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# Burn Me If You Can

Mahalia Levey

A 1 Night Stand Story

## ~DEDICATION~

This book is dedicated to my family for their support, the team of people who help make my work glow and to the readers who give me joy to write for.

### **Chapter One**

San Juan's reputation for beauty was accurate. From the moment they touched ground and she'd gotten her first good look, she'd been mesmerized. Tucked away from the stifling heat in a posh limousine, she appreciated the little luxuries, such as air conditioning. When she heard of the opportunity offered by Madame Evangeline from a close friend, ambition drove her to say yes. So many dotcoms deluded people into thinking they could find a life-mate with their help. As she sat in the plush interior of the car, she sipped a flute of champagne to take the edge off and center herself.

Newsflash: The concept of finding a "happy forever" with one person went out the window decades ago. Those who believed in love at first sight were simply confused by a hefty dose of lust. She should know. No bam moment had ever made her breathless. No first touch had her made her scream, Hallelujah! He's the one! In any event, Rebekah finally had the chance to do an exposé that would land her a syndicated column—if she could get the goods. Her interview went well. She didn't hide that she worked for the newspaper but didn't allude to her aspirations either. The application itself was insanely detailed. At one point, she thought she should type out a resume. The outlandish thought had made her laugh. Essentially, the matchmaking businesses of the world were human resource departments trying to fill a quota. She completed everything to the best of her knowledge and included a recent picture of herself.

Madam Eve had handpicked her date. Soon, she'd be face-to-face with Ashton Foster. His profile, like, dislikes, etc. all called to her, and his charismatic face had made an imprint on her mind.

She wondered if he had some mental issue; what was wrong with him that he needed to meet a date on a website. But after reading the intelligent, handsome man's profile, she couldn't wait to meet him. The only thing that seemed off to her was his vague job title. In the job section of his profile, he talked more about his day-to-day activities than what he did professionally, and that threw up

warning flags. Rebekah finished her wine and set the flute in the compartment provided for used glasses.

Beautiful didn't begin to describe the lush landscape zipping past them. With a subtle crane of her neck, she took in the colonial architecture of the island and the green vegetation lining the narrow road.

"We'll be pulling up shortly, Ms. Shayne."

"Thank you." She adjusted her outfit to insure the tiny microphone remained tucked securely in the pretty bow decorating her bra, snuggly between her breasts. Deciding on the proper attire hadn't been easy. She'd wrestled with business casual slacks paired with a seductive top, a CFM—come fuck me—dress, or a casual dress hugging her curves and showing off her legs. Not wanting to come off as classless, she chose the last. The private jet to San Juan had excited her. No one had told her such an extravagant ride was part of the package, or that her date location had changed from Vegas to San Juan until a week before her scheduled departure. In fact, she didn't know what would occur upon her arrival in San Juan. Her boss's personal assistant handled the arrangements for her trip to the Castillo Resort. Researching the popular Cuban resort, with its colonial architecture and lush grounds gave her insight into the history of the Castillo family-owned resorts. Jackson Castillo's photo currently graced the brochures for the chain. The small, three-page fold out detailed the history of the Castillo empire. Jackson was a first-generation American citizen whose parents had immigrated to the United States from Cuba many years before. Aside from that small amount of personal intel, the rest of what she was able to turn up remained business oriented, denoting star quality accommodations, consumer ratings, and relevant awards.

Finding out she'd be having a miniature vacation while working excited her. She'd always wanted to visit San Juan but hadn't made her way to Cuba's shores.

Her stomach fluttered, and she crossed and uncrossed her legs, gripping her handbag with sweaty hands. "Excuse me," she said into the intercom.

"Ma'am?"

"How much longer?" She rubbed her lips together then took out her gloss and dabbed on a fresh coat.

"We're pulling up now. Look to your left and you'll see the resort ma'am."

"Thank you." Rebekah smoothed her clothing and checked the mirror for stray hairs. Luckily, what she'd packed for desert weather was equally suited for humidity and bright beaches. The resort sat on Cayo Santa Maria, within Cavos de La Herradura, where white sand stretched far as she could see, and the crystalline waters were said to hold a serene quality. They passed the onsite pool and she noticed the lilypad-shaped, padded chairs floating atop the water.

Her body thrummed in anticipation. Suddenly her story didn't matter as much as living for the moment and having a fun two days. How long had it been since she'd taken time off? Forever.

This is not a romantic trip.

She didn't believe in magic, so why was the pretty island tugging at her heart and the thought of having a memorable time surging through her? Daydreaming wasn't for reporters. This is a business trip. That little thought helped immensely. The vehicle came to a stop in front of the hotel registration entrance. The chauffeur opened the door and extended his hand to help her out. She took it and stepped into the fresh, warm air. Once she cleared the car, she dropped his hand and slipped her shades on. "Thank you. May I tip you?"

"No, ma'am. The required fees and compensation have been taken care of. I will unload your luggage while you check in."

"Oh. Thanks...again." She felt like a clod for over thanking him for doing his job.

"Enjoy your stay; that will be thanks enough." The man smiled and loaded her garment bag and suitcase onto a cart. She followed him inside, removed her glasses, and headed to the registration desk.

"Afternoon, I'm Rebekah Shayne, checking in for the next two days," she said, breathless from the opulent interior of the resort. She wasn't a connoisseur of building structure and décor in the least, but she knew raw beauty surrounded her in all directions.

"Welcome to Castillo San Juan. We have a message for you from Mr. Foster. He wishes for you to get settled in your suite of rooms before joining him for dinner. Here's your magnetic keycard. The elevators are through the double

doors to your left, and you're on the fourteenth floor, just below the penthouse suites. We hope you enjoy your stay."

Rebekah accepted the key and headed toward the elevators, taking in all the details of the luxury hotel as she passed. She slid her key into a slot to gain access to the elevator and slipped inside. Soft music filtered from tiny speakers above her head as she rode to her floor. Once there, she peeked out the bay doors and then followed the signs to her room. The opulence that greeted her there added to her awe. "I have died and gone to heaven," she told no one but herself, and gave into falling on the bed like a teenager. Squealing-girl behavior out of her system, she moved over to the double-wide veranda doors that opened outward.

Immediately she was washed with the scent of fresh sea air and as far as the eye can see view of the Caribbean Sea. Mesmerized, she stood with her hands on the iron railing taking in the scenery. How could one not fall in love with such paradise? Feeling a bit over-stimulated, she turned and entered her suite, noticing her belongings already hanging in the closet, her extra set of heels and flip-flops resting on the closet floor. How nice, she thought, and decided to slip into a new coral-colored sundress and freshen up for her date.

If she'd thought she suffered from butterflies coming into the establishment, entering the Aqua Lounge was much worse. She cast a surreptitious glance at the bar, her eyes widening at the sublime man chatting easily with the bartender. It was all Bekah could do not to fall over or drool. He presented a side pose, his relaxed shirt fitting the contours of his broad shoulders and back. Land sakes, when he stood up, she got the most delicious view of his ass. And what an ass it was—nice, round, and muscular. He stuck his hand in his pocket and shrugged at something the bartender said. She eyeballed him for all she was worth, getting the ogling out of the way. One glance was all she wrote. She hadn't expected her date to be ultra hot. If not for her drenched panties, gravity would've pulled her cream along the inner seam of her thighs. The décor of the lounge fell away. Honed in on her date, she sashayed her way across the floor, adding a little bounce to her step, her breasts jiggling. The stool next to him remained unoccupied. She smoothed her kimono-style sundress to mid-thigh.

"Ashton." Where did her normal voice go, and when did she start speaking in

such an earthy tone. Hands clasped ladylike in her front of her, holding onto her pocketbook. Her breath came out in a swoosh when he turned to face her. A burning warmth filled the sexiest eyes, and not just any brown, but the color of milk chocolate, a shade lighter than her skin tone.

"Bekah, we finally meet," He extended his hand to take hers. She accepted his hand and let out a startled sound of surprise, ill prepared for the jolt of awareness humming from such brief contact.

"Yes, we did...do." She fell over her tongue, color rising in her cheeks. Boy, did she feel hot. He broke out in the sexiest smile—lordy above, a perfect smile—and her name all but purred from his mouth. He could call her Bekah anytime.

"You okay?"

"Peachy keen." She licked her lips and studied him from under her lashes.

"Would you like a cocktail?"

"Can we just go straight to shots?"

"Nervous?"

His teasing demeanor made him all the more attractive. His manners pleased her, as well, when he stood, showing her his height, and pulled out her barstool. She sat, and he returned to his position on the stool next to her, his gaze never leaving hers, until she had to break eye contact to gather her thoughts. He inspired instant hot, naked, orgasmic fantasies. A flicker of question crossed his features, pulling her back to the present. Fantasy in check she smiled. "Very."

"Me too," Ashton said, motioning for the bartender.

"Really? You have such confidence about you." She found herself relaxing, and hoped her mic caught all their byplay. When he leaned over to whisper in her ear, her first reaction was to pull back, but his warm hand settled over hers, brushing in gentle sweeps. She gulped in anticipation.

"I half thought you would run the other way when you entered." The bartender approached and wiped her hands on a towel. "Two shots of coconut rum." Ashton kept his eyes on Bekah while he ordered, pinning her with his gaze.

"The thought did cross my mind." She didn't admit the gravitational pull demanded she park her ass right next to him. "Being paired with you astonished me. I wasn't expecting the full package, you could say." Bekah took the shot of

rum and raised it to his. "To new people."

"Cheers."

They tossed their shots, and Bekah licked a drop that lingered on her lips. Her date's nostrils flared as he watched. She inhaled in a shallow breath and fought to clear the fog hazing her self-control. Seduction at that moment wasn't planned. Yet, as his face descended toward hers, she didn't pull away but leaned forward to meet his lips. Awareness spiked to new levels as he kissed her with masterful control, easing her mouth apart to taste her. Under his spell, she drowned and placed her hands on his shoulders for an anchor. He tasted of whiskey. Just as she got used to his delicious invasion, he broke the kiss with an abrupt halt. Shaken, she witnessed him rein himself in. Had he lost control with just a kiss? Hell, she was stuck for words her damn self. Flushed with arousal, she brought her eyes level with his.

"There's an ice breaker." Ashton tapped his glass on the bar top, turned and touched her lips with the pad of his thumb.

"I wasn't expecting a kiss," Bekah babbled, and reached for the second shot that mysteriously appeared in front of her.

"My way of thanking you for such a nice compliment."

Bekah corralled her wandering thoughts, or, rather, tried to. She had to imagine, if that was his way of thanking her for a simple compliment, what did he do to... really thank a girl for pleasing him? When she broke from woolgathering, she found him appraising her. Caught. Red. Handed. She waited for him to apologize, or at least look embarrassed. She crossed her arms under her breasts, and then realized her act only popped them up more for his viewing pleasure. He held a half smirk on his face, and his eyes danced with mirth.

"Damn, you're beautiful."

How in the hell was a person to maintain a semblance of irritation when completely disarmed? "You're forgiven...I suppose."

"Ready for dinner?" He stood and offered her his arm.

"You're not planning on shanghaiing me out of here, are you?" She could only hope.

"Not this second. I do have *some* gentlemanly qualities. I never seduce on an

empty stomach." He winked at her and kept his hand just short of touching skin, hovering on her lower back as they were shown to the dining area.

Private tables, sequestered within canvas tents, were draped with cream-colored silks. Ashton stepped to the side to allow her to enter and eased her chair out for her. No one had ever pulled out her seat before that day, and she glowed at how special his consideration made her feel. She smiled at him as he sat down across from her and pulled his chair closer to the table. Faint candlelight created a sensual mood. Soft music played in the background.

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"Ready for some Cuban fine dining?" Ashton handed her a menu.

"I've never had Cuban food, but I love spicy dishes. You?"

"I love food—any food." Ashton watched her in amusement. Her teeth biting and letting go of her bottom lip, the flicker of indecision in her eyes, the same flicker he'd seen earlier as he'd tasted her sweet mouth. So what if she caught him staring at her firm breasts. A man could get lost in caressing the bountiful melons. While he was staring, he imagined the color of her nipples and areolas to be a nice mocha shade, a tad darker than her gorgeous year-round tan. Turquoise jewelry enhanced her beauty, and the shortness of her dress told him she wasn't entirely against playing.

In the mirrored wall, he'd watched as she arrived, drank in her beauty, and pretended he hadn't seen her observing him as well. She failed to notice anything but he and the bartender, and that was just fine with him. "I suggest a mojito, if you're having chicken or fish, or the house red wine if you're having beef."

"Mojito with dinner? Isn't that more of a poolside drink?"

Ashton leaned back. "Yeah, it is but trust me it'll cool off the fire in your mouth from the Caribbean spices." When the waiter approached, he closed his menu. "What would you like?"

"Caribbean Heatwave skewered shrimp and chicken breast, and a mojito, please."

"Very good, ma'am, and sir will be having?"

"The Cuban skirt steak and house red wine."

"Very good sir, ma'am," the waiter said and bowed, taking his leave from them. 'Excellent manners."

Her Midwest twang turned him on, but a first date was no time to act like a randy adolescent. "Yes, they have great customer service here."

"How do you know so much?"

"I travel a lot." He gave his vague answer in an undertone.

"I read that in your profile. But it didn't tell me what you do." The investigative reporter came to the surface.

He steepled his hands together, pausing before speaking. "I handle freight." He struggled to think of a better reply, frowning in puzzlement as she shrank back and refused to meet his eyes.

"I knew it was too good to be true. Here I am in another country, and with a drug dealer, no doubt. I refuse to be your mule," she whispered, so low he barely heard her off-base accusation.

Laughter rumbled from his chest, Ashton clenched his jaw and snapped his eyes to her face. "I am not a drug dealer or a cartel boss."

"How do I know that? A private jet brought me here, a limo. I'm not paying anything extra, and suddenly I have the impression that my job isn't paying for my trip."

"Calm down, sweetness. I promise you, I am a legit businessman." Christ, the whole point of this mystery date was to meet someone who didn't know about his position in the business world. "Answer me this, are money and the finer things in life important to you, Bekah?"

"What an absurd question. Of course money and financial security are important."

If the situation wasn't a potential disaster, he'd have found it humorous. "In a relationship?"

Bekah shrugged, and her rigid body posture and confused facial expression let him know that she wasn't sure where he was going with his line of questioning, probably a good thing he wasn't the reporter here. He changed tactics. "In your profile, you didn't specify what qualifications a man must have for a chance to date you. Is how much money a man is willing to spend on you a factor?"

"Of course not. I'm not a gold digger," she replied.

An awkward silence ensued while the wait staff brought their food and drinks. As soon as they were alone in the tent again, he picked up the thread of the conversation where they were interrupted.

"Why?"

"Remember we both said on our profiles that dating places were little more than hoaxing unsuspecting people."

"So?" he asked, cutting into his steak.

"So...we're here to prove them wrong." Bekah sampled some shrimp from her skewer and immediately grabbed for her drink.

"Take sips. Told you it was spicy." Ashton continued with his line of questioning. "And if we're wrong?" At his question, she stopped chewing. He surmised he'd used a poor choice of words.

"Wrong? Attraction is attraction, healthy between two consenting adults. It doesn't equate to love, or even the fervor of love at first sight."

She polished off a skewer of shrimp and bit into her chicken. He watched her, amused by her ferocious appetite. "Hungry?"

"Ravenous."

He let the implication of her words and the burning passion in her tone drop and continued to eat. "Back to my job, so there are no misunderstandings. I own the largest freighting company in the United States." As he explained himself to her, he realized how out of character it was for him to communicate anything other than a command or order. Yet he found himself telling her all the details he'd intended to keep to himself. So their date didn't end up a total failure, here in this romantic, overseas setting, he opened up enough to soothe her worries. A drug dealer. Priceless. He watched her relax and then stiffen once she comprehended he wasn't scum. The expression on his face must've appeared murderous in nature, for she'd paled a bit. "Drink your mojito." Ashton strained to control the whiplash tone in his voice. She'd insulted him, and he still wanted to bring her to nirvana.

"I'm so sorry for the accusation."

"No problem." He forced a smile and hoped the tick in his jaw would go away. "Dessert?" Even in his current state of mind, she evoked a dark desire within him. He hadn't felt this alive in years. With her, he could kick back and relax. Her body was built for him, strong enough for him to bury his cock in her warm, velvety sex and drill his irritation away, giving into the unspoken innuendo. Simply put, he'd be hard pressed to break her.

"In your room or mine?" Bekah licked her lips and set down her empty glass.

"Mine, of course." Ashton stood and wiped his mouth on his napkin. He took out his wallet and tossed a hefty tip on the table. The dinner would be charged to his room. "Ready?"

Her pebbled nipples filled his vision, and he forced himself tear his eyes away.

"Yes." Bekah slipped her hand into his, and he smiled. She was wound up tighter than a corked bottle of wine needing to breathe. He nodded to the wait staff as they wove their way through the restaurant. Halfway to the elevators, Bekah wobbled, and he snaked a hand around her waist, pulling her to him to steady her. "Cute shoes." Her body relaxed against his, and he slowed his stride to compensate for her tipsy gait. Her soft murmur brought a smile to his lips and he realized she wasn't much of a drinker. Three mojitos during dinner may have been one—or two—too many. In her state, his needs would have to wait, though he planned on sating her ravenous hunger, on his time.

"I'm feeling a bit dizzy," Bekah slurred, holding onto him.

"We're almost there, sweetness." When Ashton steadied her once more, mumbled an expletive and lifted her into his arms, her hand brushed his overeager cock. On a groan, he finagled the key into the slot, entering the elevator. Fuck, if she didn't smell good. He placed the brand of her perfume and inhaled as the elevator rose and stopped on their floor. "Not too far away now," he promised her.

Ten seconds later the elevator dinged and hissed open, allowing them to depart. She fit so perfectly in his arms, he had to remind himself not to get used to the small pleasure he received from holding onto her. Walking in long strides soon placed them in front of his door. "The key is in my pocket," he said, and waited for her to pluck it out and slide it against the magnetic strip.

"Carrying me across the threshold seems a bit premature," Bekah teased.

"Smart ass woman." He balanced her and turned the knob, taking them inside.

"Who me? Home, sweet home."

"Yes, it is for now." Ashton chuckled. "I'll be right back." He set her down on the bed and stepped into his bathroom, hunting for a few aspirin and a glass of water. When he returned, Rebekah, the vision of sexiness, lay sprawled on his bed, naked save a thong and her sexy, open-toed shoes. Sexy heels hadn't been a particular fetish, but the way they enhanced her shapely legs incited his already tamped-down arousal. He'd gladly add them to his list of top ten favorites. She definitely wasn't making things easy on him.

"Welcome back. I thought you were going to leave me all on my lonesome."

He listened to her words and watched her luscious mouth part in a husky sigh. She stretched with a catlike grace that took his breath away, and his thought processes with it. "Here, open up." She obeyed, and he popped the pills into her mouth. "Aspirin." He tilted up her head to take a few swallows of water.

"So, sweet. Are you coming to bed?"

Ashton took his time stripping his clothes off. For added benefit, he flexed his biceps then flicked his trouser button open. His cock had aspirations of its own it seemed, springing out hot and heavy. Throbbing. Bekah enjoyed the show; her gaze stayed honed on his cock. With a wink, he strutted naked, allowing her to take her time to admire his physique. He pivoted and gave her a view of his ass as he headed to his suitcase.

"Commando, nice!"

"Thanks." He chuckled. Her delayed retort pleased him. Horny like a randy teenager wouldn't do. He shook his head and put on a pair of lounge pants, not trusting himself not to take what was so freely offered. "You should go to sleep."

"I want—"

"Me too—when you aren't dizzy from alcohol, but from my touch." He kissed her nape, trailing a hand down the valley of her breasts.

"That's so not nice. You bring me here, wine and dine me, then refuse me." Ashton smoothed his hand over her nipple and slid his palm down to her navel. "I'm not a nice guy." She turned into his touch, and he felt that spark of

awareness heighten. Her arousal filled his nostrils, though he contented himself by touching her soft skin.

"Liar." Bekah placed her hand over his and tugged it down to her pussy.

"Uh-uh." He allowed her to move his hand close to her mons, stopping shy of her lips.

"Finger me, please, so I can go to sleep. I swear I'm not usually such an easy date."

"Since you asked in such a sugar-sweet tone, how can I resist?" Leaning over her, he ran his fingers along the seam of her thigh, pinching her fat outer lips, skimming close to her clit and then thrusting his index finger inside her tight, velvet core.

"Ohh, you're so wicked."

"Ain't nothing yet," he said, as he added a second finger, continuing to torture her pussy in slow, sensual touches. Entranced by the way she responded to his touch with such abandon, he needed to feel more of her, to hear her haggard breathing. "So sexy." He glided his fingers over her skin as soft as playing the strings of his guitar, plucking and teasing, wrenching mewls of pleasure from her.

She responded with beautiful abandon, undulating her body to gain the edge to release. Bekah 's eyelids drooped at half-mast, her hands moved to pinch and tweak her dark nipples. His cock jerked in response to her throaty moans. Diving into her pussy with his tongue sounded so good. Eyes on the prize, he moved over her and spread her legs over his shoulders. Wetness glistened, winked at him. "Bekah, I'm going to have my dessert now."

"Ohh? Cake?"

"No. You." The first sweep of his tongue across her slit brought the flavor of her sweet tang to erupt in his mouth. He dove in, a man starved, and feasted. His fingers held her sex flush against his face, as he delivered long strokes of tongue, not missing an inch of her permeating scent. From his vantage point, her body trembled from his tongue and touch, her hair lay fanned out around her on the pillow, mussed, her bottom lip fuller from the way her teeth pulled and bit it when he sucked on her clit.

Ashton took his time to ease her arousal, caressing with firm, slow sweeps,

pausing to reach and mold a breast in his hand. He brought her to the edge and back, bringing his fingertips down her sides to rest at the globes of her ass, tongue spearing inside her cunt. Her hips rose off the bed, her walls contracting, Ashton pinched her clit to rob her of release.

"Damnit."

"Language," he murmured, appreciating how far he could bring her and deny her, knowing when she crested the experience she felt would be unforgettable. Again, he strove to bring it crashing down on her. He stroked harder with his fingers, fucking her good, while sucking her clit. The sublime change in her body underneath his hands and mouth made it hard for him to stretch her response out much longer. He clamped down on her clit, delivering repetitive short bites followed by exhaling cool air onto her sensitive nub. Her instantaneous climax filled his mouth with a jet of thick cream.

"Ashton."

She continued to moan his name until her body quit shuddering under him. He growled low and rose over her body bringing his fingers to her mouth. "Clean them." The dutiful woman that she was opened her mouth and sucked his fingers. He ignored the heat of her pussy searing through his clothing, against his erection, and removed his fingers. Her eyes watched him, dark with passion. A feeling welled up inside him; he bent down and rained kisses along the column of her throat, her jaw line, and just below her ear. "Sleep well," he said on a whisper and rolled onto his side, pulling her body haphazardly against his. Being raised with manners sucked balls. While she slept, sated, his body raged with need. His mama didn't raise an asshole, he'd wait until she was sober and rock her world. She'd be more than worth the wait.

#### **Chapter Two**

Sunlight streamed in the open windows. Rebekah opened her eyes and sat up in bed. Cottonmouth Syndrome, ugh. Blinking, she remembered she wasn't in her suite. Where was Ashton? She stumbled out of bed and into the bathroom to assess the damage to her look and her dignity. Tangled hair and smudged makeup met her stare in the mirror. Totally horrified, she took a washcloth, held it under a stream of, cool water from the tap, and soaped it. Minutes later, her face squeaky clean, she just needed to deal with her coated tongue and teeth. Pocketbook!

"Omigod." She peeked out the door, grateful he wasn't in the room, and reached out to grab her purse from the table next to the bed. Scrounging through the bag, her hand closed on her toothbrush, and she heaved a sigh of relief. Gratitude filled her that she'd remembered to bring an emergency travel kit. She wet her hair to tame the mane of curls exploding every which way, causing Chia Pet and Medusa to come to mind.

With a click of the locking mechanism, the door opened. "Ashton?"

"Morning, sweetness. I brought breakfast."

"Oh!" Rebekah rushed out of the bathroom, anxious to get a taste of the divine, aromatic Cuban coffee.

"I knew coffee would lure you out." Ashton winked and set out the fruit, bagels, cream cheese, and heat-sleeved disposable tumblers.

"You are a god among men." Sitting near him in the small kitchenette, foot tucked under her, she snagged a piece of melon and bit into the fleshy fruit." Did I say a god among men? Make that an immortal being of great importance."

"I think the sweet rum brainwashed you. I'm just a man, fallible like the rest." Ashton bit into his bagel. "Our second date. Hurry up, we only have a few minutes to eat."

"No lounging in bed? Wait, I only signed up for a one-night stand."

"No time to lounge." Ashton grinned. Technically—you're mine for three dates. Or as I see it until we board planes back to the real world. Unless you have any objections?" He popped a last piece of toasted bagel in his mouth, chewing as he moved over to his suitcase. "Now that our miscommunication is fixed, are you ready to go?"

"Where to?" She choked on a small piece of pineapple, watching him strip his lounger pants and A-shirt off. Tanned from head to toe and ripped. Seeing him clothed had nothing on seeing him nude. At her cough, he stood with board shorts in one hand and regarded her, frowning in concern. She held out her hand. "I'm good, just swallowed wrong."

"Stop checkin' me out, woman, and eat," he growled, shoving into his shorts and grabbing a pair of water shoes.

Rebekah blushed. "Damn tease."

"Hurry."

"Oookay. Be right back." Bekah hurried to her room. She found being with him easy. Pawing through her suitcase, she plucked the two bikinis she'd packed. The red or the blue? Teal-blue definitely. He loved the shade of her sundress, and figured he'd love the pastel-hued suit. She tied the vibrant tequila sunrise-colored sarong she'd bought because it looked great with both suits snug around her breasts, choosing to surprise him with her barely-there attire underneath. Wiggling, shaking and bending, she made certain the sarong wouldn't budge unless she wanted it to. After slipping into her flip flops, she brushed the tangles out of her hair, wrapped a couple of hair bands around her wrist, and grabbed her beach bag.

At a rapping on her door, she sang out, "Coming!" Upon opening the door, she smiled, glad to see Ashton's face again. "I only have these flip floppers, so if I need swim shoes, we'll have to make a pit stop at the gift shop."

He stalled her with a quick kiss. "There's more where that came from, later." Suddenly, she noticed he held a pair of water shoes. "How'd you know my size?" God, how considerate of him, how sweet. She couldn't stop the wide, pleased grin from spreading across her face.

"A quick peek at those sexy heels of yours."

"Thanks." She slipped them on and tucked her flip flops into her beach bag.

"Lead on." She smiled and followed him out to the waiting limo, where she settled into the seat, curious to learn their destination.

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An hour later, the sun warmed their skin. Rebekah sat next to Ashton on the boat, embarking on the open Caribbean waters for an afternoon of snorkeling and lounging on the white-sand beaches. She admired the luxurious boat. Built in flat loungers and bolted down tables and loungers with back rests made a cozy, living room type of seating on its gorgeous sun-drenched decks. "I've never been snorkeling."

"You are going to love it." Ashton pulled out a bottle of sunscreen and poured some in his hands.

"I hope that's for you. I don't burn."

"Shush. It's to protect your soft skin." He leaned forward and began slathering coconut-scented scented SPF 30, smoothing the creamy oil until her body absorbed the substance. "Turn around." Contrary to popular opinion, any ethnicity could still get burned or even worse a form of cancer. She should've thought to bring a bottle and was thankful he took the time to remember.

His strong hands felt good moving over her and brought memories back from the night before. He'd devastated her with his teasing and toying, until she was wound tighter than a spring on diving board, and then he delivered and knocked her world off its axis.

She let a moan fall from her lips and gravitated into his working hands. "You're killing me."

"That should be my line." Ashton slapped her ass and then smoothed her cheeks.

"My turn." She rounded on him and plucked the bottle of sunscreen off the deck chair. Their guaranteed-to-be-discreet guide navigated the boat through the blue, crystalline waters, but all she could think of was sinking her hands into the planes of sexy muscle on Ashton's body. Of course, she began with his chest,

taking her own sweet time to spread her hands over his pectorals, jumping back when he bunched them. "Show off."

His chuckle earned him a nipple pinch. The darkened spark of his eyes warned her of retribution. With a devilish grin, she moved up and down his stomach, bringing her body close enough for her sun-warmed breasts to touch his skin. She moved around him and hugged him from behind, roaming her hands up his chest. "All rubbed in—in front." She nipped his nape and began smearing the protective agent on his well-defined shoulders and his back.

"You're in for it, later."

His voice promised future delights and her smart-ass side had the perfect response.

"Burn me...if you can." Feeling bold, she reached down and grabbed his package, thankful that they faced the open sea instead of the guide. He'd teased her mercilessly earlier, by brushing his engorged cock against her and not letting her touch or have a sample. The hardened length under his trunks jerked in her hand. He cleared his throat and pointed out at the water. She bounced in delight at the family of dolphins swimming just off the bow.

"Can I have my dick back?" he joked, so low only she could hear.

Bekah let go immediately, and blushed. "Sorry." She looked at the cocky son of a bitch that had stolen her heart overnight and realized her story for the *Tribune* would never be written, because Madame Eve had provided all she promised and more.

"Penny for your thoughts," Ashton murmured.

"Just can't wait to get in the water. I'm hot."

In more ways than one.

"We're coming up on the cove." He dropped a gentle kiss on her lips and handed her the gear.

Damn if his touch or the way his voice grazed her being didn't affect her. The guide slowed the yacht down and dropped anchor at a popular lagoon. Ashton hopped over the side, first, his hands outstretched to her.

"Come on I got you," he promised.

Bekah trusted him but fought with holding onto her top ties and the aspect of

falling backward. She shook her head *no*, opting instead to see where she was going. Her decision was taking too much time. With a shrug, she gave up and jumped down, sliding into his waiting arms.

"No untying the bikini," she teased, double knotting the ties.

"Don't need to when I can do this," he said and pulled the triangles covering her breasts sloshing cool droplets on her nipples.

"Ashton!" She wiggled, pulled the material back, and splashed him. Around his neck hung a waterproof camera for their undersea adventure. The water cooled her skin, and she loved the crisp scent of salty ocean . Donning the snorkel and fins only took a minute to do. Taking his hand, she followed him down, watching the life-forms below. Vibrant hues exploded into bright neon colors. She stopped to push her hair out of her face and quickly secured it with a band from her wrist.

Ashton swam in circles behind her and tugged the band off. When she turned to see him snapping pictures with a small, waterproof camera he flashed a smile her way. She wrestled him for her hair tie, motioning for him to put it back in. After some choice body language, he did and she gave him thumbs up, happy once more to watch what was going on around them.

She broke water with him and removed her snorkel to take a deep breath. His warm body met hers. She moaned in want, her mouth fused over his taking and nibbling. Treading water he kept them afloat, his hands stroking over the globes of her ass, trailing up to touch her aching breasts. Starving to touch him, she couldn't get enough of his chiseled body. Her hands spread over his broad shoulders, moving her body back a tad to trail them over his chest, glad he didn't have too much body hair, all while she satisfied her yearn for mouth to mouth.

"Ready to see more?" Ashton broke the smooching session.

"Yeah." She slipped her mask and snorkel back on and watched the precise way his body cut through the water, all sexy-like. He stopped and turned to her with a come-on expression on his face. Bekah erupted in laughter and caught up. They swam for hours, breaking for bottles of chilled water and for him to feed her incredibly delicious finger foods, lounging on the deck, sunbathing, and then dipping again.

"Tired yet?" He dried her hair and smoothed a second application of sunscreen

on her body.

A languid feeling washed over her. "A bit."

"Here's a brochure I thought you'd like." He opened it to show her vivid images of the fish and coral around them.

"Oh. I recognize a lot of them. That grouper fish is one scary-looking beast. I thought it was gonna bite my fins. I always thought sea horses were fake." She laughed, just happy to be there, waterlogged and sun-baked, next to the most amazing man she'd ever met.

"I was hoping to see a stingray or shark," Ashton mumbled like a disappointed child.

"Nice." His displeasure made her giggle. "Two dangerous animals and you want to play with them in their territory. Has to be a man thing." She took a bottle of water and slid on her sunglasses. "Now what?"

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Ashton moved his deck lounger closer to hers. He'd sent their tour guide for a nap below, and the savvy young man had smiled and promised not to come back until they called for him. Enthralled by her beauty, Ashton appreciated the way the sun bronzed her skin, adding to her exotic nature. Normally, smart-mouthed women held no appeal for him. Bekah was the exception to the rule. More importantly, he found himself content to just sit or lie next to her, no words needed.

The relaxing sun worked its magic. Beside him, as Bekah drifted off, the slight rise and fall of her chest caught his notice. He took the bottle of coconut oil and moved over to her chair, straddling her. Two tugs later, her top fell to the side, giving him a direct view of her ample bosom with its dark, compelling nipples. Tilting the bottle upside down, he watched the oil drizzle over her skin and travel downward. He caught the droplets and spread them over her warm skin. The harder he rubbed, molded her melons to his hands, the more she sighed in pleasure, until, finally, her eyes fluttered open.

Her nipple begged to be licked, sucked, and he complied. His tongue flicked

over the tiny bud, tasting the sweet oil. Bekah gripped his head, urging him to take more of her breast into his mouth. With a chuckle, he did, sucking it in, releasing it with a pop and moving to the other. His hands strayed to her bikini bottom and untied the knots on the sides, moving, as the suit fell away, to delve his fingers into her weeping sex. Bekah keened an aroused moan from her luscious mouth.

The musical sound hitting his ears threatened to snap the remaining vestiges of his self-control. He reached into the small duffel between their loungers, withdrew a condom, and laid it on the arm of her chair. Slipping his finger from her pussy, he stood, shucking his shorts. Sheathing his cock only took a moment, but that instant felt like too much time to be away from her. Ashton laid a couple of towels on the deck. "We'll break the damn chair otherwise."

Bekah slipped to the deck with a cheeky grin and spread her legs. "Hot stuff, what are you waiting for?"

"Enjoying the view." Damn, she shone like a brand-new copper penny. He dropped to her and slid his fingers back into her core. "Nice and tight." He bent his head to suck on her clit and released it. Her gorgeous legs opened wider, and he moved on in, taking the open invitation to spear his cock into her pussy. Molten-hot muscle clamped on him. He gripped her hips and anchored her in place, once again surging into her, filling her. The tease pinched his nipples and raked her hands down his chest. Sweet gods, she'd kill him if she kept that shit up. He glared at her and pumped hard and fast, long strokes of steel. She keened low and leaned up to bite his chest. Ashton muffled a curse and pressed his thumb pad to her clit, turning her game of torture against her.

"Ashton." Bekah rose to meet him.

"So beautiful, girl." Ashton crushed his lips to hers, slowing down, syncing his thrusts in her pussy with his spearing tongue in her mouth. Her passionate nature brought out the beast in him. She submitted completely and gifted back in return. She gyrated when he pushed, wedging his hand between them. Her small clit engorged under his thumb. He toyed with it until she writhed beneath him, begging for release. Though she didn't scream, the silent intakes of unsteady breath hit his ears. He pounded harder and teased her nub until she exploded for

him. Ashton withdrew his hand and braced his hands on either side of her, lowering his weight fully on her, cock deep inside as he rhythmically worked her through her first orgasm. He bit her neck enough to leave an indented mark and jerked when her body convulsed a second time, gifting him with her sweetsmelling cream.

"That's it, baby, come for me." Sweat-drenched, he rocked long and slow until her muscles eased off. "God, you feel good."

"You, too," her breathy voice wavered back at him.

Ashton brushed his lips across hers and gazed into her expressive eyes, hoping his mirrored hers, hoping she could see his feelings in them. His passion built. The lust he'd been holding back since seeing her face ignited. "Hold on." He backed up, onto his knees, and tucked his hands under both ass cheeks, riding her hard and fast, balls slapping the indent in her ass. "Shit woman," he rasped, his seed shooting out in jets of cum filling the condom. He milked his cock in her velvet sex, wishing he had more time.

The sun departed, leaving a rainbow of blue, orange and pink hues to tint the clouds. The clear waters darkened as they returned to the resort. Their guide, true to his word, didn't invade their privacy. After the best sex in his life, and sharing the sunset, he watched Rebekah fall asleep and covered her with her sarong. They'd both agreed to no phones, no media, no laptops. No interruptions to the epitome of experiences that Madam Eve had to offer. Reality came back too fast, and he was helpless to fend it off.

All too soon, the marina loomed in the near distance. He woke Sleeping Beauty with a kiss and helped her put her swimsuit on. "I'm so sleepy." She yawned and slipped on her flip flops.

"We'll have you back to your room in no time." The solemn inflection in his voice bothered him. He generously tipped their discrete guide and led her into the plush comfort of the waiting limo's leather seats. As they pulled off, the smell of the sea evaporated from his nose. Bekah snuggled against his chest. He stroked her hair and inhaled her sweet scent, wondering how he'd find normal when he went home.

Tired himself, after their day of sun, sea and incredible sex, he nudged her

awake for the second time. "We're here." The limo driver opened the door for him, and he unfolded from the seat, pulling his sleepy woman out behind him.

"Slow down."

"Wake up." He snapped, and felt guilt creep in as she pulled away from him at his sharp tone, making her own way into the building.

"He jogged up to her, halting her mid-step. "I'm sorry. I don't know where that came from." *Which was a lie.* Women never made him feel erratic, yet all he felt around her was off-balance. He studied her wary expression and stroked her beyond-tangled hair. "I should've braided it for you."

"That's really sweet, Ashton." She jerked her head and brought her hand up to meet his.

Ashton stepped into her personal space and kissed her forehead. "Let's just go to bed. We're both exhausted."

"Sounds like a plan." Instead of going to her room, she kept walking, leading them to his.

Bekah continued to surprise him. Minutes later, back in his suite, he led her to his luxurious bathroom and turned on the shower. She smelled of coconut and salt water, reminding him of their time spent snorkeling. He realized no matter how many times he snorkeled again in the future, the experiences wouldn't compare to the date he'd just finished with her.

Gingerly, he lathered her skin with soap and rinsed her off, his hands trailing over her breasts and ass. She stepped away from him and freed her hair from its band. Water-drenched curls sprang to life. She held out the bottle of shampoo to him and turned to allow him to wash her hair for her. Feeling completely out of his element and oddly domesticated, he poured the shampoo onto her head and massaged the clear liquid to froth, working the scented foam from scalp to tips, falling just short of the middle of her back.

"You're so good," she sighed.

Hearing her sigh had to be the best sound that ever graced his ears. "Good to know. Eyes closed, head back." He commandeered the hand-held nozzle from her grasp and began to rinse her hair.

"Oh, God do that again." Bekah moved her head toward him.

Ashton passed the nozzle over her head, loving the way she called for more. His cock hardened, and he groaned. Bekah surprised him by wrapping her hand around his length and stroking from tip to balls. "Aren't you tired?"

"Not now. I want a quick taste, and for you to fuck me, before we pass out." She dropped to her knees and took him into her mouth. He damn near dropped the nozzle. Anchoring it back to the wall proved difficult with her warm mouth slurping him down and backing off to lick down the side of his shaft.

"Bekah." Her name came out in a guttural rasp as she dropped her head to suck on his scrotum. She used the right pressure and her wet mouth pulling in each ball had him close to coming. What a talented mouth she had. He braced his hands on the wall as she stood and let him go to soap up her hands. "What?"

"Wait for it." She ran soap up his body and down, leaving a trail of bubbles over his skin, then lathered her body with a generous amount of soap and slid her breasts over him. He knew then what she aimed to do and groaned when she put him between her breasts and began pumping him hard and fast.

From his aerial view, his crown peeked up from the two bountiful globes and returned to their hiding spot. Fuck if her milking wasn't perfection. The sensation stole rational thought and how to breathe without detonating early.

"So slippery." She rode him between her tight tits.

"Where the hell did you learn that trick?"

"Ladies have their secrets."

Ashton backed her into the far corner and lifted her legs, bracing her back against the cool tile. "Smart ass." He shoved into her to the hilt and took her under the spray of the shower water.

Soapy, steamy skin met skin. He devoured her mouth, and let go of her legs as she wrapped them around him, giving him leeway to tangle his hand in her hair as he'd wanted to do since rinsing the silky strands clean.

"Fuck," he groaned, as she came around him covering his cock in her release. He realized he hadn't covered up. With a growl, he pulled out of her, shooting thick jets of semen against the tiled wall.

"What?" Bekah asked opening her eyes.

"I never fucking forget." He eased her to stand under the spray. When she was

soap free, he opened the shower door to let her out so he could rinse himself.

"It's okay; we got carried away. We weren't planning on that, you know."

Her soft, reassuring tone didn't drown out the voice that told him to be a responsible grown up.

"I know sweetness. I didn't—in you, but still. Madame Eve had us fill out all those intimate details. I'm clean, and so are you. But, I don't lose control—ever.

"So I make you lose control?" Bekah handed him a towel, a note of glee in her voice.

Ashton snorted as he dried off and wrapped the towel around his waist. He stepped behind her and took the comb, parting her hair in three sections.

"You act like you've done this before."

"I have three younger sisters, so yeah." He combed through each section and wound her hair in a braid. "Don't go thinking nothing by this."

"No, of course not. A big, strong man who knows how to braid a woman's hair." Bekah turned and hugged him.

"Bedtime." He slapped her ass and pushed her to the bed. "Tomorrow comes early, and we have an a.m. flight."

"Don't remind me," Rebekah mumbled. Ashton eased his arm around her and tucked her into his body, but he didn't relax or let sleep claim him until she breathed slow and even.

#### **Chapter Three**

Rebekah hated good-byes. She faced Ashton at her airport, a layover for him giving them a chance for a few stolen moments.

"We're not saying good-bye—more like see you later." Ashton's silent promise hung between them.

Bekah wasn't prepared for the staggering, soulful kiss he planted on her. The power of his desire came close to knocking her flat on her ass. Winded and breathless, she stared in dazed amusement, wanting one more. "Oh, you know how to leave a lady wanting." She stepped back. "I'll call you later, or sext. Kidding—I mean text."

Ashton grinned at her. "We can sext all night if you want."

"Okay, tiger, you got a plane to catch."

"My plane, on my orders." He swatted her ass. "You have all your things?" "Check."

"I'll email you the pics." He gave her a brief, perfunctory kiss.

"Is that how you kiss your mother?"

Ashton shook his head and gave her one last kiss for the date. "I had a fun three and three-fourth dates, Ms. Rebekah Shayne. I'm looking forward to adding more."

"Damn." Bekah watched him leave her, and her heart tumbled in despair. "Oh, put a cork in it," she muttered to herself. Just chalk it up to a romantic weekend. *I still don't believe in love at first glance.* Deep down, she wondered how much she'd have to lie to herself to believe it.

Two days later, she sat at her desk. The computer screen blinked at her, but no words came. She dimly heard the chime of an incoming message and scanned it.

Ms. Shayne. I take it your trip was successful?

Bekah closed her office door before answering.

Madam Eve, I presume. Even in text, she could detect a sleek sophistication.

Yes.

I must admit, I have to write a different article now.

Remember, we are a discrete company with no advertising beyond word of mouth of satisfied clients.

You knew I was going to write an expose on your company? Bekah punched send.

I hoped you wouldn't. Do you believe in magic now Ms. Shayne?

*I—I.* She paused, stumped.

Take care. The screen went blank.

Bekah smoothed her suit and once again stared at her computer screen.

An office assistant rapped on her door and opened it slightly. "Ms. Shayne, conference in ten minutes."

Grrr. The meeting had slipped her mind. She slipped out of her office with a pad of paper, her cell phone, and tape recorder, and entered the boardroom. She was nearly late and the long table was filled with her colleagues and boss.

"Morning. I'll be taking the minutes for the meeting."

"Very good." Mark Sanders, her boss, called the meeting to order. "Ready when you are."

Rebekah nodded and hit *play*. "Fuck me harder. Oh, God like that, just like that, Ashton," blared from the tiny device held in her hand. The more her fumbling fingers tried to turn it off, the louder it got, giving the occupants of the room a second-by-second accounting of her sexual escapade.

Frozen in shock, it took her a moment to pull it together. "I—don't know how that happened. Holy h-e-double hockey sticks, I'm so sorry. I uh, have to go." She dropped the blasted machine on the floor and stomped on it to silence it. "Manufacturer error, I'd imagine." She darted out of the conference room and hid in her office. "I'm never leaving this room." She burst into tears of embarrassment. Her phone rang, and she silenced it, imagining getting a pink slip.

Four hours later the bleep of her phone ringing incessantly drove her mad. "Hello! Look, I don't want to talk—quit freakin' callin' and leave a message

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already!"
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"Rebekah, what's wrong?"

"Ashton?"

"Bekah."

"Just a bad day at work. What are you up to?" She stopped the flow of tears and tried to formulate a plan to save her skin, while also slowing the crazy beating of her heart.

"I flew into town to take you out to dinner tonight."

"Where are you?" She listened to the background noises and hushed whispers, trying to guess.

"Why are you hiding in your office crying, beautiful?"

"I asked first." Bekah sniffled. "And I can't tell you. It's too embarrassing."

Her office door opened and Ashton stood there. Without a word, he moved in and enveloped her in a hug. "Your assistant out there filled me in. I guess I picked a good time to come by." He held up the incriminating evidence.

"Where'd you get that?"

"I dug it out of the boardroom trash, so no one could tease you."

"I'm going to lose my job." She burst out in a fresh set of tears, stopping to speak in hiccups. "I don't even know how it taped that."

"You were recording our dinner conversation, and maybe it got jostled and stayed on that night. Damage control is more important than anything right now."

"My reputation as a reporter is ruined. I'm ruined." She noticed him trying not to laugh and narrowed her eyes. "It's not funny, Ashton." She slapped him on the arm.

"Hey, is that any way to treat the new owner of the Wichita Tribune?"

"Huh, what? No. You didn't really." Mouth agape, she stared at him. "You bought the damn newspaper?"

"Yes."

"Why would you do that?"

"Because I believe in magic."

Rebekah put her hands to her temple. "Sensory overload."

"Breathe through it. Come on, let's go to dinner."

"Hyperventilating is not me, crying isn't me either." *Get it together, woman. Get it together.* 

"Where's my smart-ass woman who finds humor in any situation?"

"Hiding, not finding the situation at all funny." She poked him in the ribs.

"I've issued a gag order. Anyone who speaks loses their job outright." He kissed her forehead and wiped her tears. "Buck up, sweetness. All the negotiating and business buying has made me hungry in more ways than one."

"I'm sure I'll find a retort somewhere." Bekah grabbed her jacket and purse and let Ashton lead her out of her office. "Still embarrassed, though."

"Don't be. Half the women are jealous, the rest staring daggers at you. The men are too scared of losing their jobs to even look at you."

"How do you do what you do?"

"It's the way I roll. You did dare me to burn you. Consider it done, sweets." He opened the doors for her, and she moved in front of him.

"No watching my ass."

"Busted."

"I can't believe you bought the damn paper for me."

He ushered her into his car. "We have till forever for you to believe in the improbable." He kissed her and drove them home.

### ~ABOUT THE AUTHOR~

Being smart and sassy with a great sense of humor comes easily for Mahalia Levey. An avid reader of books, she found herself enchanted with disappearing completely into the worlds authors created. One day she vowed to herself she'd be one of them. Then family life came, and college right after. Swayed from her childhood course of action, it took many years for her to get back to that place she held dear as a child. Now she is running full steam ahead to keep up with the many ideas flowing freely. She plans on taking her work to higher levels and expanding her genres. Her main focus is giving her readers variety. Her works in progress include paranormal, fantasy and mainstream romance. Taking characters and watching them grow past what she's imagined is her true passion.

You can visit Mahalia at: www.mahalialevey.com