

In His Shadow

A Tangled Ivy Novel

Tiffany Snow

Also by Tiffany Snow

No Turning Back, the Kathleen Turner series

Turn to Me, the Kathleen Turner series

Turning Point, the Kathleen Turner series

Out of Turn, the Kathleen Turner series

Point of No Return, the Kathleen Turner series

Turn on a Dime—Blane's Turn

Blank Slate

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Chapter One

“Hey, look. Your favorite customer is back, just in time before we close.”

I glanced over at Marcia, my co-worker, who just grinned and tipped her head toward the door. Looking across the bank lobby, I stiffened, recognizing the man who’d just walked into the bank.

“Damn it,” I muttered under my breath, my good mood plummeting. I took a deep breath. Another five minutes and my weekend would start; no need to let my last customer of the day ruin it.

He came every week, which would describe a lot of people, but he stood out, at least he did to me. Tall with light brown hair that might be blond if sunshine was allowed on it for a while, he was broad-shouldered and lean-hipped, and looked like he was in his mid-thirties. He always dressed casually, though I could tell his jeans were designer and his button-down shirts tailored. His name was Devon Clay, which I knew from the transactions he made, but we’d never exchanged pleasantries. It was always just business, which was fine with me.

Devon was one of those rare men whose every movement spoke of someone who was capable of and accustomed to violence—a dangerous man. His eyes were cold, his expression always politely bland. While perhaps others didn’t see it, I’d been conditioned from too young an age to be able to spot someone who was more than able to do me harm and not think twice about it. So from the first time I’d laid eyes on Devon a month ago, I’d instinctively and immediately disliked him—a dislike that only grew with each interaction I had with the man.

I’d mentioned my antipathy for Devon to Marcia, who hadn’t understood. To her, he was just another customer, albeit a handsome customer who she said “oozed sex appeal.” She’d also theorized he’d be “amazing” in bed, an assumption I silently agreed with but had no desire to explore despite his appeal.

For some reason, Devon always came to my line, even if I was the one teller with a wait. I had no idea why because, as I said, we didn’t converse. He was the only customer with whom I didn’t. Usually, I was a pretty nice person and I enjoyed interacting with people. Even on my crankiest day, I managed to dredge up a smile for my job as teller for one of the most exclusive and oldest banks in St. Louis. Except with Devon. There was something about him that got under my skin and made me want to run as far and as fast as I could in the opposite direction.

As I’d expected, Devon bypassed the two other tellers, one of whom was Marcia, to come to me. He handed me a few papers. I didn’t greet him.

“Can I get these taken care of, please?” he asked, his cultured British accent smoothing the syllables like a warm blanket. His lips formed a thin sort of smile, which I didn’t return.

“Of course,” I replied, polite but not friendly, and avoided looking him in the eye. I reached for the papers, but he held them tight for a moment, just long enough for his finger to brush the top of my hand. It felt like an electric current ran through me.

My eyes flew to his in surprise. His steady gaze seemed to see right through me. For a moment, I couldn't move, then the papers were sliding into my hand.

I took a shaky step back, tearing my eyes from Devon's to start the transactions on my computer. It took several minutes and I was hyperaware of him studying me. It made me nervous how much that small touch had thrown me. Was he toying with me?

I had to cancel my work a couple of times and start over, which was irritating when I wanted to get him out of here as quickly as possible. Finally, I was finished.

I stepped over to the printer to retrieve his receipts and my toes screamed in protest from the two-hundred-dollar leather boots I'd been unable to pass by in the store. They looked amazing, but wearing them to a job where I stood for ninety percent of the time had been a mistake. I winced, grabbing the papers and glancing at the clock again. Two minutes. Thank God. I swore I was going to walk home barefoot rather than put up with these boots another second.

I handed him his receipts, careful this time not to touch him, or allow him to touch me.

“Everything all right, luv?” Devon asked.

His eyes were the lightest of blues with a web of fine lines at the corners, as though he'd spent too much time squinting into sunlight. Some might compare his eyes to an ocean or the sky. I likened them to ice.

I forced a stiff smile, thinking, *Don't call me that*. “I'm fine, thank you. Have a nice day.” Now leave, I silently commanded.

The barest hint of amusement crossed Devon's face, as though he could hear inside my head, then it was gone. He leaned closer.

“It's been a pleasure, Ivy,” he said softly, the words polite and harmless, but edged in something too close to seduction.

Devon had never before called me by name, though it was printed on the gold nameplate in front of my window. *Ivy Mason, Teller*. I watched him as he walked across the lobby and out the door.

“Girl, you are blind. That man is drool worthy and hot for you, my friend.”

I turned at Marcia's teasing and grimaced. “I have no idea why he always comes to my line,” I groused. “I'm not nice to him.”

Marcia rolled her eyes. “*Gee, why does he come to my line?*” she mocked. “It's a total mystery. The fact that you could be a flippin' model wouldn't have a thing to do with it.”

I sighed inwardly. Marcia meant well, but I wasn't a girl who valued my looks. They'd brought me too much trouble. I had hair that women paid thousands of dollars to try to achieve—pure white blonde that was thick, long, and straight. My eyes were a combination of brown and green so that they seemed gold, and I'd been blessed with high cheekbones and full lips. I'd been compared to a perfectly delicate porcelain Barbie doll. A comparison I hadn't appreciated.

Most women disliked me on sight, just on principle, so I went out of my way to be nice. Marcia was one of the few who'd befriended me immediately when I'd started working here six months ago.

"I think he's weird," I replied. "Something about him is just . . . off." I knew his type all too well. They presented a perfect face to the world, then were an utterly different person when no one was looking.

"He's rich and gorgeous," Marcia said wistfully. "I could overlook a lot of weird for those two things."

I burst out laughing, my good humor restored by Marcia's irreverence. She was completely unapologetic about her goal of finding a rich husband. Period. She'd moved to St. Louis a year ago from the middle-of-nowhere Iowa and had been "on the hunt," as she put it, ever since then. So far she'd dated a lot, but, as of yet, no proposals.

"He's got to be at least eight or nine years older than us," I argued.

"An older man who knows what he's doing," she retorted, waggling her eyebrows suggestively.

"You mean an older man who'll die first and leave you his money," I teased her.

She laughed. "I wouldn't complain. So, do you have big plans for the weekend?"

I shook my head. "Not really. Logan and I are meeting a friend of his for dinner. I don't really know what his plans are for the rest of the weekend. I'm counting on doing a whole lot of nothing."

Marcia shook her head. "I don't understand this relationship you have with Logan," she said. "You're living with him, but you're not together."

"I told you," I said. "We're just friends. I needed a place to stay that didn't cost a fortune when I moved here and his roommate had just moved out. End of story." What I didn't say was that I felt safe with Logan. We'd met in the sixth grade and knew all there was to know about each other, including our secrets. "We just don't think of each other that way." I shrugged.

"No man can be friends with a woman he finds attractive," Marcia said, quoting her favorite movie of all time, *When Harry Met Sally*. "He always wants to sleep with her."

"Just because they said it in a movie doesn't make it true," I said, turning to sign off my computer. It was six o'clock. Quitting time.

"I'm just saying," Marcia replied, closing down her booth as well.

"What about you?" I said, changing the subject. "Have a hot date tonight?" It was rare that Marcia didn't have a date. Though she talked about my looks, she was really pretty, with honey-brown hair and blue eyes. She always complained about her weight, but she had curves I envied. I'd always been on the too-skinny side of thin.

"Yep," she said, pulling on her coat. "His name is John and he works at that big investment firm over on Broadway."

I grinned. "Sounds promising."

She winked at me. "I'll let you know Monday."

While my job was downtown, I lived in the Central West End near Forest Park. There's no way I would have been able to afford to live there on my own, but Logan worked for a big-name law firm and paid three-quarters of the rent. I'd argued about that when I'd first moved in, but he'd been adamant. I tried to make up for it by doing most of the cooking and cleaning.

I was just about to walk out the door when I heard my name being called. I turned around. Mr. Malloy, my boss, was hurrying toward me.

"Ivy, would you run this by Mr. Galler's on your way home?" he asked. "He wasn't able to make it in today."

Mr. Galler was one of the bank's oldest and richest clients, and by "oldest" I meant that figuratively and literally. He was a nice man, maybe somewhere in his nineties, and I'd taken things to his home before, even though it was out of my way. He lived in one of the multi-million-dollar mansions in Country Life Acres.

"Yeah, sure," I agreed, not that I had much choice, but I didn't mind. I liked old Mr. Galler, and we chatted when I went by on a bank errand.

After taking the packet, I headed outside, the bitter wind making my eyes water as I wrapped my black wool peacoat more tightly around me. My car was an old hand-me-down sedan from my grandma and made of the kind of heavy steel that meant I didn't have to worry about putting extra weight in the trunk when the weather got bad.

Rush hour was murder and it took nearly an hour to get from the bank to Mr. Galler's address. I called Logan to tell him I'd be late for dinner. He told me to meet him and his friend at a restaurant, since it wasn't far from where I was going anyway.

"You'll love Tom," Logan told me. "He's an artsy, creative type. Very hip. And his parents are loaded, which is great for him since he still hasn't made a dime from his work. Show a little leg and he might even buy your dinner."

I laughed. "You're implying I prostitute myself for a free meal?" I teased.

"Not your whole body. Just a leg. He'll be eating out of your palm, lovely Ivy."

"Logan!" I shook my head in exasperation. I wasn't interested in the kind of one-night stands that Logan dished out on a regular basis, but not paying for dinner sounded good to me. Eating out was something I loved to do, but it could get pricey and I had champagne taste on a beer budget, as my grandma said. The clothes I had on, black leggings under a cranberry dress that came to mid-thigh, would work for going out on a Friday night.

"You haven't had a date in forever," Logan went on, oblivious to my chastisement. "Your come-hither beauty is going to wither and fade away."

"Lucky for me I have a sparkling personality," I shot back, unable to help a smile even as I wanted to roll my eyes. "Just because your sex life is a revolving door doesn't mean mine should be."

"I just give the ladies what they want," Logan protested. "I can't help it if I'm irresistible."

"Right," I snorted. "Gotta go. I have to concentrate on this shitty traffic. See you soon." I hung up on Logan's protests.

He wasn't wrong, though. It had been a while since I'd dated anyone for longer than a few weeks, and even longer since I'd had sex. Not that I slept around like he did. On the contrary, I could count on one hand with three fingers left over how many times I'd had sex since high school, and both occasions had been mortifying and awful. Just remembering made me squirm in my seat. I just wasn't "into" sex, that much intimacy and vulnerability with someone made me uncomfortable and I'd avoided it ever since.

The guard manning the gated community let me through and finally I was knocking on Mr. Galler's door. He had a man who lived with him and did things like cook and run errands, and it should have been he who opened the door, but it was someone I didn't recognize.

"Hi," I said with a smile. "Mr. Malloy sent me to drop this off for Mr. Galler." I went to hand him the envelope, but the man stepped back to allow me inside.

"Mr. Galler is in the study," he said politely. "If you'll follow me."

Obediently I followed, a quick glance at my watch showing me I was going to be later than I'd thought, especially if Mr. Galler was feeling chatty.

The house was huge, beautiful, and luxurious, with expansive views of the trees and lawn. I caught a glimpse of a tennis court out back, then saw with dismay that it had begun to snow. I liked snow well enough so long as I didn't have to drive, but if I backed out of dinner, I'd never hear the end of it from Logan.

Mr. Galler was sitting in a leather armchair in front of a crackling fire. I missed having a fireplace. We'd had one back home and Grandpa had always made sure there was plenty of wood stocked up for winter.

"Hello, Ivy, my dear," he said when he saw me, his weathered face breaking into a smile.

"Hi, Mr. Galler," I said, and my smile was genuine. I liked old people. Maybe it was the years I'd spent living with my grandparents, but I felt they were underappreciated. "Where's Roger?" Roger was his usual assistant/cook/butler.

"He took ill quite suddenly," Mr. Galler said. "A company sent me William to fill in until Roger gets better. Please, have a seat."

I was grateful to sit down, the pinching of my toes making me long for my slippers. "Here you go," I said, handing him the packet once I'd sat on the sofa. "Mr. Malloy sent this for you."

He nodded, taking the packet and setting it aside. "Thank you," he said. "Would you like a drink? I can ring for tea."

"That's all right," I said apologetically. "I'm meeting friends for dinner, so I'm afraid I can't stay long. How have you been feeling?" Mr. Galler was usually in perfect health, but he'd complained of being ill lately.

"Better, I think," he said with a smile, though I wasn't sure I believed him. He looked a bit pale and drawn, but still I nodded.

"I'm glad. Did you finish that book yet?" Mr. Galler had told me he was writing his memoirs and often updated me on the progress.

“Nearly done,” he said. “Some memories are more difficult to relive than others.” His eyes became slightly unfocused, as though he were gazing inward. “Nineteen forty-five. A year I’d like to forget.”

I did some quick math in my head. Mr. Galler would have been a teenager in nineteen forty-five, during World War II.

“Where were you then?” I asked. I loved listening to older people talk about their pasts. I found it fascinating.

Mr. Galler’s gaze refocused on me. “Poland,” he said. “My father was a physician.”

“In the army?”

He nodded. “He did research as well, some of which he entrusted to me.”

“Did he die in the war?” I asked.

“Alas, he did,” Mr. Galler replied. “My mother passed away when I was but an infant. My father did not survive the end of the war. I was an orphan sent abroad to charitable organizations that helped the parentless during those times.”

I would have liked to ask him more questions and listen to his story, but I also knew Logan was waiting on me. “I really would love to read your memoir when you’re through,” I said. “Is there anything I can do for you? Anything you need before I go?”

Mr. Galler hesitated for a moment, his eyes shrewd as he examined me, then said, “Actually, yes. Would you get something for me?”

“Of course.” I wondered what he could possibly need that William couldn’t get for him.

“Go to my desk,” he instructed, “and open the right drawer.”

I did as he said and saw nothing but a thick stack of stationery and old-fashioned ink pens.

“In the very back, there’s a small notch. Press it.”

Reaching my hand in, I felt around, finally feeling what he described. When I pressed it, something sharp gouged my finger. Letting out a small gasp, I yanked my finger out and stuck it in my mouth. Ouch. A splinter, probably.

Looking back down, I saw another drawer open a sliver above the current one, which made me forget about my finger. Small and neatly hidden, I had to use my fingernails to pry it open. Inside laid a gold pendant. I picked it up, turning it curiously in my hand. It was heavy and ornate.

“Bring it here, my dear.”

I closed the drawers and went back to Mr. Galler, handing it to him.

“This has been in my family for a long time,” he said, examining it with hands that trembled slightly.

“It’s very beautiful,” I said. There was a crest imprinted on it with an elaborate design, but I hadn’t gotten a close look.

Mr. Galler handed it to me. “I’d like you to have it,” he said.

My mouth fell open. “I-I can’t possibly—” I began, but he interrupted me.

“I insist. I have no children to leave it to and you’ve been a breath of fresh air these past few months.” He smiled. “It would mean a great deal to me if you would accept it.”

The gold was heavy in my hand as I stared into Mr. Galler's eyes. He seemed tired and sympathy struck me. It must be hard to be alone at the end of your life, no matter what luxury surrounded you.

"Okay," I said, my fingers closing around the pendant. "I'll treasure it. Thank you." Standing, I impulsively gave him a hug, which seemed to take him by surprise. His eyes were bright when I stepped back and he cleared his throat before he spoke.

"Go," he said. "Have fun with your friends, dear Ivy. And thank you. "

I understood I'd been dismissed so I headed for the door, but something made me glance back. Mr. Galler stared out the window, lost in thought, his shoulders bowed as though a great weight were on them.

I didn't see William on my way out. I climbed into my icy car and hurried to turn on the heat. By now, the snow was coming down thick and heavy. Since it was Friday night, I had a hard time finding a close parking spot, so by the time I got to the restaurant I was starving, my feet were killing me from walking three blocks in the snow and cold, and I was seriously cranky.

The warmth of the restaurant was a relief, the heavy aroma of Italian food comforting. Logan and Tom were already seated at a table in the back by the windows. From inside, the falling snow looked beautiful.

"It's about time," Logan said when he spotted me. I noticed three men at the table rather than just two, and they all rose when Logan did to greet me. I pressed a quick kiss to his cheek.

"Sorry," I apologized. "Traffic was awful." I turned to meet his friend.

"Ivy, this is Tom, the friend from college I told you about." I shook Tom's hand, plastering a smile to my face. "And this is Jared Ross, who just arrived in town, as luck would have it."

My *hello* died on my tongue as my gaze fell on Jared, because it wasn't Jared at all.

It was Devon.

"A pleasure," Jared, aka Devon, said. He lifted my lax hand and pressed his mouth to my knuckles. In shock, I just stood there. His lips were soft, his breath warm against my frigid hand. He lingered in that position, his gaze locked on mine, his thumb sliding across my skin.

I opened my mouth to say something, I didn't know what, but Devon suddenly pressed my fingers hard, a look of warning in his eyes. My mouth snapped closed, the twinge of discomfort from his grip making all the vague reasons I had for disliking him come into sharp focus, despite the shiver that ran through my veins at his touch. My eyes narrowed and I yanked my hand from his.

"Thanks," I murmured. Logan had pulled out my chair and now I sat between him and Devon with Tom across from me. Tom's eyes had lit up when he'd seen me and he was gazing avidly at me now.

"You didn't tell me Ivy was beautiful," Tom teased Logan, his eyes on me. I gave a stiff smile.

"Excuse me, but I thought you'd sworn off women?" Logan retorted good-naturedly.

"A temporary decision," Tom shot back with a grin.

Their ribbing was lost on me. All I could think about was Devon and what could possibly be going on. Though there was no mistaking the message he'd sent me. I wasn't to say a word.

"Fancy some wine?" Devon asked me. He didn't wait for my answer before filling my glass with the ruby red liquid.

Logan and Tom carried the conversation, with an occasional comment from Devon. Our dinner came without me even remembering what I ordered. I drank my wine and barely touched the food on my plate, my stomach in knots over what was going on. What was Devon hiding? Should I tell Logan?

"I apologize, I've been monopolizing the conversation," Tom said. "Ivy, what brought you to St. Louis? Logan tells me you work at the Worcester Bank downtown."

"Um, well, I-I have one of those useless college degrees," I managed to stammer. "History, actually. And unless you want to teach, there's not a lot you can do with a degree like that. I happened to be talking to Logan a few months ago and he mentioned his roommate had moved out and that I should come here. So I did."

"No work for you back in Dodge City?" Tom teased.

My smile was stiff. "Not unless you want to sling hash in a truck stop or work at the local Wal-Mart." Nothing short of my own funeral would make me go back home.

Tom and Logan laughed. Devon did not. I didn't look at him, but could feel him watching me. He'd changed but was still dressed expensively, his wool suit a deep charcoal against a white shirt and striped silk tie. His hand was toying with his wineglass and I caught myself watching his fingers. He had strong, capable hands that looked rougher than I would have expected for a white-collar kind of guy. Hands that could snap one of my bones like a twig.

"Excuse me," I said, getting abruptly to my feet. I needed a moment to regroup and a trip to the ladies' room would give me that time.

Devon politely stood as well, Logan and Tom hurrying to copy his movements as I left the table. Purse in hand, I hurried to the back of the restaurant and into the empty restroom.

I stood in front of the sinks, gripping the edge of the cold marble counter. Maybe I could just go home? But then I'd be leaving Logan with a man I knew to be lying about his identity. And it didn't matter that I didn't know why he was doing it; people who lied about their name usually had reasons for doing so that were anything but benign. I'd have to stay and stick it out, if for no other reason than I wanted to look out for Logan.

Leaving the comfort and safety of the restroom, I turned the corner and nearly ran into someone in the tight corridor. Murmuring an apology, I glanced up, the words dying on my tongue. Devon stared back down at me and the look on his face was anything but friendly.

Barely had I processed this when his hands went to my waist and he turned me, pushing my back against the wall. I had no warning whatsoever before he kissed me.

Chapter Two

Devon's lips were warm and soft, and I felt the roughness of his palms as his hands lifted to cradle my face, his fingers slipping into my hair. He wore a cologne with a scent unfamiliar to me—sandalwood and spice tinged with something else, his own skin maybe. His body was pressed fully against mine and was harder than I'd imagined it to be.

My surprise left me temporarily immobile, my jaw dropping in shock at his actions. Devon took the opportunity to deepen the kiss, his tongue sliding between my parted lips to brush against my own. I could taste wine on his tongue, hot and sweet.

Devon's hold on me was unyielding, keeping my head where he wanted it, and I couldn't have gotten away if I'd tried. It was overwhelming, my head spinning at the feel and taste of him. His jaw was roughened slightly with the day's growth of whiskers, their soft abrasion against my skin a masculine touch that turned my stomach into a nest of butterflies.

Just as suddenly as he'd begun the kiss, he ended it. I opened my eyes, but he wasn't looking at me. A man had just walked past us and out the back door. Devon was watching him.

"Have a lovely evening, Ivy," Devon said, his lips brushing my ear. His voice was a deep rasp that combined with the warmth of his breath to send a shiver down my spine.

I opened my mouth to say something, I didn't know what, but he was already gone, disappearing out the back door as well.

It took me several minutes to recover my composure and I went back into the ladies' room to repair my lip gloss with a hand that shook. What had just happened? I knew nothing about Devon, not even his real name, and he had just kissed me. It made no sense.

When I got back to the table, I wasn't surprised to find that Devon had made an excuse to leave.

"He said he had a meeting or something," Logan said with a wave of his hand, "which is fine with me. I hadn't planned on taking a client out to dinner tonight anyway. His arrival was unexpected."

I wanted to tell Logan about Devon's real name and quiz him on what he knew of him, but didn't want Tom to hear. I decided it could wait until later.

"I'm sorry, Logan," I said abruptly, "but I'm not feeling well. Do you mind if I head home?" Dinner was done so technically I'd been there for most of it, but knowing Logan as I did, he was bound to drag Tom to a club or bar and be out late into the night. No way was I up for that.

And I really wasn't feeling well all of the sudden. My head ached and my mouth was cotton dry. I just wanted to get home, curl up with a blanket, and forget all about this dinner and Devon. Some people might have wanted to figure out the mystery. Not me. I'd learned a long time ago to avoid trouble, and Devon was trouble with a capital T.

“Sure, Ives,” Logan said, slipping in his nickname for me. He frowned in concern. “Are you sick?”

“I’m sure I’ll be fine,” I said, grabbing my purse to pay for my share. “It’s just been a long week.”

“Dinner’s on me,” Tom interjected, and Logan winked at me.

I thanked him and when he stood for a friendly hug, I allowed it, though it lasted longer than it should have. I rolled my eyes at Logan over Tom’s shoulder, but he just made a kissy face at me.

My car was covered in snow when I got back to it. I started the engine and got the defrost going full blast, but it still took me a while to clear it off. My motions were automatic as I scraped the windows. I was confused and out of sorts. Meeting Devon in that hallway had thrown me more than I wanted to admit, his identity a mystery that tantalized me even as better sense said I should leave well enough alone.

I was just about to get in my car when I heard a noise and paused. It was coming from the alley between the two buildings I’d parked in front of. I heard more noises, like someone grunting, and my pulse notched up. Was someone being mugged? In this weather?

I didn’t know what I thought I’d be able to do to help and didn’t really stop to think, I just hurried to the mouth of the alley, skidding to a halt when I saw what was making the noises.

Two men were fighting, both of them moving so fast it was hard to tell who was winning. The falling snow and the night obscured their forms. Suddenly, one broke loose and began running straight at me. A shot rang out. The front of the man’s forehead exploded, sending red splatters of bone, flesh, and blood flying. His body crumpled not ten feet from me.

I stood, frozen in shock at the man on the ground. A pool of crimson stained the pristine snow.

My eyes jerked up as the man still standing moved. He had a gun in his hand and when he stepped into the dim glow of the streetlight, my heart lurched into my throat.

It was Devon.

He took another step my way and that’s when I turned and ran.

I slipped and slid my way to my car—thank God I’d had it running—fell inside and shoved it into drive. I stomped on the gas and shot down the street, looking in my rearview mirror to see Devon standing in the spot I’d just vacated, staring after me. As I watched, he melted back into the shadows.

Panicked, I drove too fast, making myself slow down when the car skidded around a curve. I didn’t know what to do. Should I call the police? Call 911? But Devon had seen me, knew that I saw him kill that man. I was a witness. Would he come after me now? Hurt me, too? And what would I tell police? I didn’t even know his real name.

In the end, I drove home, unable to make myself call the police. I’d talk to Logan. He’d know what to do.

Our apartment was on the third floor of an old warehouse that had been remodeled. The remodel hadn’t included an elevator. Normally climbing the flights of stairs in the boots-from-

hell would have me searching for more colorful expressions to describe how I felt about the lack of an elevator. But tonight all I could think about was Devon and the dead man. He'd kissed me . . . then murdered someone.

A chill skated down my spine at the memory. I had no idea why he'd done what he had—and I didn't want to know. I felt guilty for not calling the police, but overshadowing the guilt was fear. I didn't want to end up like the guy face down in the snow. Did that make me a coward? Probably.

Logan and I each had our own bathroom, so I didn't have to worry that he'd complain about my leaving clothes on the floor. I took a long, hot shower, the warm water easing away some of the tension in my body. Every time I closed my eyes, I saw that man's head exploding, and Devon, standing with gun raised and pointed at me.

Shaking my head to dispel the images, I got out and wrapped myself in a towel. Grabbing my brush, I started combing through my tangled hair as I exited the bathroom and headed for the television in my bedroom.

I sat on my bed, watching TV, and brushed my hair until it was nearly dry. The long strands shone like spun gold in the glow of the lamp. It soothed me, brushing my hair. My grandma used to do it for me all the time. I missed her. If it wasn't so late, I'd call her, just to hear her voice. It would be something normal and ordinary after the events of tonight.

A sound from outside my door had me glancing at the clock. Strange. I hadn't expected Logan would be back so soon.

Another sound, the slight squeak of a shoe on the wooden floor, made the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. Logan wouldn't be so quiet. He'd be thumping around the kitchen and would turn on the television in the living room.

My panicked eyes locked on the knob on my door. It was turning, ever so slowly.

Adrenaline iced my veins, making me feel like I'd just been dipped in a bath of cold water. I lunged for my bedside table and yanked open the drawer, pulling out the gun I kept there just as the door swung open.

"This is a bit unexpected," Devon said, his eyes on the gun pointed at him.

"You!" I exclaimed, horrified. "What are you doing here? How did you find me?" My grip didn't loosen on my gun, though my hands shook. I pointed it at Devon, who seemed unconcerned by the threat.

"You're not terribly difficult to find," Devon said evenly. His gaze raked me from my head to my bare toes. "Nice towel."

I swallowed, wishing I'd dressed. "What do you want?"

"It's a shame," he mused. "Who would have thought that the one person who knows my name would also be at dinner tonight? And see a rather . . . unfortunate incident outside."

I decided to play dumb. "I don't know what you're talking about. Now get out before I put a bullet in you."

Devon's lips twisted at this, as though he found the thought of me shooting him an amusing one. He took a step closer, bringing himself to within point-blank range.

“We have a problem,” he said, ignoring my command. “By all rights, I should kill you.” His words made fear twist in my gut, the way he so casually talked about killing me. “I think you’re confused as to who’s going to kill who,” I snapped. “I’m the one with the gun.” Faster than I could react, Devon knocked my arm aside, then snatched the gun from me. I gasped in dismay and fear, suddenly weaponless, and scabbled backward on the bed away from him.

Devon flipped the chamber open on the gun, emptied the bullets into his palm, then tossed the gun onto the bed. He pocketed the bullets.

“As I was saying,” he continued as though nothing had happened, “we have a problem.”

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