ONE NIGHT, TWO Consequences

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JOSS WOOD

Joss Wood

One Night, Two Consequences

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Billionaire's Baby Surprise!Beautiful free-spirited Remy Draycott doesn't believe in happy-ever-afters. A former child prodigy, she's finally shaken free of the world's expectations and is determined to live for the moment – including one scorching, unforgettable night with handsome stranger Bo Tessier!Billionaire wine magnate Bo never expects to see Remy again – their mind-blowing night together felt like playing with fire, except he wanted to get burned! But six weeks later Remy returns. She's pregnant – with twins! And this time he can't let her go so easily… Discover More At www.millsandboon.co.uk/josswood

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'Remy?'

It was the voice from her dreams—the one she still heard in her ear, against her skin. The one she heard in the memories she relived over and over again every night.

'Bo?'

He was dressed in battered jeans and an open-neck white shirt, sleeves rolled up to reveal tanned forearms. He was here, all six-foot-something of pure, angry male. He got up slowly and she saw that his eyes were slate-grey and as hard.

'What did you just say?'

What *had* she just said? She was so flabbergasted by his presence that she couldn't remember … Oh, hell. Pregnant. His baby.

Oh, heavens, why did these things keep happening to her? Remy bit her bottom lip and folded her arms across her chest, thinking about damage control. 'Um … obviously I didn't mean to tell you like that …'

'You're pregnant?' Bo shouted, and she winced as his words bounced off the walls.

'Yes.'

Was it hot in here? she wondered as the floor rose and fell. Along with heat there was suddenly no air. Instinctively she reached out her hand and grabbed the edge of the bar to keep herself from falling over. She saw dots behind her eyes, felt the blackness coming closer.

The last thing she heard before crumpling to the floor was Eli's amused comment. 'Well, now, isn't this interesting?'

JOSS WOOD wrote her first book at the age of eight and has never really stopped writing. Her passion for putting letters on a blank screen is matched only by her love of books and travelling—especially to the wild places of Southern Africa—and possibly by her hatred of ironing and making school lunches.

Fuelled by coffee, when she's not writing or being a hands-on mum, Joss—with her background in business and marketing—works for a non-profit organisation to promote the local economic development and collective business interests of the area where she resides. Happily and chaotically surrounded by books, family and friends, she lives in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, with her husband, children and their many pets.

One Night,
Two Consequences
Joss Wood

www.millsandboon.co.uk

I really believe that editors make books better—especially my books!—and I’ve been really lucky to work with some wonderfully talented people. So this book is dedicated to Flo (who taught me so much), to Laurie (who loved this book from the start), and to Charlotte (who now has the unenviable task of keeping me on the straight and narrow). Thank you for believing in me and my books and for loving my characters and the complicated situations I place them in.

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CHAPTER ONE

REMY DRAYCOTT LOOKED at the open brochure in front of her as she sipped her glass of Belleaire Chardonnay. So this was the town of Bellevue, she thought, looking across the swish wine bar through the floor-to-ceiling windows onto the main street of the town. Cosmopolitan, sophisticated, quietly rich, it had an air of European elegance.

She liked it. A lot.

From what she'd seen so far on her brief tour of the towns of the Napa Valley, Bellevue—right at the north end of the valley—seemed to be a mixture of the best of the rest. It had take-your-breath-away views of the Palisade Mountains, a smidgeon of the old-world charm of Calistoga, a little of the casual elegance of St Helena and, if she had to judge by the superb gourmet burger she'd eaten for lunch at the glossy diner down the street, the same passion for food as Yountsville.

It was a pity she was only passing through … The town was begging for her to stay a little longer, explore a little more.

No, she couldn't, she thought, pushing temptation away. For the first time in—well, years, she actually had a deadline to be in a place at a specific time. And the reminder of why she had to be in Portland in three days' time had her throwing back the rest of her wine and signalling the barman for a refill.

In seventy-two hours, give or take, her mother was due to give birth to her half-sibling and Remy had promised to be there. Not in the hospital waiting room or waiting at home, like a normal person, but in the delivery room itself. With her mum—*obviously*—her grandmother, *and* her brand-new stepdad, who was just seven years old than herself.

Remy lifted her glass to her lips. She was amazed and terrified and confused about the entire situation.

Amazed that after a lifetime of being a single parent—well, that wasn't entirely true … Grandma Rosie had been her other parent in every way that counted—her intense, brilliant and fiercely feminist mother had settled down with a high school sports coach. Terrified for her because she was, in medical terms, an elderly mother—which essentially meant that a lot more could go wrong in a forty-four-year-old body than in a seventeen-year-old one. And confused because … Well, there was more than a quarter of a century's gap between her and her nearly here sibling.

Twenty-seven years … That was more than confusing—that was a tad bizarre.

It was all very weird and unsettling. Remy desperately hoped that Jan would take a different approach to raising this child than she had to her. Dear God, she could only pray. Just be *normal*, she told her still baking sibling. Normal would be perfect.

Remy felt the mood in the wine bar shift, felt the energy change. Grateful to be distracted from her thoughts, she turned her head to look at the new arrival into the elegant space. The man had stopped to talk to a couple sitting at a table close to the front door. His back was to her, so she admired the broad shoulders the white dress shirt covered, and the spectacular butt beneath the tailored, expensive black suit pants.

Finished with that conversation, he moved on to the next table, shaking hands and kissing cheeks, and Remy waited for him to turn around so that she could see his face. She rested her chin in the palm of her hand—at ease, as always, with flying solo.

In the corner a short brunette strummed a guitar and crooned into a microphone, while a group of women her age sat in a booth, laughing raucously and slamming tequilas. Groups of people were gathered around the horseshoe-shaped bar, and Remy couldn't help noticing the interested and predatory female eyes tracking Hot and Sexy's progress to the bar. In a room brimming with handsome and successful men he had the ability to capture a lot of attention without doing much at all.

He eventually made it to the general vicinity of where she was sitting and Remy could—finally!—see that face up close and personal: wavy dark brown hair, almost black, a long nose, and deep-set, mysterious eyes. Strong jaw, sexy mouth.

Oh, yeah. Very hot. Incredibly sexy.

Remy tipped her head as he was pulled into yet another conversation and noticed that while he didn't seem to say much when he did people listened. *Really* listened. Even in silence he exuded confidence and control. More than his face or his body—both of which were panty-droppingly attractive—it was that control and confidence that intrigued her. Alpha male, she decided quickly: powerful, wealthy, in charge.

She'd known many alpha men. They had littered the offices, bars and pavements of New York. 'Arrogant' and 'entitled' hadn't turned her head for a long, long time. He did. And she had to wonder why. Something about him made her lady bits quiver—and quivering was a *not* a good thing. Not good at all.

She was passing through Bellevue and she didn't need any distractions. This man, she realised instinctively, was the type who women made themselves look silly over, changed their plans for, embarrassed themselves with.

Remy was too smart to do any of the above.

Too smart, period.

Bo Tessier had noticed her as soon as he'd pushed through the glass doors to his family's wine-tasting bar in the heart of Bellevue town—a venue that both locals and tourists flocked to for their evening entertainment. Her elbow was propped on the bar and her hand held up her head. Her hair was a long fall of rich brown messy, loose curls, shot through with chestnut streaks too subtle to have come out of a salon. She had sculpted cheekbones, a stubborn chin, and a body that was long and lean—almost scrawny.

'You heard that Bella passed away?'

He pulled his attention away from the beauty at the bar and looked down at the expectant faces at the table he was standing next to. He'd been answering the same question all day. Yes, of course he'd heard that Bella Abram, his neighbour and owner of Bella's Folly—a Queen Anne mansion on five acres, bordering the east side of Belleaire—had passed away in her sleep the night before last.

'We're wondering who will inherit. Bella was quite well off.'

And there was the other comment he'd been hearing all day.

As for the heirs—who knew? Bella had kept the valley entertained with her many torrid affairs, but she'd never married, and since as far as anyone knew she was the only child of only children … dead end. When her heir was identified he'd be first in line with an offer to purchase. He could do without her monstrosity of a house, filled with rubbish, but he wanted that land. More land meant more vines, and there would be space for tunnels to grow organic exotic fruits and vegetables to supply their restaurants—and others in the area.

He was very aware that the land, being on the main tourist route leading into town from the more southerly towns in the Napa Valley, was also a prime spot to be developed. Belleaire did *not* need a housing estate or a golf course or a shopping mall on its doorstep. He couldn't think of anything worse.

Extricating himself from the conversation, he moved towards the busy bar as a tourist group seated in a circle rose and, gathering their jackets and bags, drifted towards the exit. Bo stepped up to the bar and raked his hand through his hair.

'Your usual, sir?' the barman asked, and Bo nodded.

The barman scuttled across the area behind the bar and Bo winced when an expensive bottle of whiskey nearly slipped from his hand. Resisting the urge to climb over the bar and pour his own drink—he'd worked behind this bar during his college years—he drummed his fingers against the surface before abruptly stopping when he recalled his sister Ginny's words.

'You intimidate the hell out of our staff, Bo. You're so distant, so unapproachable. Loosen up, smile at them occasionally. Crack a joke, compliment them.'

Years ago—before he'd lost Ana and long before he'd assumed the enormous responsibilities of running the Belleaire Group—he would have found that easier to do. These days he didn't have the time or the energy or the inclination to soft-soap people into doing their jobs.

Communication was not his strong point—as Ginny frequently reminded him.

'You can only take strong and silent so far, brother darling. No man is an island and all that …'

Bo gave a mental shrug. It worked for him, and since he worked crazy hours running their multimillion-dollar group of companies, comprising vineyards, a winery, farms, a hotel, restaurants and more than a few wine bars, he didn't see the point in fixing what wasn't broken.

Bo lifted the glass of whiskey on ice and closed his eyes as the first sip slid easily down his throat. His business might be built on wine, but there was nothing like a good shot of Irish whiskey to soothe.

Looking across the bar, he caught the eye of the barman again. 'Has my cousin been in?'

'Eli has come and gone, sir. He waited for you, but said to tell you that he'd catch up with you in the morning.'

Out of the corner of his eye he saw the woman's head lift, knew that she was listening to their conversation. He felt her eyes on his face, sensed her interest. He didn't mind—hell, she was gorgeous.

But many, *many* gorgeous women strolled in and out of this wine bar, through the tasting rooms back at the vineyard, through their restaurant, their art gallery, hotel … his office, his life. He never picked up random women. If he required female company—he was only thirty-five and he frequently did—he had a couple of women on speed dial. Women he knew, liked, was comfortable with. Women who understood that he only wanted a couple of hours' strings-free fun.

Bo placed his forearms on the bar and looked at his foot resting on the gold rail, resisting the temptation to look her way and initiate conversation. He should be heading back to the estate, to the first of the four luxury houses they'd had built when they'd decided to turn the Belleaire mansion and family home into a boutique hotel. The houses were tucked into the east end of the estate, beyond the vineyards, and were far enough away from each other so that he didn't feel as if he was living in his sister's or his cousin's pockets. The fourth house, smaller than the rest, they kept for visiting family and friends.

He had a full day tomorrow, a crazy week ahead, and he was nuts to be even *considering* chatting up this beauty with shadows under her eyes. He knew instinctively that she wasn't his type. He liked women like himself: cool, collected, calm. He could tell from the short sundress she wore with kick-ass cowboy boots, from her curly down-to-the-waist hair and make-up-free face, that this woman was a free spirit.

He always ran as far and as fast as he could away from free spirits, adventurers, women who marched to the beat of their own drum. He preferred women who were uncomplicated, undemanding, easy-going. Calm … He really liked calm.

He just knew that this woman was anything but …

So toss back your whiskey and get out of here, Tessier. And there's no point in running pickup lines through your head. You are not going to use them on her or anybody else.

Smart, very successful—rich, if she had to judge by his subdued designer threads—and a little or a lot lost, Remy thought. His broad shoulders looked tight and his thumb tapping against his tumbler suggested tension. His hair held the furrows of frustrated fingers raking through it.

She recognised stress when she saw it—after all, she'd once been the living, breathing embodiment of it—and she sympathised. He needed more than one hastily thrown back whiskey and some conversation. He needed to relax, to laugh, and probably a healthy bout of really good sex.

She could help with one and two, and she couldn't emphatically state that three was out of the question. She was *that* attracted to him …

Here's hoping you have a sense of humour, cutie, because if you don't I'm about to fall flat on my face …

'You are just the way I like my coffee. Tall, dark and strong.'

He half turned towards her and she sucked in her breath at her first proper look at his eyes, which were gunmetal-grey, framed by dark, spiky lashes.

His straight, dark eyebrows pulled together. 'Excuse me?'

Remy made a clucking noise and pretended to think. 'Didn't work? Well, what about this …? I've been looking for a man with a VCR and I've finally found the perfect one … That's a Very Cute Rear, by the way.'

He rolled his eyes but she saw humour flash in them. *Thank God.*

His strong face remained impassive, and if it hadn't been for that flicker of fun she'd noticed she would have run for the hills.

'Seriously?'

Remy flashed her naughtiest grin. 'Really cheesy, huh?'

That sexy mouth tipped up just a little at the corners. 'Very.'

'Okay—last one. Aren't you the guy who's going to buy me my next drink?'

He stared at her for a moment, before releasing a smile which took him from cool and remote to vaguely accessible.

Oh, cutie, you definitely need to smile a lot more.

'Not great, but tolerable.'

His voice was low, melodious, and as smooth as the expensive whiskey he was drinking, she thought as he turned away to order her a drink. Then he took the vacant seat next to her and, as she'd expected, blinked when he noticed her eyes. Instead of commenting on the pale golden colour, as so many people did, he just crossed his arms, big biceps pulling the sleeves of his dress shirt tight across his arms. She longed to loosen that perfectly knotted red tie, to undo the top button of that blindingly white shirt. She wondered what he would look like in lived-in jeans and a T-shirt … how he looked naked. Fantastic, she decided.

'So, do those dreadful pickup lines usually work for you?' he asked, his eyes unreadable again.

'You bought me a drink, didn't you?' Remy pointed out.

'This is true.' He pushed the glass of wine in her direction. 'Got any others?'

'Pickup lines? Sure.'

'Hit me.'

'They *are* pretty dreadful,' she warned him, her expression inviting him to flirt a little, laugh a lot.

'I don't know … the VCR one was dated *and* dreadful.'

Remy tapped her finger against the bar and pretended to think. 'Okay, what about … your body is a wonderland and I want to be Alice?'

He groaned.

'Could you please step away from the bar? You're melting all the ice?'

There was that smile again.

'Are you a dictionary? Because you just gave me the definition of gorgeous?'

Yeah, the smile's growing bigger. C'mon, I know it's in there somewhere.

'You're so hot a firefighter couldn't put you out.'

His unexpected laughter rumbled over her and Remy couldn't help her shiver, which was quickly followed by heat flowing through her veins. She'd got him to smile properly, to laugh. She felt as if she'd won a seriously important prize.

She sent him another dazzling smile. 'I'm Remy.'

'Robert, but most people call me Bo.'

Robert was too uptight, too formal, Remy thought as she took a sip of her wine, but she supposed it suited his cool, calm, Lord of the Manor attitude. 'Bo' suited the laughing man she'd seen behind the stick-up-his-ass façade.

And she really found *that* man far too attractive.

This is a good time to get up and leave, Draycott. Before you do something really stupid like inviting him to inspect your panties—which just happen to be red and barely there. Take your reality pill, honey. Remember the last time you had sex? Which happened to be your first and only one-night stand? Two years ago? It was so unfulfilling that you swore you'd never do it again … Is this ringing any bells yet?

It was, but she really, *really* didn't want to listen to Sensible Remy. She wasn't any fun …

'How long are you staying in Bellevue?' he asked, distracting her from her crazy thoughts.

Remy looked at the functional, no-frills watch on her wrist. 'Ten hours or so? I'm hitting the road at first light. Do you live in the area?'

He nodded. 'Are you travelling alone?'

She knew that he was fishing—could see the attraction she felt echoed in his eyes. 'Yep, just me.'

'It's a nice holiday … touring the wine country,' he replied, his tone so bland that she wondered if she was perhaps reading him wrong.

Then his hand moved across the bar and his thumb stroked over the pulse-point of her wrist, which instantly bolted at his touch.

Holy hell, she was playing with fire, she thought, staring at his strong, broad hand on her pale wrist. Unable to pull away from his touch, so simple and so devastating, she used her other hand to pick up her wine glass and lubricate her mouth.

'So, how has your trip been so far?'

Same voice, but his eyes were on her mouth and the gunmetal-grey had turned smoky with passion. How could he keep his voice so smooth while she was a maelstrom of nerves and lust and attraction? *Kiss me, already*, she wanted to beg.

No begging allowed, Sensible Remy whispered in her ear.

'Oh, I'm not on holiday … I'm a professional vagrant.' That sounded better—a little breathy but there had been words in a sentence. Pretty impressive, really.

His thumb on her wrist stopped. *Noooo!*

'Want to explain that?' he asked.

She couldn't. All she could think about was the effect he was having on her and her desire to get him naked, to have her hands on that warm, muscled, masculine flesh. There was no way to verbalise that three years ago she'd lived in New York, that her doctorate in computer science had landed her the position of youngest Chief Information Officer of a Fortune 500 company. *Ever.*

She'd had an apartment in Manhattan, worked eighty-hour weeks, had an ulcer the size of a fist and had been prone to panic attacks. She'd been discontented, unhappy, unfulfilled. Bitchy, demanding, impatient. She could never tell him that it had taken her landing up in hospital to realise that she was working herself to death. And for what? A fat pay cheque and her mother's approval?

Could he even *begin* to understand why she'd given up everything because she hadn't liked what she'd been doing or who she'd been doing it for? That she'd run? To Europe, and then Africa, Asia? And when she hadn't found what she was looking for in foreign places—that nebulous, indefinable something that would make her life make sense—she'd come home to see if she could find it by travelling through her own country.

Seeing that he was still waiting for an answer, she shrugged and bit the inside of her lip. 'I've been travelling for a long time.'

'Why?'

She tipped her head and shoved her tongue in her cheek. 'I'm trying to *find* myself—to work out why I *do* the things I do and *make* the choices I make.'

His lips quirked at her dramatic tone. 'Any luck with that?'

'Absolutely none,' Remy replied in a mournful voice. And even while she was mocking herself she silently admitted that she was starting to become slightly concerned that she never would.

'And how do you support yourself and your gas habit?'

That amazing thumb had resumed its rhythm on her wrist. She could no more pull her hand away than she could adjust the temperature of the sun.

Savings, investments, property … She'd worked so hard that she'd never had time to spend any of her ridiculously huge salary. She earned enough in interest and dividends and rental, and from the occasional virtual consulting job she took, to allow her to keep travelling for a long, long time. If she was really lucky she would find whatever it was that she was looking for soon—in Portland, maybe, or in the next town she visited.

'When I need to I find work.' There were always IT consulting projects popping into her inbox—some of which she took on, if they were interesting enough.

'Doing …?'

'This and that … I'm a hell of a cook—and, for the record, a really bad waitress.'

He laughed again and she felt her womb contract. Why was getting this hard-eyed, hard-bodied man to laugh such a kick? Such an incredible turn-on?

'Good to know.'

'So … what do *you* do?'

Bo lifted his eyebrows. 'What do you *think* I do?'

The corners of his mouth lifted in a sexy little smile. Was he flirting? He was so contained that she couldn't be sure, but she'd give him the benefit of the doubt.

'I'll play that game. Well, you look marginally intelligent,' she teased. 'Accountant?'

Bo pulled a face. 'Ugh!'

She pulled a face too. 'Lawyer?'

'Double *ugh*!'

She tapped her finger against her lip. 'So, not an accountant or a lawyer? I'd still say that you're in management.'

'Yeah.'

And she just knew that he was the top branch of a very tall tree. She couldn't imagine him taking orders from anyone. He was too controlled, too alpha … not her type at all. As a long-term prospect, she clarified. Along with her career she'd also given up on love and her dreams of happy-ever-after with a nice man followed by a couple of kids. She'd finally—*finally!*—learnt that, despite what people said, love, trust and approval were conditional—very much dependent on what she delivered.

So three years and two months ago she'd stopped playing that game, and she now kept any new relationships simple. Most of them were transient and fleeting anyway, due to the fact that she was constantly on the move.

And this was pure sexual heat shimmering between her and Bo: passion, lust and incredible chemistry.

Remy lifted her head from watching his thumb on her wrist—so fascinating, so thrilling!—and her eyes slammed into his. She swallowed at the heat and passion rolling through them and sighed when Bo lifted his hand and that magical thumb brushed her full bottom lip.

'So sexy,' he muttered as his other hand gripped her thigh.

Remy looked down at his hand and could easily imagine those tanned fingers on her breast, that wide hand sliding over her hip, under her bottom, lifting her to him …

Then he leaned forward and his mouth touched hers … warm, wonderful. Remy, shocked and surprised and utterly turned on, had to grab at his biceps to keep from falling off her stool. Bo steadied her by holding her waist, and she could feel the ridges of his fingers through her thin cotton dress.

Remy held on to his wrists and, wanting more of his deliciousness, pressed her mouth back onto his. He tasted like whiskey and breath mints and his lips were a surprise. Warm, firm, dry … *Confident.* That word again. What *he* was to his core and what *she* only had a glossy, thin layer of…

His hand moved to her spine, kneading as he worked his way up to her bare shoulders, moved around to touch her face. His thumb skated over her cheekbone as he deepened the kiss, his tongue sliding into her mouth.

Remy's eyes flew open at the bolt of lust that spiked through her. Where had *that* come from? She couldn't remember when last she'd been kissed with such mastery, such complete and utter self-assurance.

She wanted more of this—more of him. Now. Tonight. One night of passion with a man she knew would rock her world.

Grabbing every last bit of courage she had, she made herself pull back from him, determined to be sensible just for a minute.

'This sounds like an extraordinarily personal question, and I know you can lie when you answer but I hope you don't. Are you married? Involved?'

Apart from those hot, tumultuous eyes, he looked as calm and collected as before. Keeping his eyes locked on hers, he drained his drink. 'No.'

'Good.' Remy nodded. 'It's one of my little rules.' She shrugged a slim shoulder and forced herself to say the words. 'Been tested lately?'

Bo remained unruffled. 'Yep. I'm good.'

'Me too, but I'd still expect you to use a condom.'

'Noted.'

'Okay, then.'

Remy, hoping, praying, that she wasn't making the biggest mistake of her life, stood up and draped her black leather bag over her slim shoulder. She was as nervous as hell—couldn't believe that she'd had the … well, the courage to do this. Knowing that laughter would loosen the tension between them, she deliberately looked down at his feet before flashing him a naughty grin.

'You know what they say about men with big feet. Want to prove that to me?'

His shout of laughter had more than a few customers looking their way.

Yeah, laugh, cutie, Remy thought as they left the bar. *You sound amazing.*

'You okay?'

Bo's voice rumbled across her skin and Remy nodded, rubbing her head against his shoulder.

'Wonderful, thanks.'

And she genuinely was. Sleeping with Bo was nothing like the last one-night stand she'd had, and she was thrilled that it was so much more. There were no regrets this time—no feelings of guilt, no resentment at not being satisfied.

She felt relaxed and calm and, weirdly, *safe.*

She'd hit the one-night stand jackpot, Remy thought on an internal smile. Very good-looking, and his body, under those sharp threads, was droolworthy. Long, lean muscles, ripped abs, broad shoulders … And he smelled divine.

He was the best lover she'd ever had by a million miles. Sex with Bo had been fun and, strangely for an ONS, a little romantic. That had never happened to her before. With all her previous lovers her mind, ever analytical, had always ruled and she'd never allowed herself to fall into that space where she stopped thinking and just enjoyed. But instead of the fast and furious she'd expected, Bo had spent long, luscious minutes worshipping her body, allowing her to do the same to him. It had made what should have been a quick encounter deeper, more personal … softer.

Why was it that the one man who'd managed to show her how sex should be, who had been able to satisfy her beyond anything she'd believed possible, was the man she'd never see again?

Remy watched as Bo raised his wrist and looked at the bright dial of his watch, the roman numerals visible in the nearly dark room. This was it. In fifteen minutes—maybe twenty—he would slip out of her bed and then out of her life. She shouldn't want a little more time with him but she did: just an hour, or a day or two, here in this magical town.

Remy brushed her hand through the light, crisp layer of hair on Bo's chest. She rubbed her cheek against his shoulder before succumbing to the urge to bury her face in his strong neck, silently asking him to stay exactly where he was. She'd barely finished the thought when she felt the tap of his fingers against her hip, and she pulled her head back to look at him.

'I must go. I have to be up in a couple of hours.'

Remy sat up and managed a small smile as he swung his legs around to sit on the edge of the bed. 'I'm leaving early too.'

He reached behind him and squeezed her calf. 'I'm not going to ask you where you're going because I might be tempted to follow. I had a great time.'

Remy, holding the sheet up above her breasts, risked placing her hand on his shoulder and turned her intended caress into a quick pat. 'Me too. I thought we'd spontaneously combust that first time.'

His deep, sexy chuckle danced across her bare skin. 'We shouldn't have started kissing in the lift. We gave that other couple quite an eyeful.'

Remy frowned, confused. 'There was another couple in the lift?'

Bo stood up and pulled his boxers on. Placing his hands on his hips, he looked down at her, his mouth twisted into a wry smile. 'Yeah, there was.'

Remy tossed her head and didn't break contact with his mesmerising eyes. They were the most amazing shade of grey, edged with a ring of black. 'Well, sorry … I was kind of distracted.'

His eyes deepened and looked smoky again. 'I like the fact that I can make you lose track of your surroundings.'

Remy had to smile at the very self-satisfied smirk on his face.

When he'd headed to the bathroom Remy scuttled out of bed, rummaged in her suitcase and eventually found a pair of sleeping shorts and a roomy T-shirt. In the mirror on the opposite wall she saw her reflection and pulled a face at her very messy hair and make-up-free face. She wasn't looking her best, but what was the point of fussing over what she looked like when he was heading out through the door?

Out of her life.

One night. His staying any longer was not an option.

She shouldn't want him to stay at all.

Bo stood in the generic hotel bathroom and stared at his reflection in the large mirror above the basin. *This is a one-night stand,* he told himself, *a one-time deal.*

So what if it had been some of the best sex of his life? He'd spent two hours with her and they had done it … he could hardly believe it … *three* times. He wasn't in his dotage, but that was excessive even for him. He hadn't been able to stop touching her, seemingly desperate to make every second count.

He didn't want to walk back out there, pick his clothes up off the floor and walk out of her life. For the first time in far too many years he wasn't racing to leave, wasn't feeling the noose around his neck, the let-down after good sex with no emotional connection. All he wanted to do was to climb back into her bed and slide on home.

But that would not be sensible or practical and definitely not wise. Apart from the fact that she intrigued him—which he didn't like—they were out of condoms. Although if he didn't leave —*now!*—then he wasn't sure he'd be able to control himself.

Bo flipped on the cold tap and ducked his head under the spout, hoping the cold water would shock some sense into him. Why was he thinking about her like this? She was sex, pure and simple—a good time, and that was it!

She'd offered, he'd accepted, they'd both had fun—the *end.* He should be walking out through the door with a fat smile on his face.

She'd been a superb lay—the best two hours of his life … so why wasn't he feeling any better? Bo rubbed a towel over his hair and his hand over his jaw, now covered with dark stubble.

Since Ana he'd consciously, deliberately, kept all his sexual encounters casual and this had been supposed to be the most casual of all. A pretty girl—a tourist—someone he wouldn't see again. How much more casual could he get? He didn't know her surname, where she was from, what her cell number was, but she was the first woman in five years who'd managed to reach inside his gut and twist it into a knot.

And that was why he purposely, deliberately, strode back into the room and quickly yanked on his clothes. The quicker he left, the quicker he could go back to thinking straight …

Remy had left the bed and got dressed and Bo was thankful for the small mercy that she wasn't still naked; that would have made leaving a lot harder than it already was. Than *he* already was …

He sent her a quick look. She sat on the corner of the bed, her long legs crossed at the knees. She looked cool and composed, so he walked over to her and dropped his head to kiss her high on her cheekbone, knowing that if he didn't keep it light he wouldn't be able to resist temptation … *again.*

'Thanks, Remy. Have a good life.'

'Yeah, you too.'

Bo yanked open the door, closed it behind him and shook his head. If someone had told him earlier that walking away from her would be difficult he would have told them that they had rocks in their head. Walking away was *never* difficult.

Except that this time it really was.

CHAPTER TWO

Six weeks later

IN PORTLAND, REMY stood in the smallest bedroom, which her mum had turned into a nursery for Callum, and kept her eyes firmly fixed on her baby half-brother's face. Only the fact that her mother would kill her if she woke Callum kept her from running into the dark Portland night, screaming like a psychotic banshee.

She was on the edge of sanity and there were more than a few contributing factors …

Six weeks in her mother's orbit was about five weeks and five days too long. As it turned out Callum slept a lot, and Jan had had plenty of time to nag her adult child.

'When are you going to pick up your career? You have an obligation to use the brains God gave you for something more worthwhile than catching flights, learning another way to cook fish and then blogging about it. All that education wasted. You are *not* fulfilling your potential.'

Below those comments were the unsaid implications … *You disappoint me. I expected more. What you* do *is important—not who you* are.

But she now had a bigger problem than her mother's nagging her about her life …

Remy looked down at the plastic wand in her hand and pulled another two out of her back pocket. One displayed a plus sign, one showed two lines and, just to make sure she got the message, the third had the word 'pregnant' in the display window.

She was going to have a baby.

This couldn't be happening …

She was going to have Bo's baby. The stranger from Bellevue. Her one-night, blow-her-head-off stand.

Remy slid down the wall and rested her head just below the butt of the happy giraffe painted on the wall. *God!* Why, oh, *why* was this happening to her? She *couldn't* be pregnant—she didn't *want* to be pregnant—but she held the irrefutable proof in her hands. And *how*? Bo had entered her only once, maybe twice, without a condom. On neither occasion had he been close to his happy ending … The man had had incredible self-control and he'd used that control to bring her to orgasm after orgasm during the night.

But apparently one of his super-sperm had sneaked out and had been hell-bent on finding its own happy ending. With *her* egg.

Remy muttered a series of silent curse words as tears pooled in her eyes.

In his wooden crib Callum snuffled and Remy tensed, thinking that he was about to wake up. She stretched her neck to look at him. Crap! She was going to have one of … of *those*! They didn't even look all that interesting to have around; all Callum seemed to do was cry, eat and sleep.

She wanted to send hers back… Why didn't life come with a remote control? *Whoops, didn't mean to do that—rewind. Don't like that channel—swap.*

Remy banged her head lightly against the wall. *Life doesn't work that way, chicken.* She couldn't duck, ignore or rewrite her life or her past … no matter how much she'd like to.

Remy stared at the carpet between her knees. She was her mother's daughter in more ways than one: stupid when it came to condom use, apparently, but brilliant academically.

Like her brainy mother—a professor in mechanical engineering—she'd been in an accelerated learning programme most of her life and at sixteen had started at the same Ivy League college Jan was a lecturer at. She'd spent her entire undergraduate degree years feeling that she was an exhibit, her mum's pet project … paraded around when she was in favour, held at a distance when she wasn't.

After completing her PhD in computer science she'd been headhunted by Tiscot's, the biggest media and PR company in the country, to be their Chief Information Officer at a stupidly massive

salary. Her desire to please and to achieve had followed her into the workplace, and she'd given the company, and her boss, more than a pound of her flesh—part of her soul as well.

Her life had been consumed by work, and such dedication, obsession, such *stupidity*, had caused her ulcer to perforate and she'd landed up in hospital—which had given her some much needed time to think.

Lying in that hospital bed, she'd never felt more alone. She'd had no visitors—why would she? She had no friends—and the only flowers she'd received had been from the firm, probably ordered by the junior receptionist. Long, long hours on her own had given her the time to examine her life and she had come to accept that she was twenty-five, lonely—because she never made an effort to make friends—perpetually single—because she never took the time to date—and desperately unhealthy because she never took the time to eat properly.

She was also burnt out and possibly depressed. And every time she thought about returning to Tiscot's the flames of hell fired up in her stomach.

That had been a freaking big clue that she'd had a choice to make: she had to change her life or allow hell to move permanently into her stomach. She'd chosen to save herself and her sanity and had walked away from her corporate, high-pressure, immensely demanding job.

From New York she'd flown to England, but that hadn't quite been far enough to silence her mother's voice in her head constantly reminding her that she was making a huge mistake, that she was being a coward, a cop-out. That she wasn't good enough, wasn't working hard enough, wasn't achieving enough.

The rest of Europe had still been too close, so she'd headed for Asia, and by the time she'd got to Africa Jan's voice had been quieter. But sadly it still hadn't disappeared entirely.

Leaving her corporate life had been the right decision, Remy thought. And she'd seen some amazing places, met some extraordinary people. But travelling hadn't filled all the holes in her soul. She was still looking for …

Remy racked her brain. Why couldn't she define what she was seeking? Why did she have this belief that she would only know what it was when she found it? It wasn't love, or a man, or a relationship—love was conditional, an iffy emotion that wasn't steadfast and true. And, as she'd been shown all her life, it could be used as a weapon or a bribe. She had spent her life chasing it, catching it and then having it ripped from her grasp. She was *so* over it.

As a result, she didn't buy in to the premise that love, or a man, would make her happy. So what *would*? She wished she knew.

Was she looking for a new job? Possibly. A new passion? Definitely.

What she *hadn't* been looking for was pregnancy or incipient motherhood. That was taking her whole turn-over-a-new-leaf attitude a forest too far.

But a baby was on its way, she was keeping it, and she had to adjust. She had to make plans—start thinking for two.

But before she could make plans she had to tell Bo—tell him that she was pregnant and expecting his child. Bo deserved to know he'd fathered a child, and her child needed to know who his or her father was. She knew this because nearly thirty years ago, in a rare display of loss of control, her mum had gone to a party, got totally high, and couldn't remember exactly who she'd slept with that night.

As a result Remy didn't have a cookin' clue *who* her own father was.

Telling Bo was the *one* thing she was sure of. She owed him that. She supposed that she would also have to tell her family … which meant—unfortunately—having a conversation with her mother.

Remy sighed and pushed her hair back off her face as she stood up. That was going to be fun. Jan would respond as if she'd told her that she was intending to juggle with vials of something lethal. It was going to be ten times worse than telling her mother that she had given up her job to go travelling to 'find' herself.

Way. Way. Worse.

Unlike travelling, she couldn't just give up a baby and resume the life Jan had spent so much time planning.

Remy walked over to the crib and stared down at the tiny, tiny little bundle who was her mother's latest little project. *Unfair,* Remy thought, biting her lip. Her mum loved Callum and she loved her. Sort of …

'I'll try to shield you as much as I can, little brother, but I'm warning you she's a force of nature. Don't be too smart, okay?' she murmured, touching the back of her knuckle to his satin-smooth head. 'I'm going to leave Portland now—tonight. I've got to get out of here. And, no, I'm not quite brave enough to tell her yet.'

'Tell her what?' Jan asked from the doorway, her arms folded against her already flat stomach.

Her body wouldn't *dare* rebel and hold on to its baby fat a minute longer than it should, Remy thought.

Remy pushed the pregnancy test wands back into her pocket, hiding them, before turning to face her mum. 'Nothing much,' she lied. 'Just that I'm leaving. It's time.'

Jan nodded briskly. 'Good. I was about to suggest the same thing. But before you go I want to tell you about a VP position that I hear is vacant at Repcal Tech. It's a step down from where you were before, but beggars can't be choosers …'

Back in Bellevue, Remy thought as she pulled into a spare parking space in front of the diner on the corner of Main and First. Looking down, she saw the open notebook next to her on the cracked bench seat of her old Ford 150. There were just two bullet points on the blank page.

Fill up with gas.

Find Bo and tell him you're pregnant.

Easy-peasy, lemon-squeezy, she assured herself. Once she told Bo that he was going to be a daddy and that she expected absolutely nothing from him she could move on again. He would be upset at the news—and then grateful when he heard that she intended to let him off the hook, happy that she didn't need or expect anything from him. Then she'd leave.

She had, she reckoned, another three months of travelling before she had to make some hard decisions—like where she wanted to live, what she was going to do for the rest of her life.

That's what happens when you let yourself play with fire, Draycott. You get burned, dummy.

Or, in her case, pregnant …

Remy grabbed her leather tote bag and left the car, slamming the heavy door shut behind her. She had been travelling for hours and she was hungry and desperate to use the bathroom.

Remy pushed open the door to the diner and sighed when she saw the packed tables and booths. Apparently lunchtime on a Saturday was chaotic. She used the facilities and washed her hands and face, taking some time to run a brush through her hair, to swipe on some lip gloss. This was Bo's town, after all, and she didn't want to run into him looking as if she'd been dragged backwards through a bush.

And if she *did* run into him, how should she tell him?

Hi, remember me? Thought you'd like to know that I'm pregnant.

Funny thing … You know when you slipped inside without a condom? Well, it had a pretty big consequence …

Or her favourite.

I'm pregnant. It's yours. Bye.

Remy sighed at her pale reflection in the bathroom mirror before whirling away and heading back into the diner. Food always made her feel better. She'd have a bacon and blue cheese burger and then she'd tackle the problem of finding out exactly who Bo actually was and how to get hold of him. Once she did that her duty would be done and she could move on.

There still wasn't an empty table in the place, so Remy looked over the customers to see who would be most receptive to sharing a table. Years of travelling had robbed her of any lingering shyness and she could talk to anybody, anywhere. There were two good-looking blondes, one male, one female, sitting in a corner booth. They looked enough alike for her to assume that they were siblings. And, since they weren't lovers, they shouldn't mind her horning in on their private time.

Her mind made up, Remy walked across the room to the booth and flashed them her biggest smile. Ooh, the blond guy was *very* fine: muscled and masculine, with a gorgeous pair of deep brown eyes.

Rein it in, Draycott. The last time you flirted with a hot man you ended up with a lot more than you bargained for.

So Remy dialled down her smile and gestured to the empty seats. 'I'm absolutely starving and I was wondering if I could share your table. Please?'

The elfin face of the woman was tilted up and she smiled back. 'Sure …' She scooted up on the bench and patted the empty space next to her. 'Take a seat. I'm Ginny, and this is my cousin Eli.'

Eli leaned back and gave her a long, lazy smile.

Yeah, definitely flirting material … Except that he didn't do anything for her. The eyes were brown, not grey, his hair was too light and his smile was too open.

'I'm Remy.'

'Are you passing through?' Eli asked.

'I might be around for a couple of days—a week, maybe.'

It didn't seem that big a town—surely it wouldn't take that long to track Bo down? Maybe she could ask Eli and Ginny if they knew him. But later, after they'd all eaten.

She gestured to their half-eaten plates of food—salad for her, burger for him—and to their cooling coffee. 'Don't let me interrupt your conversation, please.'

Remy quietly ordered her food from a waitress as the cousins resumed their discussion around organic farming. Remy, not knowing anything about farming, and even less about organic farming, tuned out and leaned back and closed her eyes. Lord, she was tired. Soul-deep tired … Thank goodness she'd booked a room at the hotel down the street before she'd left Portland. After her burger she'd check in and maybe just lie down for a little while.

'Did you see the sample menus from the chef candidates that were faxed through from LA?' Ginny was asking.

'Yeah … not that I read them,' Eli answered.

She'd said the magic word 'menus' and Remy couldn't help tuning in.

'I bet you he didn't explain the brief properly—the vision of the restaurant,' Ginny grumbled. 'They're too far out. We don't want Turkish eggs and caviar omelettes …'

'What are Turkish eggs?' Eli demanded.

'Poached eggs, basically,' Remy murmured, unable to help herself. 'Although I do mine with mint, chilli and smoked paprika. Seriously yummy.'

'Maybe we *do* want Turkish eggs on the menu,' Eli told Ginny.

'Well, I don't want caviar omelettes. Caviar omelettes do *not* belong in the type of place we are opening at Belleaire,' Ginny said obstinately.

Belleaire … Remy thought. The fancy wine estate on the outskirts of town. Were Eli and Ginny two of the three family members who owned and ran the upmarket, famous estate which was prominently featured in all the tourist brochures?

Okay, she wasn't going to pretend that she wasn't listening any more. 'What type of restaurant are you opening?' she asked, intrigued.

Ginny pushed her coffee cup away and half turned to face Remy. 'A family place—breakfasts, teas, light lunches. Fresh, healthy, light, interesting food that's not … *pretentious.* I want people to be able to relax, to bring their kids there, but still be able to get a nice meal, a decent glass of wine.' She

pulled out a sheaf of papers from her bag and slapped them onto the table. 'My brother is currently interviewing candidates for the manager-cum-chef position and he's asked them to send through sample menus for what they would do if they were offered the position.'

Remy gestured to the papers. 'Can I look?'

'Are you a chef?'

Remy shook her head. 'No, but I *am* a cook and I adore food. I've done about a million cookery courses.' She skimmed through the menus, tossed most of them aside and kept a couple in another pile. She tapped her finger against the slim pile. 'These here are the best of a bad bunch, but they're still not great.'

Eli folded his arms and his biceps bulged. Nice arms, wide chest, flat stomach … But still she felt nothing. Weird.

'What would *you* do?'

She blinked at him. 'About what?'

'If it was your place? You obviously know food, and you seem to be familiar with the dishes on those menus.'

'Oh.' Remy thought for a minute, her face cupped in her hands. 'Um … interesting salads. Couscous and butternut, watermelon and feta—things like that. Soups with crusty, gorgeous bread. Hearty dishes like lamb stew, lasagne and chicken casserole. Classic puddings with one or two exceptions to keep things interesting. A specially designed menu for kids—but I'd avoid burgers and hot dogs. Fish and chips, a chicken pasta dish—meals that kids like and mums like them eating.'

Remy didn't notice the long look Ginny and Eli exchanged. Instead her eyes were on the waitress, who was walking in their direction with what was, hopefully, her burger. She was so hungry she could eat a horse.

'Are you looking for work?' Ginny asked.

'Sorry? What?' Remy sighed her disappointment when her burger went to the table two up from them.

'We're looking for a chef-manager to set up the bistro and you seem to know what you're talking about,' Ginny explained, her face animated with excitement.

'Uh … I wasn't planning on sticking around,' Remy replied, her mind whirling.

She was here to talk to Bo and then she was on her way. But setting up a restaurant, designing a menu, building something from the ground up, sounded like a whole bunch of fun.

Throughout her life, and despite trying many different activities on her travels, food had seemed to be her only constant. When she was a child, battling to reconcile her intellect with her emotions, Grandma Rosie had often hauled out her baking bowl and flour and put her to work. Baking calmed her and it and cooking was still her favourite means of stress relief.

When she'd started travelling she had finally had the time to indulge her passion; she'd started to blog about food and spent an enormous amount of time seeking out the best food markets, learning how to cook the local foods.

She'd taken a course in how to cook Thai food in Bangkok, had done a confectionery course in London, a *cordon bleu* course in Marseille. Sushi in Sydney. Chinese in … Sydney again. She seemed to gravitate towards the food industry, but she didn't want the pressure of working in a professional kitchen.

If she weren't pregnant she wouldn't hesitate to take Ginny up on her offer. But after seeing Bo she needed to keep moving while she still could. Some time in the next four months she had to find a town or a city she wanted to live in and—*ack!*—a job. Or, better, a business that covered her daily expenses and allowed her flexibility and freedom.

A cupcake shop? An ice cream parlour? An old-fashioned tea room?

And where? In Portland? Close to her mum and to Grandmother Rosie, who'd helped raise her?

'Do you have another job? Somewhere to be?' Ginny demanded, breaking into Remy's thoughts. She pointed a finger at her. 'I can see that you are intrigued and interested, and life is too short to spend your time doing stuff you don't like.'

She knew that—that was why she didn't have an ulcer any more. A baby, but not an ulcer.

'I *am* interested … it *does* sound like fun.' Remy tipped her head, thinking quickly. 'Maybe I could spend a week or so here, look over the space and draw up some sample menus. I could possibly cook a couple of dishes that you can sample. I can't commit to a taking a job right now—to *anything* right now—but I'd be happy to give you guys some ideas, so that when you do employ someone you can tell them what you want and not have to rely on their taste.'

Ginny clapped her hands in delight. '*Would* you? That sounds amazing. Of course we'd pay you for your time.'

'Hell, I'd pay you to cook for me,' Eli stated. 'So, how long have you been travelling for?'

'Ages.' Remy smiled at him and his returning smile showed interest. She checked inside herself again … No flutter, no tingle—nothing. *Damn.*

Eli must have seen something cross her face, because his eyes laughed at her before he softly spoke again. 'Huh, I must be losing my touch. That doesn't happen often.'

He said it with such genuine regret and confusion that she couldn't hold his arrogant statement against him. So she shrugged and smiled, genuinely regretful. 'Sorry.'

'I've lost track of this conversation,' Ginny muttered.

'I've lost track of my burger,' Remy stated, desperate to change the subject. 'Oh, good—it's on its way.'

The waitress slipped her plate in front of her with a murmured apology about the delay. Remy waved her away—and then blanched as the smell of fried onions hit her nose. Swallowing down her sudden nausea, which she attributed to her being on the *very* wrong side of ravenous, she cut into her burger and pulled it apart. She'd ordered it rare, as she always did, and the patty was perfectly cooked, oozing juice.

Her stomach climbed up into her throat and Remy slapped her hand over her mouth.

Ginny frowned. 'Hey, are you okay?'

Remy shook her head and pushed her plate away. She had to get out of here. *Now!*

Scrabbling for her bag, she stood up, teetering on her feet. Eli flew up and grabbed her arm, keeping her from doing a face-plant on the floor.

'I think I'm going to be sick,' she muttered to no one in particular.

From a long way away she heard Eli speaking to Ginny. 'Maybe you should take her to wherever she's staying, Gin, and I'll settle the bill.'

Before she knew it the pint-sized Ginny had a surprisingly strong arm around her waist and was guiding her out of the restaurant.

So … okay, then, she thought as she sucked in fresh air. Maybe she *wasn't* going to be one of those lucky women who got to skate through pregnancy.

Bo looked at his watch. He had ten minutes before his meeting with Ginny and Eli, and he was thinking, as he always did, that he was lucky to have his sister and his cousin as full partners in the family business. They fought like cats and dogs, but implicitly trusted each other, and each of them had their strengths, their place in the business.

His was the business brain and he kept the whole ship sailing smoothly, Eli made the exceptional wines the business was built on, and Ginny was the farmer, the viticulturist: responsible for looking after the vines and the land, the olive orchard and the vegetable gardens that supplied the mansion hotel and the restaurants with fresh produce.

On paper and in the eyes of their staff he was the boss, but in reality they operated as a rough sort of democracy. Any major decisions were made collectively, through negotiation and compromise.

Sometimes that negotiation and compromise sounded more like shouting and arguing, but whatever worked …

And it *did* work. Better than any of them would have believed when they'd inherited equal shares of the winery, house and land after their beloved grandfather had passed on ten years before. He and Ginny had supported Eli when he'd informed them that he needed to travel, to visit other wine-producing countries, and he and Eli had trusted Ginny's instincts to restore the Belleaire mansion to its former glory when they'd decided to turn it into a hotel. They'd both stood at his side when he'd buried his wife of six months …

Ana.

So little time as man and wife and he ached remembering that their marriage hadn't been the happiest time of their relationship. As always, before he forced those thoughts away he consoled himself with the reminder that he'd known her and loved her one way or another all his life. She'd been his childhood friend, his first girlfriend, his prom date. They'd broken up during college but had reconnected in their mid-twenties when she'd become his live-in lover, his fiancée, and finally, for far too short a time, his wife.

And, to date, the only woman he'd ever loved. Would ever love.

Ignoring the issue that cropped up after they married, he deliberately remembered that they had suited each other perfectly. He was ambitious and dynamic and driven, able to take control and to be in charge. He had grounded her. She'd been sanguine and scatty, easy-going and happy to let him do what he did best—which had been to make the decisions and to chart the course of their lives. They'd been the perfect example of opposites attracting, and lightning, Bo thought, shoving his hands into his pockets as he stared out of his office window at the sun setting over the western vineyard, didn't strike twice. He'd had the real thing. The *only* thing …

They said that memories of the people you'd lost faded, but even after four and a half years Bo didn't need to look at the large black-and-white photograph that dominated the credenza next to his desk to visualise Ana. The long blonde hair he'd used to love wrapping around his fists as he slid into her, her dirty laugh, her wide blue eyes. Sometimes he swore he could still smell her.

She was still as much a part of him as she had been … she always would be. Love didn't die with death. Or because of a rolling, on-off six month argument.

'I'll love you to the end …' he'd told her as the light of life had faded from her eyes, as she'd lain in his arms, battered and broken, in that driving rain. She'd needed to hear it and he'd needed to say it.

She'd managed a final tiny smile. 'Promise?'

'Yeah. Always.'

He glanced at the photograph and his heart contracted. He was still in love with his wife—would always be in love with his wife. Despite everything that had happened, he'd never stopped loving her. As a result he liked women but he didn't engage with them emotionally … financially. When you'd had something so amazing nobody else could compete—and he wasn't prepared for them to try.

And if the fact that he was still in love with his wife wasn't enough to put him off getting involved with a woman, then his job was. His career demanded eighty-hour weeks or more—when would he have time to date, for a relationship?

Nah, he was happy to play it cool, skimming along the surface …

Then his thoughts veered off on a tangent, as they often did lately, and the image of Remy—naked, looking down at him, her pale eyes warm with laughter—appeared behind his retina. Remy, his hot-as-hell, over-before-daylight, one-night lover. He could remember every kiss, every touch, every smell and he wished he could forget. One of these days he'd stop thinking of her … of that mind-blowing night.

Hopefully it would be sometime soon, so that his life could go back to normal. He hadn't seen another woman, hadn't had sex for six weeks, and it was time—way past time—to replace those hot memories of the champagne-eyed witch with the very bad pickup lines.

A hand slapping his desk jerked him back to the present. Eli and Ginny were on the other side of his desk, looking at him expectantly. When had they come in? He hadn't even noticed.

'Hi … what's up?'

Ginny and Eli exchanged a long, weird look. 'You called us to a meeting, Bo,' Ginny said, pushing her hair behind her ears. 'Are you okay?'

That would be a negative.

'Sure,' he lied, hating the feeling of operating on only one or two cylinders. He ran a multimillion-dollar company—it was time he acted like the super-sharp businessman he was reputed to be. Remembering his wife was normal—to be expected, even—but daydreaming about a hot night with a woman he wouldn't see again was not. It was utterly ridiculous …

Irritated with himself, he located the file he needed from a pile to his right and tossed it across the table to where his sister and cousin were now sitting.

Dropping into his leather chair, he leaned back and placed his feet on the corner of his desk. 'Bella's Folly.'

Ginny leaned forward, clasping her hands around her knees. 'The land with no owner?'

'That we know of. If there isn't a will, then the estate will pass on to her nearest relative. If there is a will, then it's simple. Either way, we need to find the heir first,' Eli said, placing his ankle on his knee.

'Yeah. There is going to be a *lot* of interest in the property.' Bo leaned further back in his chair. 'Moving on from one folly to another … The renovations for the bistro and coffee shop are nearly finished, and I'm flying to New York tonight and will be back tomorrow evening. I need to see some customers, talk to some distributors, and I'll also interview a couple of chefs for the position of the bistro chef/manager while I'm out there.'

Eli frowned. 'No candidates from California?'

'A couple,' Bo answered. 'These are better qualified.'

'We met someone today who had real potential. Someone who knew food and whom we really liked,' Ginny mused. 'She could be just what we're looking for.'

Bo lifted his eyebrows. 'Is she applying for the job?'

Ginny pulled a face. 'She's not sticking around that long—which is a pity, because I think she would've been perfect for the bistro.'

Comme ci, comme ça … Bo shrugged. 'I'll find someone in New York.'

Ginny shook her head. 'Just remember that we need the right *personality.* Someone who will fit in here at Belleaire with us. We want someone who is warm and funny, who can talk to kids and adults alike. Someone who has brilliant people skills and a solid sense of humour,' Ginny insisted.

The last person *he'd* come across with a solid sense of humour had turned out to be the best sex of his life.

Better than Ana? Really?

Different from Ana, he quickly amended. Very different.

I thought we were done thinking about her, moron?

'It would be nice if she was a looker, too.' Eli added.

Remy had been a looker …

Enough, Tessier!

Bo looked at his watch. 'I need to get going. Don't do anything stupid while I'm away, okay?'

Eli sent Ginny a sardonic look. 'How old are we? Ten?'

'One of these days he'll realise that he isn't actually the boss of us,' Ginny replied.

'Somebody needs to keep you two in line,' Bo told them, and held up his hand as mouths opened to protest. 'Yeah, I know. I'm arrogant, annoying and bossy.' He smiled at the two people he loved best. 'Now, get out of my office. I've got a lot to do before I head to the airport.'

Eli and Ginny, not in the least offended, stood up. Ginny, being Ginny, walked around his desk to give him a hug goodbye. It didn't matter if he was going away for two days or two years. Ginny would hug him as if he was leaving for ever.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BELLEAIRE WINE estate was dominated by a triple storey blue stone mansion—and how could it not be? Remy thought, pulling to the side of the broad, Spanish-oak-tree-lined driveway so that she could spend a minute admiring the house.

It had turrets and bay windows galore, balconies and buttresses, and was three storeys of pure whimsy. It looked like a grand old lady who'd had too many glasses of wine at suppertime and had decided to kick up her heels and dance a jig. It was loud and ostentatious and a tad over the top—and she absolutely loved it.

Her type of mansion, Remy thought.

The entrance to the hotel was just behind a massive square fountain, and there were discreet signs directing visitors to the art gallery, the craft shop, the potters' studio. In the other direction was the tasting room, and if she looked to the land there were rows of vines as far as the eye could see, heavy with grapes. It was late summer and autumn was on its way. Some of the trees were starting to turn and she knew that the harvest was fast approaching.

Remy, as directed by Ginny, took the path to the gallery and walked through the luscious gardens to her destination. God, it was pretty. How lucky were Ginny and Eli to own this, to be part of this? Remy looked around. The place was elegant, rich, tasteful … and Remy was *still* surprised that Ginny had invited her to see Belleaire up close and to join her and Eli for supper that night.

Remy felt heat in her cheekbones, still felt humiliated and foolish. After her mortifying display in the diner she'd shrugged off Ginny's company in the hotel reception area and stumbled up to her room, deathly tired and intensely humiliated, and had instantly dropped to her knees in front of the toilet.

She hadn't really left that bathroom since. God knew how she was going to manage eating with Eli and Ginny … She was still living on crackers, apples and cheese—none of which she could keep down. Dinner would be a nightmare. Right now, her best plan would be to tell them she was pregnant and that she'd just have a soft drink with them—she couldn't even drink wine on a wine estate, for Pete's sake!—and leave early.

Passing the art gallery, she saw another building with a sign stating that it was the Blue View Bistro and she grinned. Belleaire, Bellevue, Blue View … that worked, she thought. She pulled open the door and stepped into the large, mostly empty space.

On the wall closest to her was an artist's impression of what the restaurant would look like and Remy approved of the bright colours, fun artwork and welcoming vibe. There would be vintage mismatched chairs and tables, modern light fittings, and couches and chairs grouped in amongst the tables. It would be a fantastic mix of old and new … *Damn,* she wished that she'd be able to see it when it was done.

'Remy, you made it!'

Remy looked towards the bright voice and saw Ginny coming out from an area that was to be the bar. Surprising her, Ginny kissed both her cheeks before looking up into her face.

'How are you feeling? Better? I hope so. Come into the bar area. My cousin and brother are having an argument about bar stools. You're still looking very pale and washed out.'

Great. Good to know. 'Um …'

'What was it? Stomach flu?' Ginny guided her over to the door to the bar and yanked it open.

Well, here goes, Remy thought, stepping into a room dominated by a massive bar. She'd consider it a practice round for when she told her child's sexy father. And, dear Lord, he'd been *so* sexy …

Focus, Remy.

'Uh, no. I'm pregnant, and that was my very first bout of morning sickness—henceforth to be known as all-day sickness.' She kept her eyes firmly on Ginny's face. 'Actually, I came to tell you

that I can't do supper. I can't keep much down. The reason I'm in Bellevue is to tell the father that I'm pregnant with his baby.'

'Remy?'

It was the voice from her dreams—the one she still heard in her ear, against her skin. The one she heard in the memories she relived over and over again every night. That deep rumble, capable of sending heat to her womb, prickling her skin.

'Bo?'

He was dressed in battered jeans and an open-necked white shirt, sleeves rolled up to reveal raised veins on those tanned forearms. He was here—all six-foot-something of pure, pissed off male.

He got up slowly and she saw that his eyes were slate-grey and hard.

'What did you just say?'

What *had* she just said? She was so flabbergasted by his presence that she couldn't remember … Oh, hell. Pregnant. His baby.

Oh, heavens, why did these things keep happening to her?

Remy bit her bottom lip and folded her arms across her chest, thinking about damage control. 'Um … obviously I didn't mean to tell you like that …'

'You're *pregnant*?' Bo shouted, and she winced as his words bounced off the walls.

'Yes.'

Was it hot in here? she wondered as the floor rose and fell. Along with heat there was suddenly no air. Instinctively she reached out her hand and grabbed the edge of the bar to keep from falling over. She saw dots behind her eyes, felt the blackness coming closer.

The last thing she heard before crumpling to the floor was Eli's amused comment. 'Well, now, isn't *this* interesting?'

When she came to she was on the floor, her back against a solid male chest and two strong arms criss-crossed over her chest. She sat within the V of two legs, long thighs pressing against her own. She felt warm and secure and so very, *very* tired. Ginny was on her haunches in front of her and had a damp linen napkin in her hand, which she lifted to run across her forehead.

'Hey, you're back,' Ginny said quietly, her expression concerned.

'What happened?' Remy asked weakly.

Eli dropped to her level, rested his arm on his bent knee and handed her a quirky smile. 'Well, sunshine, you kind of announced that you were pregnant with Bo's baby and then you dropped like a stone.'

'When did you last eat? Are you getting enough rest? Vitamins?' Ginny demanded.

Remy pushed her hair out of her eyes. 'Bo …?'

She felt those strong arms tense before she heard his voice in her ear. 'Still here.'

Thank God. No, that wasn't right … She shouldn't *like* being in his arms. Shouldn't feel as if she was finally where she was meant to be.

Get a grip, Draycott!

He wasn't her man … this wasn't her place …

'Are you still feeling like you're going to faint?' he demanded, moving his hands to hold her hips.

She winced at the irritation in his voice. Well, it wasn't as if she'd done it on purpose. She touched her forehead and shook her head. 'No. I think I'm fine.'

His fingers dug into her skin. 'Be sure. I don't want to have to catch you again.'

Remy angled her head so that she could look at him. His mouth was drawn into a thin line and his jaw was rock-hard with tension. 'You caught me?'

'The man can move when he has incentive to do so,' Eli said in an amused drawl.

'Shut up, Elijah,' Bo snapped, and he scooted backwards and stood up.

Reaching for Remy's hands, he pulled her up into a standing position and kept a hand on her elbow—she supposed, to keep her from falling. Which was at odds with the furious expression on his face, which suggested that he'd like to boot her off the nearest cliff.

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