on eBay," he teased, then looked away from Sienna over to Evangeline. "I'll be right back."

"Take your time. I need to talk to Jacob about something anyway," Evangeline told him.

Dexter returned his attention back to Sienna as she walked with in the direction of the kitchen, but his mind was on what Evangeline was discussing with Jacob that she didn't want him to hear.

## Chapter Eighteen

"Jacob, can I talk to you for a minute?" Evangeline asked. She glanced at Sienna laughing and talking with Dexter in the kitchen.

"Sure," he answered. "What is it? Do you want me to kick that jerk out? I can't believe you let a strange man in your house. God, what would Lance say if he was still alive?"

Evangeline swallowed down the hurt in her throat at Jacob's sudden nasty comment. She wasn't going to get into an argument with him, but he needed to know that he couldn't talk to her like that either.

Grabbing Jacob by the arm, she pulled him into the foyer away from Sienna and Dexter. "How dare you toss Lance in my face? I miss my husband each and every day."

Jacob glanced away from her with a guilty look on his face. "Evangeline, I apologize for my comment. I shouldn't have said that to you. What do you need me to do for you?"

"Dexter had a wreck out there on the side road off the highway. You know the one Sheriff Perry always closes off during the rainstorms? Can you go and see if you can salvage anything from his car. I know that it might be a long shot with the rain, but will you check?"

"Are you serious?" Jacob demanded. "You want me to leave my pregnant wife and you alone here with a man I barely know?"

Evangeline couldn't believe Jacob was trying to get all macho on her. Did he not realize she had already been here two days with Dexter? Nothing was going to happen to them.

"Jacob, Dexter isn't going to hurt us. Haven't I already been here a couple of days with him, and I'm fine. Please do this for me."

Jacob ran his hand down his face and then across the back of his neck. He sighed. "You aren't going to let this go, are you?"

"No, I'm not. Will it really hurt you to check this out for me? While you're gone, I can show Sienna the sketches for my new book. I know that's one of the reasons she came to check on me."

Dropping his hand, Jacob let out a deep groan. "Okay, I'll check and see if anything is useable from this guy's car and if I find something I'll bring it back. Just make sure Sienna doesn't overdo it while I'm gone."

"I promise I'll keep an eye on her," Evangeline swore. "Let me walk you to the door." She escorted Jacob back to the front door. They stopped and saw that Sienna and Dexter were still in the kitchen with their heads together talking.

"Should I be jealous my wife is star-struck and has forgotten all about me?" Jacob asked as he opened the door.

"Oh, I wouldn't worry. Sienna loves you, cocky attitude and all," Evangeline teased.

"Watch it now." Jacob waved a finger at her before going out the door and closing it behind him.

"Where is my husband going?" Sienna asked her the second she came back into the living room.

Evangeline noticed that Dexter was watching her, too, waiting for an answer. "Jacob went to do something for me. He'll be back in a little while. How about I fix us some lunch since it so late and then I'll show you the final sketches for my new book?"

She wanted to do more than show Sienna the layout for her new book. She also wanted to pick her mind about Dexter.

"I like that plan a lot and while we're at it, I can tell you about the new additions to my shoe line coming out in the next couple of months."

\* \* \* \* \*

After eating lunch with them and telling secrets from his movie

sets, Dexter excused himself to make some phone calls in the bedroom. She brought Sienna into her den so they would be able to gossip about Dexter without him overhearing their conversation.

"Spill it. What is going on with you and Dexter?" Sienna demanded the second the door closed.

"What are you talking about? There is absolutely nothing going on between us." She wanted to ease into the conversation about Dexter, not jump into it with both feet first.

"Evangeline, do you expect me to believe that? All while I was talking to Dexter and trying to get him to tell me about his next movie, he couldn't take his eyes off you talking to Jacob. He was green with envy. The man was jealous."

"Most men only get jealous of a woman talking to another man when they want to sleep with you or he is already sharing the sheets with you. Care to tell me truth about what category you and Dexter fall into?"

She wouldn't be able to hold this in much longer. She didn't want to talk about Dexter with Roz; Sienna was the only person she could confide in.

"Yes, I slept with Dexter, and I don't know how to feel about it," she confessed, falling down into the nearest chair.

"Evangeline, you slept with a man named one of the sexiest men in the world," Sienna screamed, then lowered her voice. "Can I ask what you're complaining about?"

"Sienna, Dexter is the first man I have been with since Lance."

Sienna eased her body down into a chair next to hers. "Oh, Evangeline, I didn't know. If I had, I wouldn't have said those things to you."

She touched Sienna on the back of the hand. "No, you don't understand what I'm trying to tell you. I'm not upset anymore that I slept with Dexter. I'm talking about how much I loved it and want to do it again."

"Girl, you haven't been with a man in years. I have no doubt you liked it and most definitely want to do it again. Dexter looks like he knows how to please a woman, too. You're very lucky."

"I bet there are a lot of women out there who would kill to be in your place. Are you going to try to see if things can go further with Dexter? Does he want to have a relationship with you?"

Taking her hand off Sienna's, Evangeline placed it in her lap. "How can I seriously think I have deep feelings for Dexter only after a couple of days?"

"Hello? Did you forget how quickly I fell in love with Jacob? We had sex almost the first night we meet. I used to laugh about love at first sight until I met Jacob."

"You're right," Evangeline agreed. "You did fall in love with Jacob that fast. I never imagined it could happen to me."

"Sweetheart, are you telling me that you think you're in love with Dexter? That's wonderful."

Evangeline wasn't sure exactly what emotion she was feeling, but Dexter had become important to her in a short period of time. She never thought she would be able to experience these intense feeling again.

"There you go. How many times have I told you to stop doing that?" Sienna scolded.

"What am I doing?" Evangeline frowned. Sienna was getting on her about something, and she wasn't positive what she had done wrong.

"Overthinking situations. Just live in the moment with Dexter and see where things will go from there. Somehow, I just knew I would marry Jacob. Yeah, when I first saw him, I was nervous of him, but after I got to his house, the attraction was so strong there was no doubt we'd end up together."

She hated to agree with Sienna, but she was right. She shouldn't be overthinking things with Dexter. She would live in the moment.

"Enough, I get what you're telling me. How about I give you a sneak peek of the next installment of Pinky and Rudy before Jacob comes back from the errand I sent him on?"

"I thought you would never ask me. I'm already counting the days until I can add it to my book collection I have started for the baby."

"I think you're going to like their new adventure." Evangeline got up from her seat, then went over to her desk with Sienna right behind her.

## Chapter Nineteen

"Thank you so much for doing that for me," Evangeline said standing outside on the porch with Jacob. She knew that Dexter would be happy to have some of his things so he could stop wearing Lance's.

"You're welcome," he answered. "After seeing the damage to Dexter's car, I'm surprised he got out of it alive and found his way to your house. At first, the keys didn't want to come out of the ignition but after giving them a good tug, they finally did. I found the bags inside of the trunk.

"Oh, Sheriff Perry was there, and he took a statement from me. I think he'll be by here later on today to get Dexter's side of what happened."

"I'll let Dexter know. Now why don't you take Sienna home. I think meeting her favorite movie star and seeing my new book in one day has worn her out because she didn't get a chance to tell me about her new collection."

Jacob glanced at a sleeping Sienna inside his truck, then back at her. "Sienna has been up late working on some new shoe designs for her boot line coming out at the beginning of next year. I have been trying to get her to take a break, but you know how stubborn she can be when it comes to her job. Sienna is as almost as bad as you."

"Jacob, stop it while you're ahead. Do you want me to tell Sienna you were talking about her?" Evangeline teased.

"I'm leaving. If you need anything, call me because I still don't



trust your house guest.”

She wasn’t going to talk about Dexter with Jacob anymore. It was time for him to go home and stay out of her business. He was worse than having a big brother.

Jacob wouldn’t understand how she felt toward Dexter anyway. He might have a hard time believing that Dexter might be the man to take her out of mourning period. God, she wasn’t even ready to believe it herself. How could she explain it to someone else?

“Good-bye, Jacob.”

“All right, I’m leaving. I can take a hint.” Jacob gave her a kiss on the cheek and then walked to his truck parked in her driveway.

“Tell Sienna to call me later on tonight,” Evangeline yelled at Jacob before he got into his truck and drove off.

She stood on her porch and watched Jacob until his truck was out of sight. She knew she was stalling for time because she wasn’t ready to go back inside and find out what Dexter wanted to talk about.

Maybe after thinking about what had happened between them, he was going to tell her it was a mistake and he was going to move on. She usually wasn’t nervous about having a conversation with another person, but she was a little nervous about talking with Dexter.

Here she was ready to give him a chance, and he might not want to do the same thing now. Well, she wasn’t a coward, and she never had been one. If Dexter considered what they did last night as only a one-night stand, then she would get over it and move on.

Because he’d showed her one thing, and it was that she had to start moving on with her life. She couldn’t stay locked away in this house trying to block out the world.

Yes, her amazing husband had died, but he wouldn’t have wanted her life to be like this. He’d pushed her to live life when he was here, and he would expect her to do the same thing now that he was gone.

Unconsciously, Evangeline took a deep, calming breath and went back into the house, closing the door behind her. She was ready to face whatever Dexter was waiting to tell her. She was going to take her life back with or without him being a part of it.

"Jacob isn't fond of me, is he?"

Turning around, Evangeline saw Dexter standing behind her resting his shoulder against the wall, watching her in a way that made her stomach flip-flop. It was so wrong for a man to have such penetrating eyes.

"Oh, Jacob is a good guy. He's just a little overprotective of me sometimes, and he doesn't hate you."

"Are you sure about that?" he questioned as he eased away from the wall, making his way over to her.

"If Jacob truly disliked you, he wouldn't have gone to your car and gotten your stuff out of the trunk," she said, pointing to the bags she placed in the corner by her office door.

Dexter took a slight glance at the bags, but he didn't stop moving in her direction. "That's nice, but I'm more interested in having that conversation I brought up earlier. How about we take a seat on the couch? I still want to talk to you."

Taking her by the hand, Dexter led her over to the couch. He took a seat and then pulled her down next to him. She didn't know what he was about to tell her, but whatever it was she would be able to handle it. God, it felt so strange to her to be into a man like this, and she had only known him for less than a week.

"What do you want to discuss?" Evangeline asked as she eased her hand away from his.

"Evangeline, most of my life I have been guarded because of my childhood. It made me slow to open up to other people. Over the years, I've had a hard time believing the best was going to happen to me because there has been so much struggle and disappointment in my life... that was until I met you."

"In fact, I was always waiting for the other shoe to drop and wondering when another person was going to let me down."

"So you were a pessimistic?"

"No, I was being a realistic in my mind but after meeting you, I have changed some of my former opinions. You have shown me in such a short period of time how actions speak louder than words."

"Evangeline, I never thought when I started out on my road trip that I would have an accident and find you. But now that I have, I really want to make you a part of my life. Do you think you want to give us a chance to see where things might go?"

She stared at Dexter in astonishment. She couldn't believe what he was telling her. Did he even know what he was saying to her? This is what she wanted...but was she ready to handle the change? A little bit of fear started to set in.

"Dexter, we haven't even known each other that long. Shouldn't we take things a little slower?"

"Do you know how long I have waited for someone to come along and only want me?" he asked. "Not the famous Dexter Thornheart, the actor whose last movie grossed over two hundred million dollars worldwide. Or want to heal the hurt little boy inside of me who had the less than perfect childhood? Because he spent most of his childhood taking care of himself because his loving mother worked three jobs to support them so they wouldn't end up homeless.

"No, you were attracted to Dexter Thornheart, the man, and that's it. After realizing that about you, I was won over and couldn't think about nothing else but becoming a part of your life."

She was too taken aback to really say anything at the moment. She loved the feeling of escaping the boundaries of her ordinary existence when it came to Dexter. He found a way to bring her out of her shell which was extremely surprising to her.

"Dexter, I don't know what to tell you." She had never been this confused by anything in her life. She wanted to grab what he was offering with both hands, but she was scared of giving her heart to another man.

Sliding the last few inches that separated them, Dexter's dark blue eyes were so gentle and understanding as he looked at her that it almost brought a tear to her own.

"I know you still haven't gotten over your husband's death completely, and I'm not trying to force you to. Hell, I don't mind having enough love for the both of us until you're ready to tell me how you feel. All I ask is that you don't keep finding ways to push me away.

"I care about you, and making you a permanent part of my life is the most important thing to me. Do you think you can at least meet me halfway? Yes, I know this is quick, and we haven't known each other that long, but last night meant a lot to me. So are you willing to let this wild and unexpected attraction between us grow into something deeper on your part?"

After hearing Dexter's words, Evangeline knew what she had to do. No, she knew what Lance would tell her what to do. Dexter didn't have to take her anywhere to prove how much he cared about her.

He showed her how much he adored her by the way he made love to her last night. It was beyond time that she laid her past to rest and started her future.

The place Dexter wanted to take her wasn't as important as the connection he had made with her. Because having a connectedness that was more essential to her heart and mind than anything else.

"Dexter, I can't let this grow into anything deeper between us," Evangeline said, then placed her finger on his mouth when he started to interrupt her. "My attraction to you has already grown into something much more meaningful and out of my control. I have no clue how it happened, but it just did."

His eyes were a brilliant blue as they brightened with pleasure as he eased her finger away from his mouth. Seconds later, he got up from the couch and swung her up into his arms.

"Dexter, put me down." Evangeline laughed, wrapping her arms around his neck. "Where are you going? We still need to talk about some things."

"Talking can wait, unless you're telling me how you want me to make love to you," Dexter said, heading in the direction of her bedroom and not the guestroom.

"You don't think there are still issues we need to come to an agreement about?" Evangeline asked as he opened her bedroom door.

"Sweetheart, all of those issues will be easy fixes now that you have admitted you love me as much as I love you."

"You do know that you're a very hard man to resist," Evangeline

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said as Dexter laid her down on the bed.”

“I have been told that before, but the words never meant anything to me until now because they were spoken by the woman I love. Now, how about I show you how your words make me feel? “

## Epilogue

"Did you like it?" A warm breath whispered inside her ear as the lights came on and the applause started.

Looking away from the movie screen, Evangeline glanced at Dexter holding their sleeping two-year-old son, Mason, in his arms. She was still stunned by the fact Dexter newest movie, *Chance Meeting*, was based on how the two of them met and fell in love during the rainstorm.

"It was so beautiful," she answered. "It brought back so many wonderful memories, but are you sure you want this to be your break away movie from your well-known action films?"

"Of course, it's the main reason I started my own production company." Standing up, he switched Mason over to his other shoulder. "Why wouldn't I want to show the world how I fell in love with my beautiful wife?"

Stepping closer to her husband, Evangeline ran her hand down their son's back, smiling as he moved in his sleep. "Well, shouldn't our story be the truth instead of a lie?"

Dexter frowned at her. "What did I lie about?"

Lowering her voice, she took a quick glance at the people leaving the crowded screening room for the movie. "You know that you didn't carry me off to the bedroom like at the end of the movie. We really tore each other clothes off and made love right there on the couch."

Grinning at her, Dexter leaned down until their mouths were only inches apart. "I agreed I would tell the story of how we fell in love with

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each other. I never promised to tell about the amazing sex that kept me coming back from more and more."

"Oh, you're such a bad boy. What am I going to do with you?"

"Is that why you finally agreed to marry me after dating for an entire year? I thought I was going to go crazy introducing you as my girlfriend instead of my wife."

"No, I married you because you gave me something other people in my life hadn't," Evangeline said.

"Baby, what did I give you?" Dexter asked, giving her a quick kiss then he moved back.

"You gave me time, and I'll always love you for it."

Evangeline never thought she would find love again but here she was at a movie premiere about her life with her gorgeous husband and adorable little boy, and she couldn't ask for anything more.

The End

### Author Bio

Marie Rochelle is a bestselling author of interracial romances featuring black women and white men. Marie first started writing IR books about two years ago and it has been nonstop for her ever since. Her first best-selling IR romance was entitled *Taken by Storm*.

In addition, Marie has a very successful series called The Men of CCD and right now she's working on the much awaited third book in the series: Tempting Turner. Marie has enjoyed writing from a very young age and is happy she decided to turn her career toward the IR market; a market that she had enjoyed for years herself. She has always dreamt of being a writer and now is truly happy to see her dreams becoming a reality.

*Special Delivery* is her first book published through Cobblestone Press and she hopes there will be more to come. Marie loves hearing from her fans. Please email her at marierochelle2@yahoo.com.

Lastly, please visit her website or her popular blog at <http://www1.freewebs.com/irwriter/> and <http://shopdiva28.blogspot.com>.