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My Italian Vendetta

Black Satin Confessions, *Revenge Anthology*, Volume 2

Empress LaBlaque

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By
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My Italian Vendetta

By

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Chapter One

One of the youngest and brightest mayors of all time, Mayor Ruben Barrett had a crippling disability. He didn't know how to conduct business with his pants on. If I could shoot him and plead temporary insanity, I would. I'd probably get a medal for making the city a safer place for women. City leaders are not above the law, not even sexy ones.

Let's just face it—I'm not that pretty, plus I'm a ginger bread junkie. Consequently, when Ruben asked me to marry him, I thought I had died and gone to heaven. Although Ruben is African American he's moving up in the world. Did I mention he's drop dead gorgeous? Anything he puts his hands on turns to gold, so I was more than happy to walk down the aisle with this golden boy. My self-esteem had taken a terrible beating; as a result, I expected to spend my life doomed to spinsterhood. Any proposal was a true miracle.

Right from the start, things were not good. The day after we were married, Ruben bragged about the huge favor he did for me. Each day, he assured me I was not worth marrying. Who wanted a mutt on their arm during social affairs? I wouldn't dare show my face at formal events. A make-believe virus or headache is a great reason to stay home. With my husband's rising popularity, my presence isn't

missed anyway.

Ruben had extramarital affairs, and quite often. When I would find out about another affair, he would shower me with affection until I forgave him. Then, I'd asked myself over and over why I allow this maddening cycle to continue. After looking in the mirror, the answer is always clear—ugly ducklings can't be choosy. Even if he treats me like dirt, I'm still blessed to have a handsome man like Ruben.

Chapter Two

A few months ago, I uncovered another affair Ruben was having. This discovery nearly ended my life and his. As Mayor, Ruben often worked late. I told him my sister would be visiting with us for a while. He started to rant about my obese family. He said my sister is overweight and a slob, just like me. I love my sister and want to see her, I didn't care what Ruben thought.

In preparation for her visit, I have mountains of errands to run. During that time my club is also hosting a grand gala to raise money for cancer research. Ruben had borrowed my laptop and left it at work. I decided to save time and run by his office.

The City Hall building is usually quiet. It's run by nice old ladies who wear bright red lipstick and bouffant hair styles. They bake cookies, keep the offices decorated and give lavish gifts. I felt confident that Ruben would never proposition any of these old gals. He wanted something with a little more zest than that.

Ruben's office is on the second floor. As I walked down the hall, all seemed still. I pushed open the door to the outer office and noticed that his secretary is not

at her desk. Ruben obviously keeps her busy with his constant demands. Like usual, I walked past Ann's desk and strolled down the hall toward my husband's office. I noticed his door is closed which is a good indication a meeting is in session. I wanted to make sure Ruben was not in a conference so I placed my ear to the door. I would feel awkward if I interrupted the town's city officials. Curiosity encouraged me to press on, even though I could have sent a text asking Ruben to bring my laptop home.

At first, I didn't hear anything, and then I heard a peculiar sound. I hear whimpering and begging from someone in distress, a woman perhaps. Then I hear quiet growls of rhythmic grunting. After six years of marriage, I've grown accustomed to that sound. Suddenly, masculine groans turned into cries of ecstasy. I must be wrong. Someone else must have borrowed my husband's office.

Not my precious, Ruben! Not again, he just wouldn't, he promised me he wouldn't. Ruben's promises are like his campaign speeches—pretty and interesting, but lacking in substance. Who would dare have sex with my husband right here in city hall? Surely it is *not* his secretary. Ann would never do such a thing. She's a wonderful girl, and I trust her.

My hand trembled at the very thought of opening the door. Nevertheless, I just had to know who is inside. I feel so nervous I can hardly turn the silver handle. With the door slightly ajar, the full blast of their passions assaults my ears. A

nauseous wave swept over me and made me weak. Disbelief secured my feet firmly to the floor. My lips parted, but the horrors of reality forced my emotions deeper inside.

Ruben's back faced the door while he stood in front of his desk. His sex partner is Jill, the district attorney and a bitter woman. She's the Caucasian woman Ruben said he absolutely hates. It is obvious he doesn't hate what she has between her legs. Jill's slender legs were draped over my husband's shoulders. She whimpers like Ruben unexpectedly, has more to offer than what she really wants. Her pleading cries excited Ruben even more, and he grew more intense with his probing.

So preoccupied with pleasing her, he hadn't bothered to remove his slacks. There he stood, slacks unzipped, pledging manly allegiance to the servicing of this woman.

As luck would have it, I walked in on the finale of their sexual act. And from the sound of it, Jill put on a great show. With wavering hands I held my ears; I didn't want to hear anymore. I closed my eyes not wanting to see anymore. When it seemed my head would burst from the trauma I cried out in pain. Suddenly, my screams pierced the musky air with a lingering resonance.

As if he had been shot in the back, Ruben withdrew and stood erect. Rivers of profanity slid off his tongue as he turned to face me. Ruben had been caught and

his knees buckled beneath my discovery. He did manage one simple sentence. “Damn it, Nedra! I told you to call when you’re dropping by!”

Jill rose upon her elbows and lifted her back from the desk. Her dark eyes peered around my husband’s rigid body. Timidly, she withdrew her legs from Ruben’s shoulders and sat up. Preening her curly mane, she nervously pulled it off her shoulders and tossed it behind her. She wore an expression of fright and humiliation. As she attempted to close her revealing blouse, the buttons hid themselves from her anxious fingers.

After pulling down her skirt, she leaped from the desk and ran down the hall. Random words of embarrassment blurted from her lips. Jill’s hasty retreat left Ruben to catch the full impact of my wrath. Astonished, I couldn’t speak. Ruben reeled in his wilted line, tucked in his shirttail and zipped his pants. He could have finished the job, our marriage was officially over. He made it abundantly clear that he had no intentions of doing right. Tremendous heartache had stolen my words, I silently walked away.

Chapter Three

When Ruben arrived home I thought he'd walk through the door and start packing his bags. Instead, he sauntered in the door as usual, his large frame appearing too heavy for the task that lay before him. After closing the door, Ruben loosened his tie and tossed his coat across the sofa.

With crossed arms, I locked in for the battle of wills. Finally, Ruben's gaze merged with mine only to turn guiltily from my view. In a slow stride, he meandered toward the bedroom. I bit my bottom lip as he sauntered past, ignoring my presence. He knows I am infuriated.

Ruben returned from the bedroom dressed for leisure. In the deadened tone I've heard many times before, he announced, "I'm going out."

My body rebelled before my mouth mastered the words. "Oh, no you won't, Ruben Barrett! We need to talk about this, now!"

"We'll talk later, Nedra...after you calm down. Honey, remember your high blood pressure. Now, just slow your row and relax. You look terrible, allergies bothering you again?" Before I could say another word, Ruben walked toward the kitchen. "I'm eating out tonight."

I followed him, anger driving my words. “Why, you ignorant Bastard! Why are you trying to give this discussion the royal kiss-off? You’re on your way out of here, tonight! You promised you’d never cheat on me again!” Ranting like a madwoman, I followed Ruben into the kitchen. His nonchalant attitude had me fuming. “Is our lovemaking that stale, Ruben? Is my appearance becoming a problem in our relationship? You find me repulsive, huh? And, your little game—I can’t stand that Jill Fannoy! You knew all along you were screwing her.”

Ruben looked at me with those large dark eyes and told me a lie I will never forget. “Nedra,” he paused, “I love you. I would rather be dead than face life without you.”

Reaching inside the kitchen drawer, I pulled out a gun. “Here’s a gun, Ruben. Use it!” Ruben reached for the gun wrenching it from my hand. He then aimed for his head. “I don’t want to live without you,” he whispered tearfully.

“Why didn’t you think of that before?” I screamed, calloused from years of adultery. “I don’t care—kill yourself! I’ll help you pull the trigger.”

Ruben tossed the gun aside and it landed in the corner. He reached for me and pulled me into his arms. I resisted his touch, hitting and biting him; he only held me closer. “I can’t leave you Nedra. You’re much too sickly. Who’ll take care of you? Look! I’ll never do it again— I swear. This woman has been after me for months. I’m telling you the truth, Nedra! There will never be another woman. I

give you my solemn word.”

Ruben brushed my cheek with the back of his hand and I resisted the warmth of his arms. It had been months since he held me. Finally, with Ruben looking deep into my eyes, I surrendered. Still angry, I decided to let Ruben know he really didn't get away with anything. Two can play this game. This time, I would take charge of my emotions and plot my own revenge.

Chapter Four

Ruben is sexy and I'm the envy of almost every woman in town. His entire body reeked with masculine sexuality, his pheromones are incredibly potent. When Ruben walks past a woman he could easily upset the delicate balance of her hormones, which in turn, erased her common sense. Nevertheless, their arousal should be appeased by their own mates or some inexpensive sex toy. Instead, women secretly sought the sexual services of my dear elected husband.

I'm a frumpy thirty year old woman with a pear shaped figure. Thighs and legs dimpled with cellulite is hardly an eager treat for someone like Ruben. My hair is red, unmanageable and dry. However, behind my glasses are light-brown deep-set eyes. Mother says they are my greatest asset. I should use them to my advantage. On the other hand, my self-worth is so low, I can't unravel the threads that imprison me.

For years, I was the president of almost every committee in town. My presence was a looming force over the city. Each day, I'd try to relax by going for a walk in the park—just needing that quiet time. My biggest problem is that the hot dog vender also frequents that very same park. Now, I must confess, I'm a chilidog

junkie, extra mustard.

As I sat on the bench admiring my two chilidogs, I became curious about a woman perched on a bench beneath a tree. While I took a swill of my soda, I noticed she appeared to be of Italian decent. She wore the slight blush of a large smile. Against her olive skin, her dark eyes sparkled with mirth. Her curled, brunette hair was piled upon her head in tousled ringlets. Although, she appeared older, we balance the same load of weight.

Despite being slightly overweight, she looks happy. I shook my head to dismiss that absurd thought. The woman read a book. She closed the book, got up, and strolled past my bench. In spite of the fact that my cheeks are crammed with food, I wondered if it's just my imagination, or does she really wear her confidence like a waist-cinching corset. Although slightly plump, her jaw line is straight, her shoulders erect.

She didn't really have hips, but she swung her lower half as if it belonged to a notorious temptress. As she walked, my eyes followed her. How did she manage to appear so graceful and even sensual? Pangs of jealousy made me uneasy; I just had to know her secret.

After swiftly wrapping the chilidog and tossing the other in my bag, I rushed behind her, spilling my drink as I ran.

When the woman reached her luxury car, she opened the door and sat

down. I noticed that she rambled attentively in her purse, pulled down an overhead mirror and tastefully applied lipstick. Shortly afterward, she added an extra mist of fragrance.

Feeling my stares she acknowledged my presence. “Well hello there, Gorgeous,” she said, with an inspiring tone.

Is she actually addressing me? I brushed my dry hair out of my face and smiled, shyly. “Hi.” My reflection in her car’s side mirror told me she’s a liar, my hair looks awful—my skin feels like sandpaper. “You’re awfully kind,” I said earnestly.

“No, I’m just honest. You have marvelous potential.”

“I do?” I asked, attempting to pull my fingers through the tangled mess.

“You’re beautiful. All you need is a little attention.”

My eyes grew wide. “You think so?”

The woman smiled softly. “A good conditioner, a trim, and magic happens.”

The woman closed the car’s door. “Take care of yourself.”

“Wait!” I called, anxiously, “Didn’t I see you here last week.”

“Indeed you did. I’m Beatrice.”

“Hi, I’m Nedra Barrett,” I extended my hand.

Gently grasping my hand, Beatrice gave it a dainty squeeze. “I adore this park. I come here to get my daily dose of serenity.”

I wanted to know her secrets, but felt awkward. “Really?”

“Yes, however,” she warned, “I don’t eat here.” She pointed to the crumpled chilidog paper clenched in my fist, I blushed with embarrassment. “They have excellent food right across the street, you know”

“You have a point,” I admitted, twitching with interest. “That’s a lovely outfit. Where did you buy it?”

“Thank you, Nedra. Believe it or not, I bought it at a shop downtown.”

Beatrice paused and reached into her purse. “Here’s my card. Call me sometime. Maybe we can take in a shopping trip or something.”

“Thanks, I’d love that.” Feeling a warm bond developing with Beatrice, I smiled broadly. “Maybe you could teach me a thing or two about clothes.

Beatrice placed her finger thoughtfully to her cheek. “Perhaps.”

Looking down at my ill-fitting clothing I confessed, “I just can’t seem to find the right fit.”

Beatrice smiled softly. “I know an easy way to lose an inch in about two seconds.”

“How, Beatrice?” I pleaded earnestly. “Please tell me!”

“Darling,” Beatrice got out of her vehicle. “Start by picking your chin up. Show off that neck of yours. Hold your head erect and pull those shoulders back. Tuck in that tummy. You don’t have to be skinny to be sexy, Nedra. Showcase

your body in a new light. You aren't that big, your weight is well proportioned."

Frowning, I just wasn't sure what Beatrice was trying to say. "But, I'm just hideous." I surveyed my gut with mouth agape.

"Sweetheart." Beatrice looked at me with the deepest of sympathy. "Ugly is a frame of mind. If you feel ugly, you'll look ugly."

Still puzzled, I simply gawked at her. "When I look in the mirror, I see reality."

"That's nonsense, Nedra." She caught me by the hand and gave a gentle squeeze. "You're as beautiful as you think you are."

Immediately I started to feel self-conscious. "But that sounds silly. I thought you were serious."

"Oh, but I am serious. Just stand erect then look in the mirror. Look, Nedra. I'm going across the street for a coffee. Would you like to join me for conversation?"

I almost wanted to cry. For the first time in days Ruben is not on my mind. "Thank you. I would like that very much."

When we approached the little restaurant Beatrice waved me on to the ladies room. "Come here. I want to show you something."

When I entered the restroom, I had no idea what would happen. Once inside, Beatrice took my purse and placed it on the sink. She took her fingers and

perched them under my chin. Gently, she pulled my chin erect until my ears leveled with my shoulders. Firmly, she placed her palm into my back to force my shoulders straight. “Now, doesn’t that look better? Sweetheart, when your self-esteem is low, your body tells the entire story. Why not keep them guessing?”

After an interesting chat and coffee, Beatrice reached for her purse. “Well Nedra, I simply must go, my date is waiting. Call me sometime. Perhaps, we can do this again.” Beatrice had it all together and like a hungry child, I wanted to know more.

Chapter Five

Ruben was already snoring when I got into bed. I turned my back toward him and drew in an easy breath. We would not argue tonight. Just as I drifted off to sleep, I felt Ruben place his hand on my side. It felt like his hand would burn right through my skin. Clearing his throat, Ruben mumbled, “I’m not sleeping with anyone, so looks like you need to fulfill your wifely duty.”

I picked up Ruben’s repulsive hand and removed it. Looking over my shoulder, I sneered, “Take your hands off me Ruben.”

“Come on Nedra, I told you I wouldn’t cheat anymore. Help me keep my word. It’s been a while since you—well, you know.”

“Had sex with you Ruben.” I volunteered, finishing his statement.

“But, Nedra. If you want me to be faithful, make love to me, please.”

“Ruben, if I allow you to have sex with me, you must use protection. I don’t know what kinda diseases those women have.”

“Nedra,” he sighed, “I’ll use a condom.” Ruben tapped me on the shoulder and I flinched. “I know you’re still pissed with me. And, I don’t blame you, baby. But, could you pretend you like it, just a little? You know, put a little feeling into

it, this time. Your emotional state affects my desire for you.”

I turned to face him. “Guess what, Ruben? I could care less if you enjoy it or not. As far as I’m concerned you can satisfy yourself.”

Upon hearing my statement, Ruben sat up in bed, his face torn with anguish. “Nedra,” he pleaded, his hands in a steeple, “don’t make me do that anymore, it’s so degrading. Besides, you’re abusing your authority, baby.” Ruben calmed himself. “Okay,” he nodded. “I’ll use protection. I’ll take it any way I can get it.”

“You’d better be glad I even allow you in the same bed, Ruben Barrett. The guest room looks pretty inviting right about now.” I turned over to give myself to my unfaithful husband; I glowered as he made himself comfortable.

Ruben looked down into my eyes. “Come on, Nedra.” As if trying to spur a stubborn mule he lurched forward. “Don’t make me work so hard for it, baby.”

Looking up at him, I scowled in a way he always knew meant business. Opening my mouth wide, I expelled an exaggerated yawn and turned on the lamp. “You can start when you’re ready.” I reached for a magazine.

“Shit!” Ruben cursed. “She’s getting a book!” Sweat beaded on his forehead. “You’re gonna make me work for this, aren’t you?”

I selected a page and started to read aloud. Ruben made quick work of his quest and dismounted. He shook his head sadly. “Nedra, you’re a cold blooded

woman.”

Chapter Six

In spite of my encounter with Ruben that night, I awoke with new enthusiasm. Of course, I found myself seated at a table waiting for Beatrice. “Hello Nedra. Glad you could join me for lunch.” She placed her hands to her cheeks and smiled. “I’ve got the afternoon off. How about a girl’s day?”

“I’d love too! What time?”

Beatrice looked at her bracelet watch. “After lunch.” She paused briefly. “My cousin has been in town a few months. He’s going to meet us here for lunch. I’m sure he won’t mind if we cut our lunch short.” Beatrice cast her eyes toward the doorway, “Oh, there he is.”

My eyes fell upon *my* definition of the perfect man, a dark Italian beauty. I couldn’t believe the mental picture floating in my mind. Within seconds, he saw Beatrice sitting with me and moved elegantly toward the table. It must be a family trait. He seemed sophisticated, handsome, prosperous, and secure with himself. I became anxious as he grew closer, bewildered by unexplored desire. When I glanced upward, my hesitant gaze met the hypnotic dark brown eyes of Mathias George.

Immediately, Beatrice introduced me. “Mathias, this is Nedra. She’s a close friend.” Beatrice faced me and mused, “Mathias is divorced,” she teased. “He’s only thirty-two and already looking for wife number four.”

Mathias placed his manicured hand on the chair in front of me. “Well hello, Nedra.” He said with an unmistakable, thick Italian accent. “Could you use some company?”

Sincerity rang out clearly in his voice, while his eyes glimmered with hidden secrets of wild passion. I hardly expected Mathias to flirt with someone like me. Not only am I black, I’m also a well known frump in the social world. From his sexy appearance, Mathias George is not good for any woman. But, I couldn’t control myself, I’m thirsty for his flirtatious attention.

No doubt, his sensual smile and silky demeanor arouses my sleeping anatomy. “You may sit wherever you like,” I admitted intimidated by his boldness.

He pulled out a chair. “Haven’t I seen you before?”

“I’ve been in the newspaper a few times. Maybe you saw me with my husband, Mayor Ruben Barrett.”

“Oh, Ruben Barrett,” he nodded. “Then you have hurt feelings to bury. He treats you like swine!”

Beatrice seemed shocked by his blatant honesty. “Mathias! That isn’t any of your business and it isn’t very nice.”

Mathias turned toward Beatrice. “Cousin,” he replied calmly, glimpsing his nails. “I call it, like I see it.”

Beatrice got up from the table. “You are still rude.” She smiled in my direction. “Please excuse me. I’ve got to take care of a few things before we go.”

I nodded goodbye to Beatrice, reached for my napkin, and turned my attention back to Mathias. “What makes you think I’m trying to camouflage hurt feelings, Mr. George?” I inquired, blotting my lips.

“It is obvious,” he chuckled. “I know women. I’ll bet you eat the same thing each day. You drink the same thing, and you always have something on your mind—your unfaithful husband, perhaps.”

“You’re really good, Mr. George. You should try fortune telling. I hear there’s good money in it.”

Mathias seemed shaken. “Come now, Nedra. I know I am not hearing Mr. George coming from those sweet lips. To my friends, I am Mathias. Any friend of Beatrice is also a friend to me.”

“Thanks Mathias, I could use a good friend.”

Mathias eased back in his chair.

I signed loudly, “We all need friends,” I admitted, forking my salad.

Mathias spoke profoundly, “You are no longer a stranger, but a beautiful black woman whose company I am enjoying. Your name is lovely. It rolls easily off

the tongue.”

“Nedra?” I repeated, stunned that he would notice.

“Mmm, an erotic sounding name. I would whisper it in your ear while in the throes of making love.” He closed his eyes tightly. “Ne-dra, Ne-dra,” he whispered.

“Mathias,” I scolded, lightly blushing, “you’re an animal.”

Mathias held his head in shame, although his gaze moved over the cleavage of my sagging breasts. “I’m sorry. I get carried away in the presence of an ebony beauty. There is something, how you say, *enticing* about a darker skinned woman.” Mathias reached for my bill. “Would I be presumptuous if I paid for your lunch?”

“No, go right ahead,” I stammered, lingering on his open confession for darker skinned women. “My husband doesn’t take me anywhere.”

“Then, he is an ass!” Mathias scorned. “If you were my wife, the sheets would never get cold. Our bedroom would be a love nest for the two of us.”

Sniggering childishly, I realize his lines are rehearsed. “Really. I’ll bet you have a lot of women chasing you. You’re successful, handsome, and smart.”

“I’m only looking for friendship, Nedra.” He shrugged his shoulders. “Sex, is everywhere. Everyone wants to make love to Mathias.” He placed one finger in the air. “But, real friends, I don’t have.”

On the heels of that statement Beatrice returned with her purse and Mathias said goodbye. I watched him walk away, his body moving like sheer

poetry.

Beatrice snapped her fingers before my face. “Nedra. He’s gone, we can leave now.”

Almost breathless, I conceded, “Beatrice, he is simply incredible.”

“That’s a true statement, Nedra.” Beatrice smiled and her cheeks plumped. Even a fake line from a man like Mathias brought hope to my heart.

Chapter Seven

We rode downtown in Beatrice's car. As she drove, she schooled me and I listened intensely. She would make an impact on my life that would change my world forever.

Beatrice flirted with everyone, her genuine smile radiated from her soul. She loved herself and didn't cry over extra pounds, those pounds, she used to her advantage.

We didn't discuss starvation diets, she saw the humor in every situation, and each trial became a learning experience. What God gave her, she used. I have never met a more positive person. Beatrice is regal from the top of her head to the soles of her feet. By the end of the day, she earned the title, 'Queen Bea.'

I didn't mind Beatrice's pep talks. I needed her guidance, so badly. This metamorphous would be a life transformation of my mind, my body, and my spirit.

Beatrice sat patiently in the salon. Periodically, she made suggestions to the stylist. After they finished my hair, Beatrice had someone do my nails, feet and brows. A slightly higher arch in my brows gave a stunning appearance.

When I looked in the mirror I had taken on a new appearance. "Wow!" As

the evening waned we talked about inner beauty. I had no idea that inner beauty is more important than outer beauty. “Start by accepting yourself, Nedra.” She stroked my broad back. “Meditate upon good things. See the world as you want it to be. Forgive whoever needs forgiving and get on with your life.”

Once inside Beatrice’s favorite dress store, she placed me before a mirror, we did make up, bought a great fitting bra, panties and a comfortable body shaper. When we finished, I faced Beatrice. The twinkle in her eyes said, *You look magnificent*. We both had tears in our eyes as I turned meticulously before the full length mirror.



When we returned to the restaurant I stepped out of Bea’s car with more than a new attitude. For the first time in my life my silky hair blew in the wind. New shoes felt good on my feet and instead of lying around my belly, my new bra thrust my ample breasts forward giving them a rounder fuller appearance.

“This is insane,” I muttered, feeling slimmer without a diet. “Impossible!” Standing up straight, I pulled my chin upward. Even though I felt a little self-conscious, I thanked Bea for taking time with me. After sharing a smooch on the cheek and a last farewell I strolled toward my car. Like a voluptuous Amazon, I felt strong, confident and determined.

While getting in my car I observed Mathias sitting at a table outside a little bistro. He glanced from his newspaper and pondered, “Nedra,” he squinted. “Is that you?”

Mathias meant it, and I felt his honesty. He walked toward my car as if spellbound. “What the hell...”

“I got my nails done.” Without hesitation, I displayed them before him. “Do you like them?” I kidded, wiggling my fingers.

Mathias knew better, but he played along. “Nedra. I love them,” he grinned.

“Thank you,” I replied, with a coy wink.

“Would you think I am behaving badly if I asked you to attend a function tonight?”

Surely, I’d faint. Though I’m married, the invitation did give my ego a much needed boost. Suddenly, I caught a glimpse of myself in the glass door of the café. Frowning, I caressed my buoyant hair. “Who am I?” I asked, carelessly thinking aloud.

“My-my,” he groaned softly, shaking his head. “Yes, who are you?”

I turned toward Mathias, my gaze followed a shimmer against the darkness of his hair, his burnished skin looked moist and mellow. Mathias stepped in front of me his large chest blocked the entrance to my car. Looking into my eyes, he slowly and meticulously interlocked his fingers with mine. Simultaneously, he

placed gentle kisses upon my fingertips.

“The function will be over early tonight. Afterward, I promise you a night of ecstasy you’ll never forget.”

Mathias talked as if we were alone, although we had a nosy small-town audience.

Fear loomed in my eyes. Without answering, I broke from Mathias’ much wanted attention. I felt weak and had to get away. I didn’t say goodbye. I leaped in my car, slammed the door and swerved from the curve. Surely, I didn’t want Ruben to get wind of this. When I glanced in my rearview mirror, Mathias stood in the street looking after me. Periodically, I glanced in the rearview mirror as I drove frantically home.

Chapter Eight

When Ruben arrived home, he found me cooking in the kitchen with a silly smirk on my face. My mind wandered miles from the bubbling spaghetti sauce. An intimate encounter with Mathias preoccupied my thoughts and my smug expression gave me away.

Ruben studied my odd appearance. “What’s going on with you,” he asked, grimacing.

Mathias would be the perfect man to make Ruben jealous, an emotion he’d never experienced. I’m really going to have some fun. “Oh nothing,” I hummed. “I’ve decided to attend the banquet tonight, just for kicks.” The new me is yowling to get out and mingle.

We ate our spaghetti in silence. From time to time Ruben would ask for something—anything to break the blissful expression plastered on my face. Cleaning up the kitchen was a breeze. I functioned on autopilot and hardly recalled washing even one dish. Mathias had me floating above the clouds and I never wanted to come down.

That evening, I went to my closet and pulled out that sexy black dress with

the plunging neckline. All along, I felt the dress was too small, but now, it's an amazing fit and perfect for the black tie affair.

I showered and pampered myself with scented oils. As I dressed, Ruben noticed the dramatic change. Hovering over me he lifted and examined my new haircut. Squinting suspiciously, he picked up my perfume bottle. After taking a sniff, he sat the bottle down slowly. "What's really going on, Nedra? You look like you're going someplace really special."

My newfound confidence kicked in. "I'm just going out, that's all. You know—same old boring banquet."

"Am I invited?" He searched my averted eyes, looking for signs of the truth.

"No, you aren't." I replied harshly. "I'm a special guest."

Ruben scowled. "Oh."

I smiled sweetly, remembering Mathias' touch on my love-starved body. When I reached for the container that held my contacts, Ruben cringed.

"You're wearing your contacts tonight?"

"Yes, I am. What of it?"

"Nothing, it's just that you have gorgeous light-brown eyes," he receded, "I don't blame you for showing them off every once in a while."

In six years, Ruben had never mentioned my eyes. For all he cared, I could have been stricken blind. Yes, he had every right to be antsy tonight.

While I applied eye shadow, Ruben kissed my forehead. “My wife is faithful. You look really good. Have a nice time,” he haggled. Being the dog that he is, Ruben decided to take advantage of my absence. Placing his hands in his back pockets he wrangled, “Hey! Ah, Nedra. I’m going over to Dan’s house. We’re going over some papers, okay?”

“Okay,” I replied, gleefully.

Ruben’s eyes took on a curious frown. “Well, uh, uh, have fun okay?”

I beheld the new Nedra in the mirror. Grinning sheepishly I responded, “Oh, I intend to have fun, Ruben Barrett. You can bet your life on that.” I arched a brow to emphasize my statement.

Chapter Nine

When I pulled into the parking lot, I could see that several dignitaries were already inside. A doorman opened the glass door as I walked past. It could have been my imagination, but seemed as if he took a second glance. Standing in the foyer, I drew in a breath, straightened my dress, and walked into the banquet hall. Upon my arrival the room filled with eerie silence, all eyes turned toward the door. If I didn't know any better, I could swear the music also stopped.

Gazing around the large hall, I saw programs and banners with Mathias' picture printed on the front. I was president of almost every club. I was embarrassed; I didn't know about this event. Picking up a program, I felt dense. I had no idea why Mathias is being honored.

I searched the room for Mathias. Like a fine actress, I sought the man who promised me an exquisite evening.

Whispers buzzed around me, but I chose to ignore them. Nothing would ruin my special night. Rude comments drifted from a thick crowd of socialites. Murmuring loudly, Jena folded her arms and declared, "I didn't know she even wore contacts."

“And, I’ve never seen that dress before,” Tina whispered stretching her eyes.

Tonya took a sip of her drink and scoffed, “What shade of lipstick is she wearing?”

“Well,” Jill sneered, her hands on her hips. “I heard she’s been sick with some kind of disease. She’s lost about twenty pounds.”

Frowning, Maria nudged Jill in the ribs. “Does she look *sick* to you?”

Disregarding their petty statements, I found a table and tried to make myself comfortable. Mathias was held in another room, he didn’t come out until time for his speech and he spoke eloquently.



After dinner, Mathias waltzed toward my table and took my hand. As we danced, this hot Italian lover gave me his undivided attention. At that point, I didn’t care that people stared. They must be wondering where my handsome husband is, I’m sure. Ruben’s absence is all a part of my beautiful fantasy. Did I drink too much champagne or is Mathias just that intoxicating?

For the first time in my life I didn’t care who saw me. I danced under the jealous stares of, Jill, Tonya, Tina, Jory, Jena, Maria, Angela, and a few others who slept with my husband. There is no way I’d allow them to steal my thunder, like they stole my man.

In his formal attire, Mathias was as striking as my husband, but in a

different way, Mathias has class. The dinner is over all too soon. While we danced, Mathias slipped me his card key. Other than my sweaty palms, I had no reservation as I waited patiently in his hotel room.

Mathias tapped gently on the door and I rushed to let him in. Once inside he removed his coat, loosened his necktie, grabbed me in his arms and swept me off my feet. Placing my arms around his neck I nuzzled in his fragrant chest. He sat me down on the bed and bestowed a kiss upon my lips. Like magic, I suddenly felt my back pressed against the thick comforter. Is he so smooth that I don't realize I'm being undressed? His hands are tender, his kiss, well worth the wait. Closing my eyes, tears flood my cheeks.

Inside, I felt nervous but excited. When I realized no one had ever taken the time to make me feel wanted, pity surrounded my heart. My yearning for attention had delivered me this far, this splendid night just couldn't end. Closing my eyes tightly, moisture seeped between my lashes and I returned his embrace with fervor. His moist lips discovered the passions Ruben had abandoned. How I needed his glorious touch, faultless intentions could not be wrong, could they?

Feeling dampness on his cheeks, Mathias stopped and held me at a distance. Instantly, I cast my gaze downward in shame. Taking his finger tips, he raised my chin until my teary eyes met his amazing stare. With a grim expression, he searched my eyes and brushed away a tear. "Sweetheart, you are trembling. Are

you sure about this? I have no problem making love to you, but I want it to be something you want, too.”

“Do you want me, Mathias?” I breathed, with quivering lips.

Without speaking Mathias placed his lips on mine, his kiss suggestive of his desire. “Does that answer your question?”

My eyes widened with a certain knowing, while a raging battle took place in my heart and mind. Gently, I pushed Mathias away.

Although Ruben is unfaithful, I couldn’t stoop to his level. Like a dove imprisoned in a cage, Mathias released me into my new way of life. That night, he held me in his arms and we talked. Mathias laughed a lot as the evening waned, I’m sure he enjoys relaxing instead of performing great feats of lovemaking just for posterity.

All of a sudden we heard an urgent knock on the door. It had to be Ruben as my gut became tightly gnarled. Mathias placed his finger to his lips to indicate that I sit quietly. After scrambling to his feet, he walked toward the door and peered out the security view. He nodded that my suspicions are correct. After buttoning his shirt he slid the night latch in place and opened the door. The latch slid and caught securely leaving the door lightly ajar. Mathias then pressed his weight against the door.

As I watched the events unfolding, my stomach wretched. Although I was

relaxed with moral restraints, I didn't want anyone to get hurt. Immediately, I leaped to my feet in protest. Mathias' eyes indicated I sit down and be patient. Through the crack in the door Ruben could clearly see me sitting on the chair. He called to me with a fiery tone, "Nedra. What do you think you're doing? The whole town is talking about us."

Mathias didn't hesitate to address Ruben, his voice firm, menacing and cold. "What do you want, Mr. Barrett?"

Ruben also spoke with authority. "I received a call that my wife is here."

"Oh, really," Mathias said, grinning. "I will ask her if she wishes to see you."

I knew Ruben was at the height of his anger. "What are you saying, man? Of course she wants to see me. I'm her husband."

Confusion held me silent. I didn't understand Mathias' game so I didn't interfere. "You are her husband in name only. You treat her like a pig," he spat, turning to wink his eye at me.

"That's your opinion," Ruben quibbled, "and none of your business."

Reaching for my purse I shuddered, this could get really dangerous. Mathias put out his hand to indicate that I calm down. "Yes, it is my business," he charged, looking through the crack at Ruben. "I know how to appreciate a beautiful woman."

"Beautiful!" Ruben stormed. "Man you'd better open this door." Ruben

slammed his body against the firm latch. “George! If you don’t let my wife go, I’ll call the authorities and have your illegal ass deported.”

Mathias shook his head to deny the charge; he folded his arms and smirked. “Do not threaten me, Mr. Barrett. I know all about you and your harem of lovers.”

Ruben’s eyes became red with rage as he protested. “You can’t use that against me, man!”

Mathias circled his index finger in the air to indicate that Ruben is full of it. “I’m just saying that if you treated your lovely wife like you threat those harlots, your marriage would be wonderful.”

Shoving angrily against the chained door, Ruben called, “You can’t tell me anything about my own wife, man! I know the woman!”

“I know her too,” he insisted, “she has needs, or she would *not* be here with me.”

Upon hearing those words Ruben became solemn, he stopped pushing against the door and his face hardened. “I need to talk to my wife,” he managed, almost inaudibly.

Mathias reached up and unlatched the door. “As you wish, Mayor Barrett.”

Just as soon as Mathias unlatched the door Ruben exhaled. He walked silently into the room and saw me now sitting on the side of the bed. My eyes elevated to take in his agitated appearance. In an instant, something miraculous

happened. He knelt before me on one knee. “Don’t do this, Nedra.” He shook his head. “I’m sorry, baby.” Reaching out he grasped my manicured hand. “I was insensitive to your needs. I was only thinking about myself.”

“Ruben, I...”

“Shut up and listen. Mathias is right,” he whispered. “If I wasn’t such an ass you *wouldn’t* be here.”

“Come home, Nedra. I’ve made a lot to promises to you over the years, but this time, I see myself, as you see me.”

“Ruben, I’m...”

“No, don’t apologize, it’s all my fault. I should have given you what you needed in this relationship.”

With those words spoken, I stood up and threw my arms around my husband. Pressing my forehead to his, I beamed. “That’s all I ever wanted, Ruben Barrett.”

That night marked a turning point in our marriage. As promised, I’m still making changes to suit my well being—I eat right, but I don’t diet. Now, I walk through the park instead of sitting and devouring chilidog after chilidog.

During the day, I find time to meditate. Everyone loves the new me and so do I. Though I still doubt Ruben’s fidelity, he now calls me his sensual goddess. My marriage was saved by the gifted antics and quick wit of Mathias George, but

my mental and physical liberation—I owe to a woman—a woman, I call, Queen
Bea.

The End

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Author Bio

To escape the harsh reality of domestic violence, Empress LaBlaque would write about men who were romantic, devoted and affectionate. As a result, many of these stories were published. Empress considers herself a connoisseur of fine romance and enjoys writing across genres. She is also an advocate for Prevention of Family Violence.

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