

The Park Angel

By

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***Free*editorial** 

Chapter One

Concentrating on his work, a newspaper suddenly appeared upon the desk before him and an angry female voice followed, “What is this?” A huge headline stood out announcing the engagement of Sable Morrow and Michael Jonas.

Looking up from the newspaper, Jack Morrow saw the very angry face of his only daughter Sable. It was obvious she was angry but the way she stood reminded him of her mother when she was angry-hands on hips, red hair the color of fire, eyes sparkling like jade. The very image of her mother. He only wish she could see her now.

Folding his hands over the newspaper he smiled up at her, “My dear daughter, what has you so mad?”

Her eyes were like green daggers now, “This is not happening!” She pointed to the newspaper on his desk, “Is this your idea of a joke?”

Jack lifted the newspaper in his hands. Squinting his eyes as he did not have his glasses, he tried to make out the words before him, “Ah, looks like Michael finally made his move.”

Sable grabbed the newspaper from her father’s grasp, “Made his move? This has your fingerprints all over this one, Dad. Call it off-Now!” Her raised voice made him realize she would not go through with this unless forced to do so.

Smiling up at Sable like he did so many times before, he replied, “No.”

Surprised at his response, she took a step backward, “What do you mean no?”

Slowly, he rose to his feet. Keeping both hands flat on his desk, he kept his voice low and calm to put his point across to her, “Michael asked me for your

hand, Sable. I agreed. The union of our two families will do both families a world of good. This marriage will take place at a reasonable time.”

“You cannot be serious! Are we living in the dark ages now?” She fumed.

Jack let out a soft chuckle, “Dark ages? No, but I am still your father.”

“I am over 18 which makes me an adult now. I should be able to make my own decisions-good or bad!” She clenched her fists by her sides.

“You are right my dear but since you decided you no longer wanted to date Michael, I had to make the arrangements myself.”

She lowered her voice to an acceptable tone, “Do you even know why I broke up with him? Do you even care?”

“At this point-no. All I know is this marriage will give us more power than the arranged marriage of your brother did.”

“You fixed it where Jared had to marry Beth?” She watched as he slowly nodded his head, “I should have known. You always have your fingers in everything, don’t you? Was it arranged for you to marry Mom, too?”

Jack stood upright and lifted his chin in pride, “It was and I must say, I believe we had a wonderful marriage.”

“Not everyone is meant to be with the one they are arranged to marry.” She folded her arms over her chest in defiance.

He shrugged, “True but I loved your mother. I still love her even though she’s been gone for ten years now. I see her in you every day. You have her red hair, her green eyes, her temper.”

“I know,” she held up her hand to stop him, “I am just like my mother-big surprise.” She crumpled the newspaper and stuffed it into her purse that hung over her shoulder, “Look, let me think this over. I need to take a walk. I’ll see you tonight for supper.” She turned toward the door to leave.

He stopped her, “Is this conversation over?”

Keeping her back to him as she opened the office door, she replied, “For now. We may finish it over supper.”

After she disappeared through the door, he resumed his work.

It seemed to be unusually cold today as she strolled through the local park. Her large coat reached her knees and the fur lined collar helped but even with her hands stuffed into the pockets she still felt cold. The wind blowing through her hair made it appear her head was on fire but it certainly didn't feel that way.

Not many people were in the park. She would occasionally see a small child or a loving couple sitting on a bench but not very often. Mostly the only sound around her was the sound of her boots as she walked on the concrete sidewalks. That was fine by her as so much ran through her mind. How could she marry Michael-the jerk?

At only 19, she was still thought of as a child by her father and her brother. They only told her what she needed to know. Now she finds out her brother was arranged to marry Beth Owens who now was expecting their first child. Her own parents were arranged to be married and even though she was young when she lost her mother, her parents seemed to be so much in love. Even after her death, Jack took it much harder than either her or her brother.

Nothing made any sense. She always thought arranged marriages were the worst way to be 'stuck' with another person. Her Aunt Sophia was arranged to marry Barry Kindle several years ago. Now Barry was in prison for her murder. Her cousin Deidre was arranged to marry Harold Martin who turned out to be gay. Now they live separate lives in the same household.

Sable loathed Michael Jonas. She only dated him for a short time to keep her father off her back and only while they were in high school. She had her share of male admirers. Why couldn't he pick one of them? Like Dalton or Mitch-they always liked her. Not the self-absorbed Michael Jonas!

As her mind wandered, she had no idea how far she had walked. She found herself stopped before a statue of an angel. The statue stood about nine feet tall. She looked up into the angelic face staring down at her. It was weather worn and discolored. She reached out and touched the outstretched hand of the angel. It was cold but it seemed to give her a little comfort to touch it.

The statue actually looked like her mother.

As she held the angel's hand, she looked beyond the wings behind the statue and saw an old church. It too was weather worn but seemed to have a welcoming feel to it. She stepped around the base of the angel to climb the steps of the church. One by one, she came closer to the large wooden doors. She pushed on one of the doors and slowly opened it. A large creak came from the door as it opened.

Once she was inside, she closed the door behind her. Stepping inside she could see a large statue of Jesus at the pulpit several feet before her. She slowly stepped forward. The church was well lit at the pulpit but at the back of the church it was not lit up so well. She could not see if someone sat in the back.

All she could hear was her own footsteps until a voice made her jump, "What brings you here?"

Her hand over her heart she turned to see a priest sitting in one of the pews at the back of the room, "You scared me."

The young priest stood and walked toward her, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to." He extended his hand to her, "I am Joseph. My parishioners call me Joe."

She grasped his unusually warm hand in her cold one, "Nice to meet you Father Joe."

He lifted one finger, "Just Joe. I am so young most people feel funny calling me father so just call me Joe."

She felt better just by seeing his warm smile, "Alright, Joe. My name is Sable."

Recognition lit up his eyes, "As in 'Morrow'?"

"That's me." With such an unusual name, she knew anyone who ever heard it would remember it.

The priest motioned for her to sit in the pew next to him, "Is there something on your mind, Sable?"

She eased down where he motioned for her to sit and he followed to sit

beside her, "I have so much on my mind I don't know where to start."

"Why not at the beginning?" He looked down at his watch, "Oh my goodness."

She noticed he looked at his watch, "Is there something wrong?"

"I'm sorry Sable but I have a wedding to perform in about an hour. I do have a solution." He stood and walked to a door to their right. He opened the door and called to someone inside. He must be speaking to another priest-she thought to herself.

Soon, Joe disappeared behind the door and another young man appeared in his place. They actually looked alike. Maybe they were related. This man was not wearing a priest collar. He wore dark jeans and a blue T-shirt. He had a warm smile. Sitting down beside her, he extended his hand to her, "Hi, I'm Jake. Joe told me to sit with you."

She took his hand and felt how warm and soft it was. A welcoming handshake. She smiled at him, "I'm Sable."

Leaning back against the pew next to her, "Sable, beautiful name. How did you get such an unusual name?"

"My mother heard it was the name of a type of fur and liked it."

"I like unusual names. Seems to give the person a sense of mystery in a way."

"Sounds like you're sort of a romantic, Jake."

He smiled, "Is that so bad?"

She chuckled, "No-I guess not." She pointed to the door she entered through, "I was looking at the statue outside. How old is it?"

He looked up at the door, "Oh, I don't know for sure. Maybe 100 or 150 years old. It was here when I came here as a kid. All I know is what she was named about 100 years ago."

"She has a name? What is it?" She seemed excited to hear it.

"Everyone calls her angel Marjorie."

Suddenly her face turned white, “What did you say?”

“The angel outside-her name is Marjorie. Is there something wrong?” He noticed she seemed worried about something.

Without a word, she jumped to her feet and almost ran for the door. After jerking the door open, she didn’t stop to close it. She ran out the door and after momentarily stopping by the statue she ran away.

Jake followed her to the door and once he reached the door, she was gone. What was wrong with her? Something obviously troubled her. She was troubled even before he told her the name of the angel statue but she was upset by the name. Did that name mean something to her? If it did, what?

Sable ran until she reached her home at the edge of town-several blocks from the church. Stopping at the steps leading up to her home, she tried to catch her breath. The cold making her breath look like smoke she watched her breathing as it finally slowed down. Then she realized there were tears on her cheeks. She wiped at the wetness on her cheek and looked at her wet hand. So much was happening and she was hearing so many disturbing things in one day.

She slowly made her way up the steps. She dreaded walking through that door. She spent most of her day walking in the cold. She knew her father was home by now. Sometimes he would go into town but not today.

She eased through the door so no one could hear her come in. After closing the door and tiptoeing toward the staircase, she could hear Jack talking to Jared in his study. Why was Jared here? She stepped closer to the study door that was open only about an inch. She peeked into the door and saw Jack pacing the floor with a cigar between his lips. Jared sat in one of the leather chairs with his legs crossed.

Jared held his hand up to Jack, “Dad, she’s 19 now. You can’t control her like she’s 12 anymore.” They were talking about her.

Jack still paced around the room, “She’s strong willed like her mother. She will marry Michael Jonas! I will make sure of it if I have to cut her off.” She

gasped-would he really cut her off? What would she do with no money?

Jared spoke to his father, "Look, you did a good job with me. You did great with Mom. Sable is not like us. She has a mind of her own-not to say we don't but she won't go willingly to the alter like you want her to."

Jack slammed his hand on the hard desk. The action made Sable jump but she would not move from this spot while they were discussing her. He continued with a raised voice, "I have made my decision and she will do as she is told. Case closed!"

Jared lifted his hands in defeat and placed them on the arms of his chair to lift himself to a standing position, "Alright but I still think you are making a mistake."

As Jared would have left the room, Jack stopped him, "Wait. What do you mean by 'mistake'?"

Jared slowly turned to face his father, "She dated Michael for years. Did you even bother to ask her why they broke up?"

Jack rubbed his chin in thought, "No, I didn't. Do you know something you're not telling me?"

Jared shrugged, "I don't know anything. It just seems to me that if two people dated as long as they have and then suddenly break up-there had to be a reason."

Sable thought back to that night over a month ago when she broke up with Michael. Sure there was a reason! She just wasn't sure she wanted to share that reason with her father.

Jack leaned forward as he placed both hands flat on the desk, "Do you know that reason?" He asked again.

Jared shrugged again, "No, I don't, but I'm sure Sable does. Why don't you go ask her? Maybe even have an adult conversation with her. You may just find your daughter has grown up." Without waiting for any kind of response, Jared walked out the door.

Luckily, Sable hid behind a wall beside the door. He didn't see her as he

walked to the front door and left.

Sable slowly walked up the stairs so Jack would not hear her. She only hoped she could make it to her room before he stepped out of his study.

Jack cleared his throat loudly and Sable jumped. She turned to see her father standing at the bottom of the stairs with his hands clasped together before him, "How long have you been there, Sable?"

She gave him a nervous smile, "Hi. I took a walk and just got back. I was just headed to my room."

He still had that stern look on his face-seemed that was the look he always had with her, "Not now. Come in here," he motioned to his study, "I think we need to talk." He disappeared into the study, expecting her to follow.

She slowly stepped back down the stairs and walked into the study. Jack stood with his back to her staring into the fire that roared in the brick fireplace in one corner of the room. He must have known she was there because without looking behind him, he replied, "Close the door. Don't want any eavesdropping."

Sable slowly closed the door. She made sure it was completely closed. She even turned the key to make sure the door stayed closed and locked.

Jack still stood with his back to her-his hands clasped behind him-as he spoke, "I think we should talk about your upcoming nuptials."

Still standing by the door, she stood her ground, "I don't want to marry Michael."

He turned to look at her-that stern look still there, "I know you don't." He stepped over to the desk to pick up his cigar that sat in an ashtray. He lifted it to his lips, "It has been brought to my attention that there may be a reason for that." As the cigar's flame went out, he lifted a lighter to relight it. As he puffed on the cigar, he asked, "Would you like to elaborate on that?"

Sable nervously wrung her hands, "I'm not sure."

She still wore the huge fur lined coat. Jack motioned to the chair Jared recently vacated, "Take off that coat, my dear. Have a seat, get comfortable."

She slowly stepped to the chair and removed her coat. After draping the coat over the back of the chair, she sat down to face her father who still stood before her with his cigar between his teeth.

“Tell me, what was it that broke you two apart?” He settled on the corner of the desk.

She couldn’t look up at him. She knew he would probably force her to marry Michael anyway, no matter what she told him. Staring down at her hands, “We were just two different people. I don’t think I even like him-let alone love him.”

“Nonsense, you’ll grow to love him. That’s what happened between me and your mother.” He seemed so proud of that fact.

She knew if she fought his decision now, he would just fight her back. Michael’s family was well known and wealthy. Barry Jonas-Michael’s father-was in the running for Senator. If the Morrow name was connected with the Jonas name, that would be good in Jack’s eyes but not Sable’s.

Looking up at the large painting of her mother that always hung behind the desk. Her slight smile gave Sable a small hope in her heart. Her long red hair was tied atop her head. She wore a bright green dress and her hands were gently folded in her lap. Such a lovely woman. How could she live with such an unreasonable man?

Lifting her chin to her father, she asked, “Can I ask you something that is not on this subject?”

Jack shrugged, “What is it?”

“I walked by the church by the park. Why does that old angel outside the church have Mother’s name? It even looked a little like her.” That fact weighed heavy on her mind.

Jack took the cigar from his lips and put it in the ashtray. “That’s a story I heard a long time ago. I guess you should know.” He folded his hands in his lap, “Your mother was named after her mother and her mother before her. That angel was carved by your own great grandfather who named it after his wife-your great grandmother-before they were married. They all had the same

name and look a lot alike. That's why that angel has your mother's name and her looks."

"Why was I not named Marjorie?" Seemed to her she would have been to keep up the tradition.

Jack shrugged, "Your mother wanted you to have a 'different' name. She said she always lived in someone's shadow. She didn't want that for you."

She still felt she lived in her brother's shadow. She always felt she lived under her father's thumb as well. How could she get away from him? How could she get out of a marriage she did not want?

Sable stood slowly. "I would like to go to my room now. I want to think about my upcoming marriage."

"I hope you will think about this. You know it will be good for all of us to be a part of the Jonas family."

"I know." Turning slowly, she walked to the door. She placed her hand on the door knob and stopped. Without looking at him, she finished with, "I still need to talk about this but later." She left the room and made her way to her room at the top of the staircase.

Sable laid on her bed facing the ceiling for hours. So many things ran through her mind. She weighed the pros and cons of marrying Michael. She couldn't sleep all night. How could she get out of such a marriage and get out from under her father's rule?

Suddenly like a lightning bolt an idea hit her. She looked at her alarm clock-it read 8am. She jumped from the bed and shed her nightgown. She slipped into her blue jeans, a white T-shirt, and a pink sweater. Slipping her feet into her fur lined boots, she grabbed her coat and almost ran out the door. In seconds she was down the staircase and out the front door.

Chapter Two

Almost running, Sable walked to the park then to the church. She stopped in front of the angel and looked up at the face. She still saw her mother there. Maybe she could find an answer inside but only if she could find Jake.

She made her way up the steps to the front door. She opened the large door-once again it creaked loudly. Stepping inside she closed the door. As she stepped inside, the priest Joe met her by the pews, “Good to see you again. What brings you back so early?”

She wasn’t sure if he meant ‘early’ to mean in the morning or so soon, “I spoke with ‘Jake’ last night. Is he around?”

Joe smiled slightly, “Jake is my brother. He was only here last night to help out. He’s not here all the time.”

“Where is he? I need to talk to him.” She seemed anxious.

Joe rubbed his chin, “Is it important?”

Her excitement began to show on her face as she replied, “Yes, yes, it’s important. I need to talk to him.”

Joe held up one finger, “Give me a minute. I’ll be right back.” He disappeared into the room Jake came out of the night before. About five minutes later he came out of the room and approached her, “Okay, he said he would meet you right outside by the angel statue in about ten minutes. It’ll take him that long to get here.”

Sable smiled, “Thank you.” Joe turned to leave.

Looking at her watch, she saw it was only 8:15am. That meant he would be here at 8:25am. She nervously waited in the warm church. She began to pace back and forth. Standing by the door, she looked at her watch-8:19. Time seemed to stand still.

Hoping she wouldn't miss him, she walked outside and stood by the statue. She watched and waited. Jake finally began to walk toward her. Relief filled her. His warm smile made her feel warm inside. Such a good looking man. He wore jeans and a heavy dark blue coat. Even his brown wavy hair seemed perfect.

Jake stopped just before her, "Hi, I heard you wanted to talk to me?"

She smiled, "Yes, I need to talk to you some place warm."

He put his hand on her elbow to turn her toward the church, "Let's go inside."

She pulled away from him, "No. Let's go to a restaurant." She wanted to talk to him at little more public place, "I'm hungry. How about some breakfast."

He nodded, "I could eat."

"Great. There's a cute little café around the corner." She lifted her thumb to point in the direction of the café.

"I know the place. Been there a few times. They have good food."

She began to walk, "Let's go."

As they walked, he was curious, "What is it you want to talk to me about?"

She wanted to wait, "I will explain everything once we are in the café." He shrugged and continued on by her side.

They stepped inside the café. Cute little place that wasn't very big but there were people here. Some at the bar and some at the tables eating. Sable quickly steered Jake toward a table at the back of the café. She sat facing the door and he sat in the booth across from her.

A waitress immediately placed menus in front of them and asked, "Can I get you something to drink?"

Sable said, "I'll have a big glass of orange juice."

Jake smiled, "Black coffee." The waitress disappeared. Jake placed his clasped hands atop the table, "So, what's on your mind?"

Sable looked around to make sure they would not be eavesdropped on. Once she was satisfied, she replied, "I have something to offer you."

"Offer me? What is it?" He narrowed his eyes.

Before she could reply, the waitress returned with their drinks. They placed their orders and Sable continued once the waitress left, "I want to offer you some money."

Jake leaned back and held up his hands, "What? Money for what?"

Sable whispered, "Calm down, it's not what you think." She looked around again to make sure he didn't cause any unwanted attention. Finally she replied, "I want you to marry me."

"Wait, I'm not a priest. That's my brother."

"Not as a priest-as a husband."

His face went white. Was she really asking him this question? "How did you know I wasn't a priest to begin with?"

"I met your brother. He wore a collar. You did not." She noticed how nervous he became, "Just keep your wits with you. I am offering to pay you."

He ran a hand over his face, "Pay me? To marry you? Look, you're a pretty girl. I'm sure you could find someone you know who would be more than willing to marry you-with or without money."

She released a breath to calm down some, "I thought of that. If you knew my father, you would know why I can't do that." With the influence her father had, no one she knew would go against him. All the more reason to ask someone he didn't know and probably couldn't influence in any way.

"I know who your father is. I know who you are. Aren't you supposed to marry some guy named Michael?"

There it was-her reason, "Yeah. That was my father's doing. He threatened to cut off my money if I didn't marry him."

"Wait. How will you give me any money if he cuts it off?"

She leaned back against the back of the booth, "I have my own money

saved up. You can have all of it if you will marry me so I won't have to marry Michael."

The waitress appeared with their food. After placing all the plates on the table with the ticket under his plate, she left.

Sable grabbed the ticket from under his plate before he could. He replied, "I should pay that."

She put the ticket in the collar of her sweater to make it look like she put it in her bra, "Still want it? Come get it."

He released a breath, "How exactly would this work? I'm sure your father would stop it before we could actually get married."

She smirked as she folded her arms over her chest, "Not if we were already married."

"Touché." He took a sip of his coffee. "Okay, how much will you give me?"

"I have about Twelve thousand in my savings. It's yours if you marry me today."

This was all so confusing to him, "If your father is going to cut you off, don't you want to keep that money?"

She studied him through narrowed lids, "You're smarter than I realized."

"Thank you-I think."

She leaned forward, her hands flat on the table, she gave him a serious look, "Either you marry me now or I find some total stranger who will take my money and marry me."

Jake leaned forward so his nose almost touched hers, "But I 'am' a stranger."

She spoke softly as they were so close, "Help me."

He leaned back against the booth and folded his arms over his chest, "If I do marry you, what then?"

She sat back and shrugged, "I haven't thought that far ahead. I guess we

tell my father and let the pieces fall where they may.”

Jake stared out the window to his right. He watched a woman walking her dog-a small furry little dog with a tiny sweater. Not far away stood a man smoking a cigarette. The smoke seemed to swirl around his head as he took each puff and blew the smoke out. He could see the church in the distance. What would Joe say when he told him? He would probably get an ear full from him. Since Joe was older than him, he would definitely share his opinion.

He ran a hand down his face then pushed his untouched plate to the side. He clasped his hands together on the table where his plate had been, “Okay, I’ll do it but only because I don’t want you finding some jerk who will just take your money and run off.”

She smiled, “I’m glad you decided to help me.”

He held up one finger, “I have a condition.”

Skeptical, she narrowed her eyes and asked, “What condition?”

He cleared his throat and looked around to make sure the waitress and any other people in the café were not listening in on their conversation. Then he leaned forward, “You keep your money. I don’t want it.”

“You don’t want it?” What did he want?

“No, I don’t want it. What I do want if I marry you is we live as husband and wife. Nothing more-nothing less.”

She thought for a moment, “Husband and wife? You mean sleep in the same bed?”

He shrugged, “Among other things.”

She wasn’t sure about this ‘condition’. That was not part of the bargain. Did he mean ‘sex’? Of course he did. Why else would he say that? Would they have children together?

She thought long and hard. Jake just sat back and watched a gamut of emotions cross her face. Fear, concern, confusion, and so many emotions he couldn’t count them all. He just sat back and waited.

That smug look on his face made her want to slap him. He was right, though, in order for this charade to be believable, they would have to play the part as if it were not an act. Finally she relented, “Okay, you win. We will be married and live as husband and wife.”

Not long after Sable left the house, a knock came on the front door. Their servant Andrew answered the door and there stood Michael Jonas. Andrew asked, “May I help you?”

Michael answered, “I would like to speak to Jack Morrow please.”

Andrew motioned for Michael to enter the home. Once inside, Andrew closed the door and said, “I’ll see if he can see you. Your name please.”

Michael replied, “Michael Jonas.” Andrew nodded and headed for Jack’s study.

Michael couldn’t hear what was being said but moments later, Jack appeared in the doorway as Andrew left, “Michael, please come in.” He motioned for Michael to join him in the study. After he entered the room, he motioned toward a chair, “Please have a seat.”

“Thank you for seeing me.” Michael took the chair Jack motioned toward.

Jack took his seat behind the desk, “What brings out here, my boy?”

Settling in the chair, Michael wasn’t sure how to begin this conversation, “I saw the paper this morning.”

Jack smiled at his handy work, “Yes, I took it upon myself to do the inevitable.”

Michael smiled, “So you talked to Sable?”

He nodded, “Yes, we talked extensively. She says she doesn’t want to marry you but I of course insisted.”

“Even after what happened? I must say you are a better man than I would have been.”

Confused, he narrowed his brows, “After what happened?”

“I’m sure Sable told you about our break up.”

Once again he nodded, “She did.”

“Well, I am very sorry for what happened. It just sort of happened without thinking about the consequences.” His hands lifted with the palms facing the ceiling.

More confusion. Jack had no idea what the boy was talking about, “I’m sorry, Michael, you’ll have to speak more clearly. You seem to be talking in circles.”

Seeing the confusion written on his face, Michael finally realized he had no idea why he and Sable broke up, “I’m sorry. I assumed....obviously she didn’t....I guess I should explain.”

Jack clasped his hands together on top of the large desk, “Please do. I’m listening.”

“This is really something Sable should tell you.” He rose to leave.

Jack stopped him and pointed to the chair, “Sit back down.” He waited for Michael to sit down before continuing, “Tell me what it is you seem to be talking about.”

Now Michael began to get nervous. It was written all over him. He thought Sable spilled all the details that awful night. “It was cold.”

“It’s always cold. Go on.” Jack rolled his wrist to indicate he wanted him to continue.

“I was home alone. I wanted someone to talk to. I called my friend Sam who wasn’t home.”

Frustration began to build, “Get on with it, boy.”

“I called my next door neighbor Kelly to come sit with me since no one else was home. She came over and at first we just talked.”

Jack saw where this was going and held up a hand to stop him. He ran his hand down his face before saying, “Did Sable catch you with this other girl?”

Michael swallowed hard, “Yes, she did.”

“Just tell her nothing happened.” Jack assumed he only kissed the girl.

“I can’t say that.” He rubbed his sweaty palms on his jeans.

“Why on Earth not?”

“Because she caught us in bed together.” He spoke softly but Jack still heard him.

Now Jack saw red. “She caught you in your room?”

Michael held up his hands, “No, nothing like that. We were naked on the living room floor.”

Jack put his hand over his eyes, “Oh dear Lord.” Trying to remain calm, he placed both hands flat on the desk. He looked at his wrinkled hands-he knew if he looked at Michael he would likely jump over the desk to strangle him, “I suggest you leave my home now. Never return here again.”

Rising to his feet, Michael turned to leave but stopped, “Does this mean the engagement is off?” Michael watched as Jack’s hands began to form into fists-still on the desk. He knew he should get out of there now. He practically ran out the front door.

Chapter Three

It took most of the day to do what they needed to do. Jake and Sable went to the local courthouse to get a marriage license. After that they went back to the church to find Joe. Joe had many things he had to say about their rapid decision. He eventually married them-with reservations. They returned to the local courthouse to file their license. As for rings, Sable had the rings she found in her mother's old jewelry box. There had been two that matched perfectly and would work at wedding rings. They appeared to be very old. She assumed they had been her parent's rings. She hoped they were not family heirlooms.

As they stood outside the courthouse, Sable took in a deep breath then released it, "I guess all we need to do now is tell my father."

Jake grimaced, "How do you think he'll take it."

Now Sable grimaced, "Not well, I'm afraid."

Jake offered her his elbow, "Well, I guess it's now or never."

She slipped her hand under his elbow and placed it on the top of his arm, "How about never?"

He laughed, "We have to tell him sometime." He had such a great laugh. Jake turned serious, "I do want to ask you something."

"Just one thing?"

"Among others. Why did you run away when we talked about the angel statue?"

Embarrassed, she replied, "It scared me. I thought the statue looked just like my mother. Then when you said the statue was named Marjorie, I really got scared. That's my mother's name."

“Oh.” He was surprised.

“My father explained it to me. My mother, my grandmother, and my great grandmother all had the same name. My great grandfather carved the statue and named it after his wife.”

“Your great grandmother.”

“Yes. I guess shouldn’t have run away like that but I had so much on my mind.”

“I imagine so.” He placed his opposite hand on hers, “Maybe now things will get better.”

“I hope you’re right.” She placed her head on his upper arm as they walked. She wanted to put her head on his shoulder but he was so much taller than her.

Before she realized it, they stood at the foot of the steps leading to her home. Jake could feel her tremble under his touch. He wanted to offer her comfort but didn’t know how. He allowed her to stand there for a several seconds to collect herself. Finally when she lifted her head and breathed in and out a large gulp of air, he asked, “You ready?”

She gave him a nervous smile, “As ready as I’ll ever be.” They slowly ascended the steps to enter her home.

Once inside, she shed her coat and tossed it over a loveseat in the front hall. She seemed to tiptoe toward the room at the bottom of the stairs. Peeking inside, she turned to look at Jake with a relieved look on her face, “He’s not in his study.”

Jake looked confused, “He spend all his time in there?”

As she walked toward him, she replied, “Not always but that’s usually where he is if he’s home.”

Still standing by the front door, he asked, “Now what?”

She shrugged, “I guess we have a lot to talk about. For instance, where will we live? Here? Do you have a place?”

Keeping his face emotionless, he replied, "I do have a place but not around here. I'm only here to visit my brother and I'm staying in a hotel. I actually live in Richmond."

"Richmond?" That was in Virginia. Her home was here in North Carolina. She wasn't sure she liked the idea of living so far from her family. "Would you consider living here?"

Jake chuckled, "I believe you're supposed to live where your husband lives-no matter where that may be."

She chewed her lip, "I guess you're right." She looked around for Andrew. Stepping to the bottom of the stairs, she looked up and called for him, "Andrew! Where are you?"

The older man stepped from the room to Jake's left. From the table he could see from where he stood, he could tell it was the dining room. Andrew replied, "I am here, Miss."

Sable walked over to the man, "Andrew, where is my father?"

The man seemed to show no emotion or anything on his face at any time, "He is in the kitchen eating a sandwich." As Sable would have walked by him, he grabbed her arm to stop her, "Your father had a visitor today while you were gone."

"Who was it?"

"I believe his name was Michael Jonas."

Fear and frustration covered her features, "He was here?" Andrew nodded. She placed her fingers on her lips. He couldn't read the emotions that seemed to fly over her face and through her eyes. She looked at Jake, "Stay here. I need to talk to him first."

Jake replied, "I'll be here if you need me." He watched her disappear into the dining room.

Sable slowly made her way to the kitchen behind the dining room. She pushed on the swinging door that led to the kitchen. Her father stood by the stove eating his sandwich. He looked up as he noticed the door opening. He

saw her enter the room and in mid bite he stopped and put his sandwich on a plate on the counter. Turning fully to face her he replied, “Michael came to see me today.”

She looked down at her hands then back up at him, “Andrew told me.”

Jack stepped forward to grab her shoulders with both hands, “Why didn’t you tell me what happened?”

“I didn’t think you would believe me. Even so, I was afraid you would still make me marry him.”

He gathered her in a hug, “My dear, I would never have let you marry someone who has cheated even before marriage.”

She didn’t know what to do. Her father almost never hugged her. The last time he hugged her was at her high school graduation.

Feeling how stiff she seemed, he stopped hugging her and looked down into her face. “You seem a little nervous. Is something wrong? I have already called off the engagement. You don’t have to marry Michael now.”

She couldn’t look him in the face so she bowed her head to look at her hands as she wrung them nervously, “I know that now. I just have a surprise for you.”

Cupping his hand under her chin and lifting so he could see her face, “A surprise? I hope it’s a good one.”

She gave him a nervous smile, “I hope so.” She took his hand in hers and turned toward the door, “It’s out here. Come on.”

She led him out of the kitchen and through the dining room. Jake stood before the large oak door that led outside. Anxiously waiting her return, he stood alone with his hands in his pockets. Removing one hand he extended it to Jack, “Hello, Sir, my name’s Jake.”

Jack clasped his hand, “Hello, Jake. Do I know you? You look familiar.”

Jake smiled, “You may know my father, Daniel Shane.”

Jack’s face showed recognition, “Danny is your father?”

Jake nodded, "He is."

Confused, Sable asked, "You know his father?"

"Of course I do." He released Jake's hand and kept staring at him, "He is a very influential man." He remembered the man with admiration.

Sable thought to herself, 'That has to be one point in our favor'. She finally replied, "That's good, right?"

Jack smiled-one of his rare smiles, "Yes, it is. I am glad to have you in my home. What brings you to my abode?"

Jake looked at Sable-Jack's eyes still on him. Sable answered his question, "We were married this afternoon."

Shocked, Jack looked at Sable, "Married?" Calming himself, he shook his head, "I guess I brought this on by wanting you to marry Michael. This was my fault."

Sable went to stand by Jake and grabbed his arm, "Nevertheless, we're married now."

Jack rubbed his chin, "I need to think. Sable, why don't you and your," he pointed to Jake, "new husband go up to your room. I'll meet you up there in a minute." They headed for the staircase when Jack replied, "Don't get too 'comfortable', I don't want to walk into anything." He watched the two walk up the stairs as he went to his study.

Once they stepped inside her room, Jake could tell this was the room of a girl but it seemed like the room of a young girl. The canopied bed was completely pink-even the bed clothes. The large armoire in the corner was painted pink with flowers. The three windows-two on either side of the bed and one on the other side of the room-had pink lace curtains. Even the huge rug under the bed was a furry pink.

She looked over her shoulder at Jake, "Excuse the way my room looks. I hate pink but my father won't let me change it."

"Looks like he still thinks of you as his little girl."

She laughed, "Yeah, he does."

Jake removed his coat and tossed it on the bed just before sitting next to it. The bed was very comfortable. He bounced a little to see just how comfortable.

Sable sat next to him, "I guess this is where we'll sleep when we visit."

"The bed feels so soft. I bet you sleep well here." He bounced a little to test it.

She shrugged, "Sometimes. Sometimes I just lay here and think."

"Think about what?"

"Everything-nothing. It depends."

A knock sounded on the door. Sable called out, "Come in."

Jack stepped in and had that rare smile still plastered on his face. He clasped his hands together like he was excited, "I have a great idea, kids. I want to give you a wedding gift."

Jake held up a hand, "That's really not necessary."

Jack replied, "Please, let me do this. I want to give your two a honeymoon."

Sable was confused by his generosity, "A honeymoon? Where?"

"How does Miami sound?"

Sable was speechless. Jake found his voice, "What do you have in mind?"

"Well, I have a friend who runs one of the biggest hotels in Miami. I can get you reservations and give you some money for things like food, sightseeing, and whatever."

Jake held up a hand, "The reservations is all we need."

Jack waved a hand, "I know you have money but I want to do this. You know, a gift for the wedding."

"When would we leave?" Sable wanted to know.

"I'll let you know. I need to get everything ready. May be able to leave as soon as tomorrow." He turned to leave, "You two stay here tonight. Dinner's

at six. I'll let you know about everything then." Before they realized it, he was gone.

What was happening? Sable was more confused than ever. She thought her father would blow the roof off the house when he found out she was married-to a total stranger. How did her father know his father? She had to have some answers. As Jake still sat on the bed, she stood before him with her hands on her hips, "What is going on here? How does my father know your father?"

Jake looked her up and down-tight jeans over slim hips and waist, pink sweater covering full breasts, long flowing red hair-she was beautiful. For the first time, he realized how lucky he was to be married to her. Finally he shrugged, "My father is a congressman."

Sable threw her hands in the air, "I should have known." Dropping her hands by her sides, she replied, "That's why my father is so happy about me marrying you."

Jake shrugged again, "I guess so. You never asked me about me or my family."

She tried to calm down, "I knew the priest was your brother. I assumed he was your only family."

He lifted his palms, "Like I said, you never asked." He reached forward and took one of her soft hands into his much larger one, "Your father puts a lot into a name, doesn't he?"

"Yes, he does. That's why he wanted me to marry Michael. Now it seems I picked someone else he would have picked for me."

"Is that good or bad?"

"Good-bad-I don't know." She put her free hand over her eyes, "This is so confusing."

He pulled on her hand. He moved her so she could sit on his lap, "We can make this work. Who knows maybe we'll even stay married for several years."

She wrapped her arms around his neck, “I’m not sure how this could work.”

“Just let the chips fall where they may.”

They talked for hours. They talked about their future, their honeymoon, and both their families. He learned about her mother, her brother, and more about her father. She learned about how he left home at 18 and went to college in Richmond-that’s why he still lives there. He makes a living as a lawyer-he had his own money. His father still lives in Maryland and yes, he is a congressman. Daniel Shane. Jack called him Danny so he obviously knew the man. Why had she not heard the name before?

Before they realized it, it was dinner time. They made their way to the dining room. Jake sat next to Sable after he held the chair when she sat down. They waited a few seconds for Jack to take his seat at the head of the table. He smiled at Jake, “Hope you don’t mind but I invited my son and his wife to join us.” That was when Jared and a very pregnant Beth sat across from Sable and Jake.

Jared smiled at Sable, “Dad told us about you getting married, Sable. I had to see this.”

Sable gave him a stern look, “Just shut up, Jared.”

Beth smiled as she picked up her water glass, “Congratulations Sable.” Then she took a sip of water.

Sable smiled, “Thank you, Beth.” She always liked Beth. Sweet girl. She did not see what she saw in Jared. Sable and Jared always fought growing up-she guessed because they were siblings.

Jared introduced himself to his new brother-in-law, “I’m Jared-Sable’s brother.” He motioned toward Beth, “This is my wife Beth.” She nodded toward Jake. Then he placed his hand on Beth’s tummy, “This is soon to be my son Tanner.”

Jake smiled, “Nice to meet all of you. Even little Tanner. How much longer do you have?”

Beth smiled as she rubbed her tummy, "Another six weeks."

Light conversation continued as they ate. No one touched on any difficult subjects. They wanted to get to know their new family member. They all learned of his father and his brother. He did talk about some embarrassing things he and Joe did as kids. Giving them all a good laugh.

Once the dinner was finished, they said their good-byes to Jared and Beth as they went home. Jack turned to Jake and Sable-still sitting to his right, "I called my friend in Miami. I made you reservations for tomorrow night and three nights after that."

Jake asked, "Four total?"

Jack smiled, "Yes, four nights. Is that enough?"

"Sure, it is." Jake could use a vacation.

"Great. I got you two plane tickets leaving from Charlotte tomorrow morning at nine." Knowing they would have to be taken to Charlotte-80 miles away-he continued, "I have arranged for Andrew to take you to the airport at 7:30."

Jake smiled, "Thank you, Sir."

Jack held up his hand to Jake, "Call me Jack." Jake nodded. Jack turned to Sable, "You've been quiet tonight, Sable. You feeling okay?"

Sable looked up. She was very quiet. Much more so than usual. "I'm just listening to all the conversations going on around me."

Jack chuckled, "Well, I guess Jake will find out how talkative you can really be, in time."

Jack rose from his seat, "I think I'll turn in. You two have sweet dreams." They could tell by his sly smile, he meant something else entirely.

After he left the room, Jake stood and grasped Sable's chair, "You ready for bed?"

She seemed to be lost in thought when he snapped her out of it, "Oh, yeah, let's go to bed." She rose from her seat and they walked silently to her room.

Once they were alone in her room, Jake pulled his black T-shirt over his head and turned to face her. Her mouth dropped open at the sight of his muscular chest. The sight almost took her breath away.

Finally finding her voice, she replied, "What about sleeping arrangements?"

He gave her a smirk, "Married couples usually share the bed."

She folded her arms over her chest, "I know I agreed to us being husband and wife but not tonight-I'm way too tired. Plus we have a big day tomorrow."

He shrugged, "I was only kidding anyway." He pointed to the chaise in the corner of the room, "I'll sleep there tonight. Sweet dreams." He turned to walk over to the chaise.

She went into her bathroom to don a nightgown. She only slept in her underwear and a nightgown. She was not going to change that now. Once she entered the room again, she saw him curled up on the chaise which was much too small for his tall frame. She sort of felt sorry for him. She started to grab a blanket and throw it over him when she stepped beside him. He looked up at her, she said, "Look, if you'll stay on your side, you can share my bed."

He smiled, "Thanks, I'm sure it's warmer." He slid his pants off right before her eyes and now he was completely naked just before slipping under the covers.

She swallowed hard before rounding the bed and sliding under the covers. She leaned over and turned off the lamp by her bed then settled down to go to sleep. It took a while but she finally fell asleep.

Chapter Four

The next morning the sunlight fell through the window and landed on Sable's face. She woke and rubbed her eyes. Turning over she saw Jake still asleep. He was facing her. She wondered if he really did sleep without any clothes on. She lifted the covers to peek under them. He did sleep in the nude.

She jumped when he spoke, "Like what you see?"

She quickly dropped the covers, "I don't know how you can sleep like that."

"It's much more comfortable than putting on anything."

"Not even underwear?"

He shrugged, "Don't wear them."

"Ever?" He shook his head. She didn't want to think about that any longer. She turned to get out of bed. Her bare foot touched the floor and she pulled it back under the covers, "The floor's cold."

He moved closer, "I can warm you up."

She put her hand on his chest, "We are about to take a trip where we will be alone a lot. You can wait for that." Then she leaned over to find her slippers and put them on her feet. Then she got up to head for the bathroom.

She took a shower, blow dried her hair, and dressed. It had been some time before she came back into the bedroom. Jake was still in the bed. She could tell by his uncovered top half, he wasn't dressed yet.

She placed her hands on her hips, "Don't you think you should get dressed?"

"Okay." He grabbed the covers and she barely had time to turn around

before he flung the covers off his naked body.

She could hear him put on his pants-at least she hoped so. She asked him, “Do you have your pants on yet?”

“Yeah, you can turn around now.” He laughed at her embarrassment.

She turned to see him pulling on his boots. She let out a breath. She was relieved to see he did have his pants on. He quickly pulled on his T-shirt. She asked him, “Maybe we can go by the hotel to get your things.”

“That would be a good idea since I don’t have any other clothes.”

“Want to stop by to say good-bye to your brother?”

He rubbed his chin, “That might be a good idea too. He was expecting me to help out at the church later today.”

After Sable packed her bag, they made their way downstairs and ate a quick breakfast. Then they went to find Jack. They obviously went to his study first. He wasn’t there. Maybe he was not up yet. Sable checked his room-he was gone. Where could he be?

At that moment, Jack came in from outside. He smiled to see them ready to go, “Just checking to make sure Andrew was ready to leave. You two ready to go?”

Sable answered him, “I am but Jake will need to make a couple of stops first.”

“Of course, you need to get your things.”

Jake nodded, “Yes, I do. I also need to say good-bye to my brother.”

“Anyway, hope you two have a good time. I have work to do so I’ll see you when you get back.” He leaned forward to kiss Sable’s cheek and shake Jake’s hand. He disappeared into his study.

Sable looked at Jake, “Well, I guess we should go.” She leaned down to pick up her suitcase.

Jake grabbed her hand and pushed it away from the suitcase, “Let me get that.” He picked up the suitcase and they headed for the door.

Once they were outside, they saw a huge black limousine sitting at the bottom of the steps. They climbed inside the back. Andrew looked over his shoulder from the driver's seat, "Are we ready now?"

Sable spoke up, "We are. We need to stop at the church next to the park and the hotel to get Jake's things."

"The church first?"

"Yes, it shouldn't take very long," replied Jake.

Riding in silence, Jake and Sable just watched the scenery go by. Jake decided to go into the church alone to say good-bye to Joe. He was only inside for about ten minutes. That seemed odd to Sable as she was sure Joe would have more to tell him about their rapid wedding. Then after a stop at the hotel to gather his things, they were off to Charlotte. Still riding in silence.

They were halfway to Charlotte before Jake got a little bored and began looking through the cabinets in the back of the limo. He finally came across a bottle. He lifted it to show Sable, "Look, your Dad got us Champagne. Want a drink?"

She smiled, "I think I could drink a little."

Then Jake stopped, "Wait, you're not old enough to drink."

"If you're going to dwell on such things, then we have to dwell on things like a one day courtship. Just pour it."

Jake shrugged and pulled two flutes from the cabinet. Holding both glasses in one hand, he poured them half full. After putting the bottle down, he handed one to Sable and lifted his in the air, "Here's to a long and wonderful life together." He took a big gulp and noticed Sable didn't drink hers, "Is something wrong?"

She seemed deep in thought then snapped out of it, "No, nothing." She took a sip and laughed, "I like it. I've never had Champagne before. It's good."

He sat next to her on the leather seat, "Yeah. It feels funny when the bubbles tickle your nose." He took another sip as he watched her down the

entire glass.

She held out her glass, "More."

Jake chuckled as he got the bottle and poured more into her glass. "If you drink it too fast, you might get drunk."

She lifted the glass to her lips and said, "That doesn't sound so bad."

Before she could take a sip, he grabbed her hand to stop her lifting the glass to her lips, "You don't want to get drunk before we even make it to our destination."

She smiled, "Watch me." She jerked her hand away and downed the entire glass in one gulp. She reached for the bottle and he pulled it away from her reach. She punched his belly and then grabbed the bottle when he put it within her reach. She just looked at him, "What? I'm nervous." She turned the bottle up and drank straight from the bottle.

Still clutching his belly, he smiled, "You nervous about me?"

After another sip from the bottle, she wiped her mouth with the back of her hand, "Not really. I hate to fly."

Jake let out a huge belly laugh, "You? Afraid to fly? Have you even been on a plane before?"

"I have." She put the bottle between her legs. She looked up as if lost in thought, "I was on a private plane owned by my father once. It crashed in the woods off the coast and it killed the pilot. He was an old friend and I felt bad for him and his family. I have avoided flying if I could ever since."

He lost his smile, "I'm sorry to hear that." He grabbed the bottle from between her legs. "I think you've had enough."

She grabbed the bottle back, "I'll tell you when I've had enough." She took another gulp from the bottle.

Jake held up his glass, "Could I have some more before it's all gone?"

She smiled and poured some into his glass, "I didn't mean to hog it." Then she turned the bottle up and drank the last of it. Jake knew this trip would be

interesting-to say the least.

An hour in the airport and they were on their way to Miami. As the plane took off, Jake noticed how Sable grasped the armrest. It almost seemed her fingers couldn't be pried off with a crowbar. He could see the nervousness written all over her face. He allowed her to sit in silence until they made it to Miami. The flight didn't take long.

Once the plane stopped in Miami, Sable released her grip on the armrest. A relieved look flooded her features. As all the passengers filtered out of the plane, Sable just sat in her seat. Jake wondered if she was going to be okay.

Jake placed a hand on her arm, "We're here. Time to go now."

She let a nervous breath and smiled, "I think I'm ready to get out of this plane now."

Jake held out his hand and she slipped her shaking hand in his. He lifted her hand to his lips and gave it a gentle kiss. He rose and lifted her up with him as they made their way out of the huge plane.

After gathering their bags they took a taxi to the hotel her father told them about. The cab ride only took about five minutes. Climbing out of the cab, Sable looked at the huge hotel. It had to be several stories high-she couldn't tell how many.

Stepping into the lobby, they approached the desk and Jake told the clerk, "We have reservations for Jacob and Sable Shane."

After hearing her new name, Sable liked how it sounded but it awoke a nervous feeling in her. A feeling she wondered if she could shake free of.

After checking the computer, the clerk behind the desk replied, "Yes, you have the bridal suite on the top floor." He called over a bellhop, "James, help these people to the bridal suite on the top floor." He handed the bellhop a key and James loaded their bags on a rolling cart.

Pushing the cart ahead of him, he looked at Jake, "Follow me." He led them to an elevator to take them to the top floor.

Once they reached the top floor, they were led to a door at the end of the hallway. It was double doors that seemed to be sitting there all by itself. James unlocked the door and waited for them to enter the room before he unloaded the bags just inside the door.

Sable walked in first, she stood in a room that appeared to be a living room with two couches, two chairs, a bar in the corner, and several small tables scattered about the room. It was decorated so pretty.

Jake gave the bellhop a five dollar bill and he left. Jake joined Sable in the room and looked around at how beautiful it was. Turning to a door to his right, he opened it. There was the bedroom. There was a huge king sized bed with a very elaborate comforter, a night table on either side of the bed, and a glass door to his left. Pulling the curtain away from the glass door, he could see a huge balcony just outside.

Pulling the door open, he stepped out onto the balcony and could feel the cool wind from the ocean. Sable stepped up behind him and replied, "I am so glad we shed our coats before we took off in the plane."

Jake nodded, "Me too. Want to head down to the beach?"

"Not yet. I want to enjoy this beautiful room first."

They stepped back into the room and noticed what was in the opposite corner. There sat a huge hot tub just outside the bathroom door.

Jake pointed to the hot tub, "Want to try that out?"

Sable smiled, "I would love to." She went to gather their bags and bring them into the bedroom. She immediately opened hers and pulled out her bikini. She went to the bathroom to change. She hoped Jake would be ready by the time she returned.

Stepping out of the bathroom, she saw Jake standing by the tub in his swim trunks. She let out a relieved breath. He was testing the water's temperature as is poured into the tub. After turning off the water, he looked at the tub. No bubbles like a hot tub normally has. Then he saw a button on the side and pushed it. There came the bubbles. It looked so inviting.

Jake held out his hand to her, "Ladies first."

Sable smiled and put her hand in his. She stepped up the three steps that led to the top rim of the tub. She eased her foot into the bubbly water and settled down. She waited for Jake to do the same. He sat on the opposite side of the tub and smiled, "I love this."

Sable smiled and closed her eyes as she leaned back against the tub, "This is wonderful. I could stay here forever."

While her eyes were closed, she could hear him move in the tub. Then she felt him between her legs. She opened her eyes to see his knee between her legs and his face hovering above hers. She placed her hand on his bare chest, "What are you doing?"

He gave her a sly smile, "I just want a kiss." He leaned down and captured her lips before she could protest. This was only the second time he kissed her on the lips. The first time was just a little peck when they got married.

This kiss was much better than the first. His tongue probed her mouth. She instinctively wrapped her arms around his neck.

As they kissed, he settled on his knees between her legs and pulled her up on his lap. Once she was on his lap, he pulled his legs out from under them to be more comfortable. He continued to kiss her. She had never been kissed like this before. She enjoyed his probing tongue. He caressed and explored every part of her mouth.

His lips moved from her mouth to kiss along her jawline and her ear. She never wanted it to stop. His kisses felt like fire on her soft skin. He could hear a soft moan escape her lips. He knew she was enjoying this.

He wanted to take this to the next level. He lifted his hand to cup her right breast. He caressed and massaged her breast through the bikini top.

She wasn't sure she should let him continue but then again, he was her husband. His touches felt so wonderful she didn't want him to stop. When he lifted the bikini top and lowered his head to capture the nipple in his mouth, she let out a louder moan from deep in her throat. Her head seemed to spin with the pleasure he was inflicting on her.

Much to her surprise, he pulled the bikini top back down to where it was. She looked into his eyes, “Why did you stop?”

He gave her a sly smile, “I don’t think this should go any farther.” He moved away from her and climbed out of the tub. “I want you to come to me before it goes any farther.” He grabbed a towel and began to dry himself off.

She would come to him-never! She would not allow herself to give in to him again.

Chapter Five

After they dressed, it was time for dinner. The day seemed to fly by. Where had the time gone?

They went downstairs to the hotel restaurant. Such a fancy restaurant. Sable felt out of place wearing only a tank top and shorts with tennis shoes on her feet. Jake looked a little better with a T-shirt, jeans, and tennis shoes.

They sat in a corner booth-one of those where the booth curves around the table. Sable sat on one side and Jake sat on the other side. Sable immediately picked up the menu and scanned it for something good. Jake on the other hand didn't even look at the menu. He just sat with his hands clasped in front of him.

Looking over the top of the menu, Sable asked him, "You not ordering anything?"

Jake shrugged, "I know what I want." He looked at her with longing.

She rolled her eyes, "I'm not on the menu."

He laughed, "I've been here before. I know what I want-to eat."

"Really? What do you want?"

"They have a great steak here. They cover it with some sort of seasoning and makes it so good, I get it when I can."

She seemed suspicious, "When were you here?"

He looked up at the ceiling as if deep in thought, "I believe the last time I was here was two years ago with my old girl-friend."

It never even occurred to her that he might have a girl-friend. "You have a girl-friend?"

“‘Had’ a girl-friend. We broke up months ago. Don’t worry, I didn’t have one when we got married.”

She breathed a sigh of relief, “I was hoping I didn’t ‘steal’ you away from someone.”

“You didn’t.” He smiled at the thought she might be a little jealous.

The waitress came for their orders. They both ordered the steak he spoke of and a bottle of wine. Lucky for her, they didn’t ask to see Sable’s ID.

Once they finished their dinner, Jake had the idea they go for a walk. She gladly accepted-wanting to see this beautiful city.

Once outside, she placed her hand on his arm as they walked along the sidewalk. They saw the pretty lights in the darkness and they peered into the store windows as they walked by them.

Seeing something in one of the windows, Sable said, “Let’s go in here.” They stepped inside the store. It appeared to be some sort of gift shop with T-shirts saying ‘Miami Beach’ and the like on them. Sable picked up a statue of a dragon and held it to her chest.

Jake replied, “You want that?”

She smiled, “I collect dragons. This one breathes smoke. I don’t have one that breathes smoke.”

Jake lifted the dragon from her fingers and turned it over to see the price tag on the bottom-\$25.00. Much too expensive for such a small dragon but he did remember he was at a tourist attraction type place. He replied, “If you want it, it’s yours.” She almost squealed with excitement. Jake paid for the dragon and they headed back to their hotel.

Once they were back in their room, she immediately took the dragon from the bag and put it on the table by her side of the bed. She poured water into the little hole on its back and it began to breathe smoke. She sat on the bed to watch it.

Jake leaned against the door and folded his arms over his chest, “I’m glad to see you enjoy something.”

She turned to look at him, “Enjoy something? I’m sure you’ve seen me enjoy other things.”

“I have earlier today.” She felt the blood rush to her face as she remembered their time in the hot tub. She quickly turned away to watch her dragon and hide her flush from him but he already saw it.

Jake stretched his arms high above his head, “I’m tired. I think I’ll turn in. You can watch your dragon if you want.”

Moving to his side of the bed, she refused to look over at him because she knew he would soon be naked. When she felt him climb under the covers, she allowed herself to relax. She didn’t realize she was so tense while he undressed. She didn’t turn in until she knew he was asleep.

The next morning, she woke to find Jake gone. Sleeping in her bra and panties, all she had to do was put on shorts and a T-shirt. She stepped into the other room to find him sitting on one of the large comfortable couches. He looked up and said, “Glad you’re up.” He rose to his feet, “I rented a car and we’re going to spend the day riding around to see the local attractions.”

The entire day was filled with so many beautiful sights, she couldn’t count them all. She really enjoyed the trip. She could hardly wait to see what they would do the rest of their time here.

They would be in Miami for another two days and on the third day they would leave. Jake had so many things they would do, he wondered if they had enough time to do them all.

The next day they took a tour on a huge ship. Then they did some parasailing. They spent several hours enjoying the beach. They even went to a local pool that had a bar where they could have drinks at a bar while still in the pool.

Their day on the beach and at the pool had to be Jake’s favorite days. He got to enjoy watching Sable in her bikini all day. It took almost all his strength to keep from taking her right then.

Their last night in Miami, they returned to their room and they were both

exhausted. Jake flopped on the bed after he slipped out of his shoes. He felt like he could sleep for days.

Sable slipped off her shoes and climbed over his body to hover above him. She smiled as his eyes fluttered open. He smiled, "Are you as tired as I am?"

"I'm a little tired." She leaned down to kiss him-a little peck on the lips. He reached up and put his hand on the back of her head to pull her closer. He began to kiss her. She wrapped her arms around his neck and laid on top of him.

As the kiss grew deeper, he flipped her over so he was lying half on her and half on the bed. He began to caress her breast through her T-shirt.

Sable wanted him to continue. She pulled up on his T-shirt until she could pull it completely over his head. He followed suit by pulling off her T-shirt and bra. Both discarded to the floor alongside his own T-shirt. He pulled her nipple into the warmth of his mouth and she put her hand on the back of his head. With her arching toward his mouth, he knew she was enjoying this.

Enthralled by the attention he was paying to her breasts, she reached down to unbutton his shorts and push them down his hips. He decided that was her way of 'coming to him'. He slid her shorts and panties down her slender legs. As he continued to suckle her breasts, he cupped her womanhood in his hand. She let out a gasp and a moan. She felt a heat and longing between her legs.

Before she realized how fast it escalated, he settled between her legs and they made love right there on the edge of the bed. He quickly learned he just took her innocence. He couldn't stop now. He continued until they both lay spent on the comforter. They slept like babies all night. Exhaustion taking over them both.

The next morning, they needed to get to the airport to return home. Sable woke to find herself on top of the comforter and Jake lying next to her-both of them completely naked. The huge red spot on the comforter made her remember what happened the night before. Jumping up she ran into the bathroom to shower.

With the towel covering her, she came back into the room to see Jake just

beginning to stir. He had his hand on his aching head and beginning to sit up. She stood before him, “Jake, we need to get dressed. We have to catch that plane in less than an hour.”

Jake sat up and smiled. He grabbed her around the waist and pulled her to him, “We could do something else and catch a later flight.”

She pushed away from him and lost her towel. She grabbed her shirt they discarded on the floor the night before. He grabbed one of her breasts, “No need to get dressed so soon.”

She pushed his hand away, “We need to go.” She grabbed her clothes and went to the bathroom.

Their ride to the airport was a silent one in the taxi. Their ride in the plane was also a silent one. All she could think of was the ache in her legs and between them. She was lost in the moment and did what she thought she wouldn’t do.

Throughout the trip home, she wondered exactly how she felt about Jake. Did she give into him because she loved him? Did she grow to love him or did she love him beforehand? She was much too confused to understand why she acted the way she did on their last night in Miami.

The silent trip in the taxi, the airplane, and the limo ride home, gave her a lot of time to think. By the time they arrived back at her home, she was more confused than ever. Did she want to remain married to him? She didn’t know. She did know she didn’t want to move to Richmond.

Once they were back inside the house, she grabbed Jake’s arm, “Let’s go into the dining room. I want to talk to you.”

Jake followed her into the dining room and sat in a chair next to the one she sat in. She turned in her chair to face him. She had to be honest with him, “I know you live in Richmond. I just can’t see myself moving so far away from my family.”

Jake shrugged, “I suppose you want me to move here?”

She nodded, “Yes, I do.”

He placed both hands on the table, "I don't want to leave my business-and it is my business-and I have friends up there."

"I know but I have friends and family here. You at least will have Joe."

"Well, I guess we've come to an impasse."

"Is there some sort of compromise we could make?"

Jake rubbed his chin, "I can't see one on the horizon."

"How can we stay married?"

"I don't think it will work out anyway. We were married because you didn't want to marry someone else. He's out of the picture now."

More confusion filled her, "So what now?"

"We could get a divorce or just an annulment."

"Any chance we could make this work?"

"Not that I can see." He knew it would probably be the best if they just parted ways as friends. He felt they couldn't make it work from the very beginning.

"So you will go home to Richmond and I'll stay here."

"Looks that way." He rose from his seat and headed for the door. He stopped and turned, "I'm a lawyer so I'll draw up the paperwork and send it to you."

She sat quietly as she watched him walk out the door and out of her life. Looking out the front window, she saw him walk in the direction of the park and church. She wondered if she would ever see him again. In one way she wished she would. In another way, she wondered if that would be the best thing for either of them. Only time would tell.

Chapter Six

Six weeks after Jake walked out of her life, a large yellow envelope arrived in the mail. It was addressed to 'Sable Shane'. Her shaking fingers lifted the flap. She knew what had to be inside.

She carefully pulled the papers from the envelope. There they were, her divorce papers to end her short marriage to Jake. Did she really want to sign them? She wasn't sure she wanted to do that.

Placing the papers back in the envelope, she had an appointment to keep. She would read over the papers when she got back from her appointment.

Jake was reading over one of his court cases. The court date was coming up soon. This just happened to be a divorce case. He represented the husband. Looking at the small calendar on his desk, he noticed what today's date was. It had been two months to the day since he last saw Sable and walked out of her life. He surprised himself-he really missed her. He began to wonder what she was doing now.

Suddenly a large yellow envelope landed on his desk directly where he was looking at his paperwork. Looking up he saw her. There stood Sable with a big smile on her face. With the warmer weather, she wore a form fitting white T-shirt outlining her breasts. Were her breasts bigger? Expecting form fitting jeans like she usually wore, he was surprised to see gray sweat pants hugging her hips-which also seemed a little bigger.

Before he could say anything, she replied, "You need to shred those."

Surprised to see her, he asked, "What are you doing here?"

"I told you. I want you to shred those papers." She pointed to the yellow envelope.

He rose to his feet to stand before her, "I missed you."

She wrapped her arms around his neck, "I really missed you, Jake." She stood on her tiptoes to plant a kiss on his lips.

He couldn't help himself, he kissed her back. A passionate kiss like the one they shared in Miami. After the kiss, he pushed her away from him, "Now tell me why you came here."

She pointed to the yellow envelope, "Shred those and we can go eat lunch-to talk."

He picked up the envelope and opened the flap. He pulled the divorce papers from the envelope, "You want me to shred these?"

"Yeah, we won't need them."

"I'm guessing you want an annulment?"

She slowly shook her head, "No, not that either."

"You want to stay married?" He watched her slowly nod in agreement. He looked at her through narrowed lids, "Why?"

She took his hand in hers, "I will explain everything at lunch. Come on, I'm starving." Not knowing what she had on her mind, he agreed to go to lunch with her.

What was going on in her pretty little head? He took her to a cute little restaurant around the corner from his law office. He ate there a lot when he could take a break from his law practice.

After taking a seat in the back of the restaurant, he noticed Sable could not lose her smile. What she so happy about? They quickly ordered their food and after the waitress brought them two cokes to drink, Jake couldn't contain himself any longer, "I want to know why you are here in Richmond."

Sable pulled another yellow envelope from her purse. She slid the envelope over the table top to him. "This will clear it all up for you."

Wary, he looked at the envelope. This one was half the size of the one holding the divorce papers-about the size of a 5X7 photo. He picked up the

envelope and folded the clasp to lift the flap. He looked inside and pulled out four black and white printed pictures. He couldn't believe his eyes. Is this what he thought it was? Holding them up, he replied, "These look like sonogram pictures."

If it was possible, his smile grew bigger, "They are."

Speechless, Jake looked at the pictures and he could see the tiny baby. He looked up to see she had tears in her eyes-even with the smile on her face.

He slapped a twenty on the table and stood. He held his hand out to her, "Come on, I want to show you where I-we-live."

She slipped her hand into his and he led her outside. He led her to a black Miata. After he rounded the car when she got inside, he slid behind the wheel. After starting the car, he drove to a small house two blocks from his law office. It was small but quaint. After helping her out of the tiny car, he led her up the steps and opened the door.

Sable stepped inside and noticed it obviously belonged to a man. They stood in the living room but it only contained a couch, a chair, and one table next to a small TV. He noticed her looking around, "I don't spend a lot of time here-mostly just to sleep. I will get a bigger, better place for our baby."

Before she could say anything, he dropped to his knees and lifted her shirt. He placed an ear on her belly and spoke to the tiny baby, "Hey, little fellow. I'm your Daddy. I'm going to give you everything you need."

While he was on his knees, she rubbed his head and smiled down at the man she realized she didn't want to live without-even if that meant she had to move away from everyone she knew. She would gladly live in this new place with him-until death they do part.

Epilogue

Jack anxiously waited for his family to arrive for the Christmas holidays. His house was clean and now that he was a grandfather, he could shower the little ones with lots of candy and presents. He could barely contain his excitement.

A knock sounded on the door and Andrew opened the door. Jack stood waiting for little Tanner to come running to him for a big hug. He was followed by Lyndsey-his little sister. At only 2-years-old, she had so much energy. Jack picked her up and kissed her little cheek.

6-year-old Tanner wanted attention too, “Hey, Gramper, where’s the presents?”

Jack rubbed the boy’s head, “Under the tree, silly. In there.” He pointed at the living room. Tanner disappeared to go see how many he had under the tree.

Lyndsey wanted down to see hers too. Jack placed her on her feet. He watched the little girl run away in her red velvet dress. He loved them so much.

Jared walked up to Jack, “Merry Christmas, Dad.”

Jack shook his son’s hand as he hugged him, “Merry Christmas, Son.” He turned his attention to the lovely lady behind him in the blue dress, “Hey, Beth. You look lovely as ever.” He kissed her cheek.

Beth blushed, “You know how to make a lady feel wonderful, Jack.”

Jared asked, “When will Sable and Jake get here, Dad?”

Jack looked at his watch, “They should be here any time, Jared. Their plane should have been in Charlotte over an hour ago.”

A knock on the door signaled their arrival. Andrew opened the door and in came 5-year-old Jackson. Andrew scooped up the little boy and hugged him tight. "I missed you Gramper," replied the little boy.

Next he saw Sable in a green velvet dress and it almost took his breath away. She held the 7-month-old Kimball in her arms-who wore a matching dress to go with her mothers. She was followed by Jake-so tall and handsome in his brown suit.

Jack stepped forward to hug Sable. He placed Jackson on his feet so he could collect Kimball into his arms. He missed having his family under this one roof.

Staring down at the plump little girl, Jack said, "She's so fat. All the more to love."

Sable smiled, "She eats a lot."

Jack leaned over to kiss her cheek, "I missed you, Sable. I am so glad you could come home for Christmas."

Sable smiled, "Me too, Dad."

Jack-still carrying little Kimball-he motioned for them to follow him into the living room, "Let's go get those presents. I'm sure Tanner and Jackson can't wait much longer."

They all gathered in the living room just as Tanner began to pass out the gifts. Excitement filled the kids and joy filled the adults as they watched the kids open their presents.

With the lights turned down, the only light came from the lights on the tree and around the fireplace. Wrapping paper flew everywhere as the kids opened their presents.

Jack looked around at his family. Beth sat next to Jared and Sable sat next to Jake as they watched their children open the great things Gramper gave them. Occasionally he would see Sable kiss Jake then put her head on his shoulder. They all seemed so much in love. He watched the kids enjoy their new toys.

After all the presents were unwrapped and everyone either played with toys or admired the gifts they got, Jack stood to announce, “It’s time to eat our dinner.”

They all filed into the dining room. They filled their plates with turkey, dressing, vegetables, and other tasty foods. The kids had milk in their glasses while the adults had champagne in their glasses. They all enjoyed their meal and conversation.

Jack leaned back in his chair and looked around the room. From his seat at the head of the table, he had a good view of his family around the table. He loved them all so much. He was proud of his two children and his four grandchildren. He felt sure there would be more grandchildren to come when he saw how much in love Jared was with Beth and how much in love Sable was with Jake. He had his doubts in the beginning but now, it was love that surrounded him and his heart.

There were paintings of his wife in every room of the house. He looked up at the one that hung there in the dining room and quietly whispered to her, “We did good, my dear Marjorie. We did good.”

END

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