



*From warming his bed
to walking down the aisle!*

The Billionaire's Pregnant Mistress

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LUCY MONROE

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Аннотация

When the Greek Claims his heir...Greek billionaire Dimitri Petronides has one rule: duty over passion—especially for the women in his bed and this includes his latest mistress, the beautiful Xandra Fortune. But when Dimitri ends their affair, announcing his engagement to a more suitable woman, Xandra's parting shot before leaving turns his world upside down. Having disappeared without a trace, it's taken four months for Dimitri to track her down and now he's found her, he's not going to let her—or the baby she's carrying—out of his sight! Alexandra left the painful life of Xandra Fortune far behind, but the moment Dimitri appears, it comes crashing back. Knowing he'll use their searing attraction against her, she must resist, because this time more is at stake than just her heart...

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The Billionaire's Pregnant Mistress

Lucy Monroe



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When Greek billionaire Dimitri Petronides is forced to give up Xandra Fortune, his beautiful mistress, he's certain she won't be too distraught. They might have set the bed sheets alight with their passion, but Dimitri has a duty to uphold and Xandra isn't part of it.

Four months later, Dimitri makes two shocking discoveries: 1. Xandra Fortune is not who he thought she was; and 2. She is pregnant with *his* child. Now he has to track her down and claim his mistress as his wife!

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“I won’t be your mistress.”

He, too, shot out of his chair. “I’m not looking for a mistress.”

“Good, because I won’t be one. Not ever. I learned all I wanted to know about having uncommitted sex with a guy so primitive

he should be in a museum. The next time I have sex with a man, I'm going to have a ring on my finger and an avowal of love to go with it!"

"Just who is this man?" he demanded in a near roar.

"I don't know, but when I find him he won't be anything like you!"

"Just who is this man?" he demanded in a near roar.

He'd said the words a breath above her lips and then closed the distance. And the electric current of desire was there, waiting, lurking in her deepest subconscious to come to the fore with the first touch of his mouth to hers.

About the Author

Award-winning and bestselling author **Lucy Monroe** sold her first book in September of 2002 to Harlequin Presents. That book represented a dream that had been burning in her heart for years...the dream to share her stories with readers who love romance as much as she does. Since then she has sold more than thirty books to three publishers and hit national bestseller lists in the U.S. and England, but what has touched her most deeply since selling that first book are the reader letters she receives. Her most important goal with every book is to touch a reader's heart and when she hears she's done that it makes every night spent writing into the wee hours of morning worth it.

Lucy started reading Harlequin Presents very young and discovered a heroic type of man between the covers of those books...an honorable man, capable of faithfulness and sacrifice for the people he loves. Now married to what she terms her "alpha male at the end of a book," Lucy believes there is a lot more reality to the fantasy stories she writes than most people give credit for. She believes in happy endings that are really marvelous beginnings and that's why she writes them. She hopes her books help readers to believe a little, too...just like romance did for her so many years ago.

Lucy really does love to hear from readers and responds to every email. You can reach her by emailing

lucymonroe@lucymonroe.com.

To my resident alpha male—you are and will always be the hero of my heart.

Thank you for believing in me.

I love you.

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PROLOGUE

THE cold porcelain of the bathroom sink pressed against Alexandra Dupree's forehead as she leaned against it, her stomach still heaving from its third early-morning upset in as many days. She dragged air into lungs starved by the unpleasant moments spent bent over the sink.

After a minute of doing nothing but breathe, she tentatively brought her body erect. A small twinge of nausea hit her, but she was able to control it. Okay, as unpleasant as this new early morning ritual had become, she had something even less pleasant to perform. She stared at the small white stick with all the wariness she would feel for a snake found curled around the base of the commode.

Dimitri had been fanatical about using birth control. So she'd convinced herself one late period didn't mean anything, until she woke up heaving three days ago. At first she'd thought she had the flu, sure there could be no possibility she was pregnant even though the condom had broken a month ago. Her menses had come right on time a week later.

She still didn't understand how this could be possible, but she had too many symptoms to deny. Her breasts were tender. She was tired all the time. She'd cried when Dimitri told her he had to spend more time in Greece and wouldn't be returning to their Paris apartment for several days. She never cried.

She forced herself to do what was necessary for the pregnancy test. Ten minutes later the world went white around the edges as she stared at the blue line confirming she carried the child of Dimitrius Petronides.

Dimitri clenched his fists, refusing to give vent to his frustration.

“You know it is time. You are thirty, heh? You need a wife, some babies, a home.” The older man’s gray head tilted arrogantly, while he fixed Dimitri with a look that said he would argue this to the ground.

Dimitri had no desire to argue anything with his grandfather. He had barely survived a heart attack five days ago. Dimitri smiled. “I’m hardly in my dotage, Grandfather.”

The man who had raised Dimitri and his brother since their parents’ deaths snorted. “Don’t try to get around me with your charm. It won’t work. You’re my heir and I need to go to my grave knowing you will do your duty by the Petronides name.”

Dimitri’s heart contracted. “You are not going to die.”

His grandfather shrugged. “Who of us is to say when we will die? But I’m old, Dimitrius. My heart is not as strong as it once was. Is it so much to ask you marry Phoebe now? Why put it off? She’s a sweet girl. She’ll make you a proper Greek wife. She’ll give you Petronides babies.”

Eyes sliding shut, the older man breathed shallowly as if his short speech had taken more out of his weakened physical state than he had to give. Dimitri wanted to do something, but he was

powerless. His grandfather's doctors wanted the old man to have heart surgery, but he had refused to discuss it.

"Why won't you have the by-pass operation your doctor is recommending?"

"Why won't you marry?" the old man countered. "Perhaps if I had great-grandchildren to look forward to, the pain of such an operation would be worth going through."

Dimitri felt the blood drain from his face. "Are you saying you won't have the operation if I don't marry Phoebe Leonides?"

Dark blue eyes, so much like his own, opened to stare at Dimitri with all the stubbornness a Petronides male had to bear. "Yes."

CHAPTER ONE

ALEXANDRA nervously smoothed the kerchief style silk halter-top over the nonexistent bump where her baby rested under her heart.

The unaccustomed warmth of late spring had allowed her to wear the sexy outfit to boost her flagging morale. She turned to the side and surveyed herself in the full-length mirror in her bedroom. Her willowy body encased in the champagne silk hip-hugging pants and sexy halter looked no different than it had when Dimitri had left for Greece.

The week-old knowledge that she was pregnant with his child might show in her wary hazel eyes, tinted sultry green by colored contacts, but it had not yet affected the shape of her body. She adjusted the gold chain belt resting low on her hips and the multiple thin bangles she wore on her wrist tinkled like small bells as they clinked together. Then in a nervous gesture, she pulled another curling strand of her hair down to frame the soft angles of her face.

Curled and professionally bleached so many shades, it looked like rippling sunlight when she let it down, her hair was a Xandra trademark. Only right now, she didn't feel like Xandra Fortune, popular model and lover to Greek Tycoon, Dimitrius Petronides. She felt like Alexandra Dupree, daughter of an old New Orleans family, convent educated and shocked to be unmarried and

pregnant with her lover's child.

"You look beautiful, pethi mou."

Alexandra spun away from the mirror. Dimitri stood in the door, masculine appreciation burning in his startling blue eyes. For a moment she forgot her condition. Forgot the many truths she needed to tell him. Forgot her fears. Forgot everything but how much she had missed this man over the past three weeks.

She flew across the room and threw herself against his chest. "Mon cher, I have counted the minutes since you left!"

Strong arms locked around her in an almost convulsive movement while his body remained strangely stiff. "It has only been a month and you have been busy with work. You cannot have missed me that much."

His words reminded her how he had resented her refusal to quit modeling when they had become lovers, but she had not wanted to be any man's kept mistress. Nor had she had the option of quitting her job. She needed the money she made to support the family he knew nothing about.

"You are wrong. Nothing can keep me so occupied I do not notice your absence. A day. A week. A month. I grieve them all." She grimaced inwardly at her blatant vulnerability. Where had her sophisticated cool gone, the career model facade that had initially drawn Dimitri to her?

The first crack had appeared when he'd told her he was going to be in Greece longer than anticipated and she'd cried. After two-and-a-half weeks of morning sickness, a positive pregnancy

test and her mother's horrified reaction to the news, the Xandra Fortune persona was in definite risk of extinction.

Dimitri tried to hold on to his self-control, not an easy thing around Xandra. And this was Xandra as he'd never seen her. Clingy. Almost vulnerable, but he knew that could not be true. They had become lovers a year ago and although she shared her body with a generosity that moved him, she kept her heart and parts of her life hidden from him.

Their relationship was modern and free of long-term commitment, something she'd made it clear by her actions she did not expect from him.

She pressed her body to his in blatant invitation and he laughed. "You mean you have grieved my absence from your bed, do you not?"

That was the only place he was convinced she did need him. She wouldn't let him support her, making it obvious she would rather spend time away from him than give up any part of her career. None of this, however, made it easier to say what needed to be said. In fact, he was sure it would be harder for him to say the words than for her to hear them. His sophisticated lover would not appreciate a drawn out, or emotional goodbye any more than he would.

She shook her head, stretching up to link her hands behind his neck and brushed the hair at his nape. "I missed you, Dimitri. There was no joy in cooking for myself alone, no pleasure in watching the French Open without you to mutter when your

favorite double-faulted on game point.”

He frowned, remembering the play. She smiled at him with a look that spelled his doom if he didn't get his news out quickly. It had already wrought an instant response in his body. “I have news I must tell you.”

Her arms went stiff in reaction to the seriousness of his tone. “Can it not wait, mon cher?”

He reached behind his neck to remove her hands, but she locked her fingers with surprising force.

He clasped her wrists. “We must talk now.”

Alexandra did not want to talk. She was not ready to share her news. He'd seduced her from the beginning. She'd given him her heart, her body and her fidelity, as committed to him as any wife could be. Only she wasn't his wife and she didn't know how he'd respond to his lover getting pregnant.

Fear more than desire prompted her hips to grind against him. “No.” She kissed his chin, tasting the skin and letting her body absorb the return of its other half. “No talk.” She brushed her unfettered breasts behind her thin top back and forth across the crisp white silk of his shirt. “First, this.”

“Xandra, no.” He pulled her hands away from his neck, but made the mistake of letting them go.

She tunneled under his jacket and pushed it off his shoulders. “Dimitri, yes.”

He glared at her, but he did not stop her from pushing his suit coat to a pile of expensive Italian designer fabric on the floor.

She smiled in approval. "I want you, Dimitri. We can talk later."

She needed the affirmation that they were two halves of the same whole before she could tell him the truth about the baby she carried and equally as terrifying, the truth about who and what she was.

He grabbed her round the waist and lifted her until her mouth was even with his own. "Heaven help me, I want you, too."

There was something about the angry tone in his voice she did not understand, but she could not focus on it for long, not with his warm lips closing over her own in overwhelming passion.

She tore at his tie while he made quick work of the two hooks holding her top together. He helped her with the buttons on his shirt. The two garments fell to the thick pile carpet together and his lips never separated from hers. He pulled her flush against his body and the naked flesh of her already aroused nipples brushed the heat of his muscular chest.

She shivered in reaction while he groaned.

"We should not be doing this."

The words registered only subliminally, planting a question as to why they should be said, but she could not consciously respond to them. She was too overwhelmed by the feel of his flesh against her own for the first time in over a month. He seemed similarly affected as his arms tightened around her until she could barely take a breath.

Seconds later they lay entwined on the bed, the rest of their clothes discarded, hungry hands touching intimate places,

mouths devouring one another. They climbed to the heights together with a speed they never had before. When they tumbled into starbursts and oblivion, masculine shouts mingled with her own cries of pleasure.

Alexandra laid her hand over Dimitri's heart. It still beat with the accelerated pulse of recently spent passion.

"Such a strong heart," she murmured, "such a strong man." Would the news she had to share direct that strength toward her or against her?

His body tensed as if he had some premonition of what was to come. He rolled away and ejected himself from the bed. "I need a shower."

She stared at the six-foot-four-inch sexy giant towering above the bed. Tension was emanating off him in waves.

"I'll join you."

He shook his head. "Stay there. I will be quick."

Her heart squeezed at the small rejection, but she smiled and nodded. "All right." Craven coward that she was, she gladly accepted another excuse to put off telling him her news.

He came out of the bathroom fifteen minutes later dressed in his usual sartorial elegance, but his dark hair was still damp. His choice of another business suit over something less formal made her pause.

"Do you have a meeting?"

The chiseled features of his gorgeous face were set in an unemotional mask. "Xandra, there is something I must tell you."

She scooted into a sitting position, pulling the sheet with her to shield her body from the blue gaze that had mesmerized her from the moment they met. "What?"

"I'm getting married."

Everything inside her went still. Had he said what she thought he had said? No. It wasn't possible. "M-married?"

His hands fisted at his sides, his body stiff with tension she could no longer ignore. "Yes."

She could not take it in. It had to be some kind of joke. "If this is your idea of a marriage proposal, you've got a lot to learn."

Sensual lips twisted in a grimace. "Do not be ridiculous."

"Ridiculous?" She wished her brain would start working again, but she couldn't think in the face of his words.

"You are a career woman as you've shown time and again over the past year." He slashed the air with one cutting hand. "A woman with your ambitions would not make a proper wife for the heir to the Petronides empire."

She shivered with a chill that went clear to the marrow of her bones. "What exactly are you saying?"

"I am getting married and naturally our liaison must come to an end." The sick paleness of his features did nothing to alleviate her personal pain.

"You told me our relationship was exclusive. You told me I could trust you. You would not make love to another woman while I shared your bed." She jumped out of that bed, feeling dirty and used, the passion they had shared soiled with his

revelation.

Running his long fingers through the black silk of his hair, he sighed. "I have not had sex with another woman."

"Then who are you marrying?" she practically shrieked.

"No one you know."

"Obviously." Alexandra glared at him, wanting to kill him, wanting to scream, very afraid she would cry.

He sighed again. "Her name is Phoebe Leonides."

Greek. The other woman was Greek and probably meek, proper and brought up to marry money. "When did you meet her?" Though the pain was tearing her apart, she had to know.

"I've known Phoebe most of my life. She is the daughter of a family friend."

"You've known her most of your life and you just decided you loved her?"

A cynical laugh erupted from him. "Love has nothing to do with it."

He said love like it was a dirty word. Neither of them had ever spoken of love, but she adored Dimitri with every fiber of her being and had hoped that he had returned those feelings at least in some small way. Enough to make a marriage and family between them work now that she was pregnant with his child, but he quite obviously didn't believe in the emotion.

"If you don't love this woman, why are you marrying her?"

"It is time."

She swallowed convulsively. "You say that like it's something

you'd always planned to do."

"It is."

Blood roared to her head, making her feel flushed and weak. She swayed.

He said something vicious in Greek and grabbed her upper arms to steady her. "Are you all right, pethi mou?"

What planet was he from? How could she be all right? He'd just told her he planned to marry another woman, a woman he'd always intended to make his wife while he'd spent the past year using Alexandra as his whore.

"Let. Me. Go," she got out between clenched teeth.

He dropped his hands, his face registering affront and she wanted to slap him so much it was an ache in her muscles. He took a single step back.

She glared up at the face that had been more beloved than any other since they met fourteen months ago. "Let me get this straight. You always planned to marry another woman?"

Indigo eyes narrowed. He didn't like repeating himself. "Yes."

"Yet you seduced me into your bed. You made me your tart knowing you never intended our relationship to be anything more than sexual?"

He reared back as if she'd struck him. "I did not make you my tart. You are my lover."

"Ex-lover."

His jaw clenched. "Ex-lover."

"Why..." She swallowed the bile rising in her throat. She

couldn't ask this, but she had to. "Why did you make love, I mean... have sex with me just now?"

He spun away from her, his magnificent body sending messages to her own even amidst the carnage of their discussion.

"I couldn't help myself."

She believed him. She hadn't been able to help herself with him from the very beginning. She'd still been a virgin at the ripe age of twenty-two, but her innocence had been no barrier to the feelings he ignited in her.

He'd been shocked by her virginity, but not deterred in his resolve to make her his lover. She'd loved him and after two months of holding him off, she'd given in. It had been fantastic. He had made her feel cherished and there had been times over the past year when she had even felt loved.

"I don't believe you want to let me go." He couldn't.

"It is time," he said again, as if that explained it all.

"Time to marry the woman you intended to marry all along?" she asked, needing to make it very clear in her own mind.

"Yes."

Suddenly she felt her nakedness even through the mists of her anger and it shamed her. She had shared her body without inhibitions with this man for a year...a year during which he knew he planned to marry another woman.

She spun on her heel and headed to the bathroom where she jerked on the toweling robe she kept hanging on the back of the door. When she came back into the bedroom, Dimitri was gone.

A search of the apartment revealed he had not merely left the bedroom, he had left her.

She stood in the middle of the living room and let the emptiness of the apartment sink into her consciousness until it was so heavy it forced her to her knees. Her head dropped, feeling too heavy for her neck and the sting of tears began in the back of her throat.

Soon their acid heat burned their way down her cheeks and neck to soak into the lapel of the heavy Turkish robe.

Dimitri was gone.

Dimitri leaned against the wall in the hallway outside the apartment. He'd forced himself to leave when Xandra went into the bathroom. If he hadn't, he would never have made it out the door. Even now, the temptation to go back to her and tell her it was all a mistake rode him hard.

But it was not a mistake. If Dimitri did not marry Phoebe Leonides, an old man whom Dimitri loved more than his own life or personal happiness, would die. His grandfather had refused to back down from his ultimatum and even now sat weakly in a wheelchair, refusing necessary surgery until Dimitri set a wedding date.

His fist jabbed viciously into the palm of his other hand. Why had Xandra mentioned marriage between them? Why taunt him with the impossible? She did not want marriage. She could not. If she had, at least one time over the past year, her career would have come second and he would have come first. It never had.

Not once.

Xandra was angry right now, her feminine pride bruised. It had upset her to realize he had planned to marry another woman all along, but he could not take seriously the idea she thought their liaison would end in marriage. She'd made her independence too much an issue for that. However, she had obviously believed he had no plans at all in that direction.

More guilt added to the already swirling cauldron of emotions inside him.

He had not intended to make love with her again, but he'd lost his cool and his control the moment she went into seductive mode. For all her worldly sophistication, Xandra was not an aggressive lover. She was affectionate and responsive, more responsive than any woman he'd ever known, but she initiated lovemaking rarely and even then, she did so subtly. Her seduction just now had been anything but subtle and it had undermined his defenses with the impact of an invading army.

Afterward, it had been harder than he thought possible to tell her of his upcoming marriage while her body remained warm and fragrant from their intimacy.

He forced himself away from the wall and toward the elevator. A clean break was the only way.

Alexandra waited thirty-six hours to call Dimitri's cell phone, sure with the passing of each hour, the man she loved, the father of her child, would come back to her.

He had made love to her. She was sure he hadn't planned to

do it, but he had. He'd never slept with Phoebe. He had said he didn't love the other woman and equally important, he couldn't possibly need her the way he had needed Alexandra for the past year.

But he did not come and she had no choice but to contact him. She was furious with him, more hurt than she'd ever been in her life, but she carried his child and she had to tell him before he made the mistake of marrying another woman.

She refused to consider what she would do if the news of impending fatherhood had no effect on his marital plans.

The sound of the phone ringing beeped in her ear three times before he picked up. "Dimitri, here."

"It's Xandra."

She was met with unnerving silence.

"We need to talk."

More silence. "There is no more to say."

"You're wrong. There are things I must tell you." Did he notice how alike her words now to the ones he'd spoken to her two days ago?

"Can we not dismiss the postmortems?"

She sucked in air, but controlled the desire to scream like a fishwife at the insensitive tycoon dismissing her like yesterday's garbage. "No. We need to talk. You owe this to me, Dimitri."

This time she didn't break the silence.

Finally she heard a heavy exhalation at the other end of the line. "Fine. Meet me at Chez Renée for lunch."

“I’d rather meet in the apartment.” She did not want to tell him of his impending fatherhood and her true identity in a public setting.

“No.”

She gritted her teeth, but didn’t argue. “Fine.” Maybe a public setting would be best after all. He would hesitate to commit murder with witnesses, she thought with black humor.

They set a time and hung up.

Dimitri cut the cell connection and turned to look out the large window in his Athens office. He had flown to Athens within hours of leaving the Paris apartment. He hadn’t trusted himself to stay in France and not go back to her.

And that infuriated him.

His grandfather’s life was at stake and Dimitri refused to allow an obsession with a woman deter him from his purpose. His parents had taught him all the lessons he needed to learn in that area. His father’s obsessive need for his mother had resulted in years of volatile togetherness and ultimately both their deaths.

He could not allow a similar compulsive need for Xandra to affect the same result for his grandfather.

He’d been her first lover, but with a sensual nature like hers, he knew he would not be her last. There had even been times when he wondered if he were her only lover. There were areas of her life she kept hidden from him. She took trips abroad that were not modeling assignments, but that she refused to discuss with him.

He had told himself he was being foolish. She did not flirt or make meaningful eye contact with other men. She had always been gratifyingly hungry when they came together, but he'd never been able to dismiss the feeling she did not belong exclusively to him. If not sexually, than emotionally.

Which had led him to believe she would take their eventual but inevitable breakup with her usual cool sophistication, just as she took their many separations made necessary by her work or his. A memory of her tear-clogged voice the last time he'd called to say his stay in Greece had been prolonged rose up.

What if she had convinced herself she loved him? He shuddered at the thought. Love was an excuse women used to succumb to their passions. His mother had supposedly loved his father, but she'd also loved her tennis instructor and then the husband of a business acquaintance and finally the Italian ski instructor she'd run off with.

His mother had been a prime example of the treachery women perpetrated in the name of love. Dimitri preferred the frank exchange of sexual desire to protestations of a fleeting emotion that only caused pain in the end.

But Alexandra wanted to meet one more time. His curled fist settled against the windowsill.

He'd agreed because she was right... he did owe her.

They'd spent a year together and she had given him the gift of her innocence. She'd made little of it at the time, but his traditional Greek upbringing had planted it as a debt firmly in

his mind. A debt he should not have repaid with such a soulless dismissal of their relationship.

He hadn't even given her a gift in parting. She deserved better than that. She had been his woman for a year. He would make sure she was set for the future.

He could only hope his control at their upcoming meeting exceeded that of the last one.

CHAPTER TWO

ALEXANDRA remained seated while she waited for Dimitri to weave his way between the small bistro tables and join her. She'd chosen to sit outside, hoping the late spring sunshine would imbue their encounter with some much needed optimism. Dimitri's aviator sunglasses hid his expression from her, but his mouth was set in a grim line that did not bode well for the meeting ahead.

She resisted the urge to rub her temples, giving away the anxiety she felt.

He pulled out a chair opposite her own and folded his tall frame into it. "Xandra."

What a cold greeting for the woman he had been living with for the past year. She pulled the cloak of sophistication she wore like a protective covering around her and inclined her head. "Dimitri."

He pulled off the aviators and tossed them on the table. His blue eyes revealed no more of his thoughts than the mirrored reflection of his glasses had. "Have you ordered?"

Why that question should cause pain to slice through her, she had no idea. Perhaps because it exemplified a new level of distance between the two of them. He had not asked how she was or how her morning had gone. Presumably those topics were no longer of concern to him.

“Yes. I ordered you a steak and salad.”

“Fine. I presume you have a specific reason for insisting we meet.” As if the dissolution of their year long relationship wasn’t enough. “There is something I forgot to do at our last meeting as well.” He grimaced. “It did not go as I expected.”

She had thought she couldn’t hurt more than she already did, but she had been wrong. Not go as he expected? They’d made love with desperate passion and then he’d ditched her. Which part hadn’t he expected?

“There’s something you need to know. Something I have to tell you before you...” She could not make herself say it.

His brow rose in query and he pulled a sheaf of papers from his briefcase. He laid them on the table and then placed a small box on top of them, a box obviously the size of a jewelry case. There was an attitude of finality in the action that cut the thread holding her composure.

“You can’t marry her!” The words burst from Alexandra without thought. “She doesn’t care about you. She couldn’t and still accept your lifestyle for the past year.”

Again that mocking black brow rose.

She answered the unspoken question. “You’ve been living with me.” Surely no woman could tolerate such a circumstance and care even the least little bit for the man involved.

“I assure you, I have not publicized the fact.”

She clenched her hand against her stomach, feeling as if she’d sustained a blow there.

He was right. He had been very careful to keep their relationship out of the media, no small feat when she was a fairly well known model in Europe and he was a billionaire. But those same billions along with her circumspect behavior had made it possible. She had her own reason for wanting to stay out of the international scandal rags.

Just as she'd had her reasons for keeping her identity as Alexandra Dupree a secret. Just as she had commitments that had forced her to put her job before her time with Dimitri. But those commitments no longer held top place in her priorities, not now that she was pregnant and he was talking about marrying another woman.

"Do you love her?" He'd implied he didn't, but she wanted facts. She needed assurances.

"Love is not something I think about."

That was telling her. She bit her lip, tasting blood before she realized what she was doing.

He swore and dipped his napkin in her glass of water before pressing it against the small wound, his expression furious. "Do not do this to yourself, Xandra. Our affair was bound to end. Perhaps that end is coming sooner than either of us expected or wanted, but it cannot be a complete shock to you."

She shook her head, unable to believe he thought she had spent the last year looking ahead to an end in their relationship. She had never allowed herself to imagine a future with him, either. In fact, she'd spent the last year pretty much refusing to think of

the future at all.

"I love you." The words just slipped out.

"Damn it. Don't do this."

"Don't do what? Tell you the truth?"

"Try to manipulate me with such claims."

"I'm not trying to manipulate you."

Cynicism colored his features. "Then why have you said nothing of this great love for the past year?"

"I was afraid..."

His sarcastic laugh cut into her. "You were more sincere."

On one level, she understood his disbelief. She'd never spoken of love and he didn't know about Mama or Madeleine and the financial needs that had forced Alexandra to put him second to her modeling career. She might never have told him of her love either, but her pregnancy had forced her to reevaluate her life, a big chunk of which was her relationship with him.

Even understanding it, his scathing denial of her love still hurt. "You care about me. Don't try to deny it. Not after the way we have been the past twelve months, not after making love to me two days ago."

"I appreciate that having sex with you in the circumstances was wrong, but as I said I could not help myself."

Okay, so he hadn't agreed he cared about her, but such an admission from a guy like Dimitri Petronides wasn't something to dismiss lightly. He found her irresistible. Surely that must mean he had some feelings for her. "If it were only sex, you could have

gotten that anywhere, including from your fiancée.”

“A proper Greek girl does not give her innocence to a man before she marries.”

Did he realize what he was saying? It was archaic. Prehistoric. “What does that make me? A tart?”

His broad shoulders tensed. “No. You are an independent, career-minded woman. I wanted you. You wanted me. We made no promises to one another. I never intended marriage and if you are honest with yourself you will admit you knew that.”

“Why should I?” Maybe she hadn’t thought ahead to marriage, but she sure as heck hadn’t assumed they’d break up like this either. Not with him planning to marry someone else. “We had something incredibly special.”

“We had great sex.”

Her hands trembled and she put down the glass of juice she had just lifted to her lips. “I can’t believe you just said that.”

“It is the truth.”

“Your truth.”

He shrugged. “My truth.”

“Well, I have a truth I have to share with you as well.”

“What is this truth?” he asked coolly.

It was hard, harder than she could ever have imagined to pluck up the courage to tell a man who had just informed her what she had mistaken for love had been nothing more than great sex that she carried his child. In the end only blunt honesty would do. “I’m pregnant.”

For several seconds his expression did not change and then his eyes filled with pity. “Xandra, do not humiliate yourself this way. I will not leave you unprovided for.”

He thought she was worried about the payoff gift? She glared at the pile of papers and jeweler’s box near his right hand, wishing she could incinerate them with her eyes. “I’m carrying your child, Dimitri.”

He groaned and rubbed between his eyes with his thumb and forefinger. “You’ve always been very forthright, very honest. Do not stoop to telling tales now. Surely you cannot believe it will change the outcome.”

He thought she was lying? She felt hysterical laughter well up inside her. He thought she was lying now and had always been so forthright in the past. He believed she was Xandra Fortune, the French fashion model and orphan the world saw. And he didn’t believe she was pregnant.

The irony almost choked her. “I am not lying.”

His cynical smile galvanized her into action. She dug in her purse and grabbed the white stick that proved her pregnancy. She waved it in front of him. “One blue line means yes to a pregnancy.”

She did not know exactly what reaction she had expected, but it was not the volatile, fury filled one she got.

He grabbed her wrist, lifting the hand with the pregnancy test, his body vibrating with palpable anger. “You dare to show this to me?”

What was wrong with him? “Yes, I dare. I won’t let you ignore the reality of your baby just because you’ve decided it’s time to marry another woman.”

A nerve ticked in his jaw. “Do you think I am stupid? You cannot possibly be pregnant with my child.”

“The condom broke, remember?” He should. He’d made enough of it at the time.

“That was before your period and we did not have sex again until two days ago.” The grip on her wrist tightened painfully. “Tell me you are not pregnant. Tell me this—” he shook her hand “—is some kind of joke.”

“You’re hurting me,” she whispered as tears clogged her throat and burned her eyes.

A flash went off and he let her go, throwing her arm from him with disgust. She watched out of the periphery of her vision as one of Dimitri’s security men took off after the photographer. “It’s not a lie. I am pregnant.”

If anything, he seemed to swell with more anger. “It is not my child.”

For a moment his words paralyzed her. How could he doubt it was his child? She’d never had another lover. He knew it. “It is.”

His face contorted with revulsion. “All this time you have been haranguing me for planning to marry Phoebe, you have known you took another man to your bed. Who is it?”

His shouted question made her jump in fright. Dimitri never lost his cool. He hated scenes and putting on a public display was

anathema to him.

“There is no other man.”

“The evidence is not in your favor.” His voice had dropped to freezing levels.

“I don’t know how it can be, but it is.”

“I had planned to be generous, give you the apartment. I thought you deserved it, but I’ll be damned if I’m going to pay for your lover’s lifestyle and support his bastard child. I am not that stupid.” He grabbed the papers off the table, but tossed the box at her. “This should be a sufficiently memorable token for services rendered.”

She shoved the box aside. “There is no other man!”

His face closed up and terror coursed through her. He did not believe her. “You can have the tests done.”

He stood up. “Be assured I will demand them if you attempt to sue for any kind of support.”

Alexandra gulped, trying to get enough air. Trying not to vomit, but the pain was so intense that she wasn’t sure she could win the battle. Her arms were wrapped tightly around her middle and she still felt like she was going to fly apart into a thousand broken little pieces.

To have the gift of their child so brutally rejected hurt almost beyond bearing.

She whimpered.

Whipping her hand to her mouth, she blocked the sound with her fist. She did not want to let him see her weakness.

“You have twenty-four hours to vacate the apartment.” He gave her one last sulfuric glare, spun on his heel and left.

Alexandra paced from one side of the living room to the other. She’d called Dimitri’s cell phone at least a dozen times and gotten his message service every time. She’d left messages with the operator, at his Paris office, at his office in Athens, even with his grandfather’s housekeeper.

Every message had said the same thing. Please call.

He hadn’t. Not all day yesterday as she vacillated between tortured tears and blazing fury. Not through a sleepless night when she had tossed and turned in a bed too big for comfort without him in it. She’d tried to rest for the baby’s sake, but every time she closed her eyes images of him telling her he planned to marry intruded, or worse... his expression of revulsion when she’d told him she was pregnant.

It was now close to one o’clock in the afternoon and she’d spent the last hour calling every contact number she had for him again. It hadn’t done any good. She couldn’t sit down. She was so strung out and edgy, she felt like she’d taken a couple of the diet pills some of her fellow models used to control their appetite.

One thought played itself over and over again in her brain. Dimitri believed she’d taken another lover. What kind of trust was that? He really did think she was some kind of slut.

The thought sent her to her knees only to hop up again at the sound of a key turning in the lock. She flew to the door. He’d come back. Relief surged through her in unstoppable waves. He’d

realized how idiotic he'd been to believe she could make love to another man.

She wrenched the door open. "Dim—" Her voice choked off mid word. It wasn't Dimitri at the door. "Who the hell are you?" she demanded in English before remembering where she was and repeating her question in French.

The stocky bald man pushed his way into the apartment, followed by an efficient looking woman and another man, this one lanky and sandy haired. The woman spoke. "I am Mr. Petronides's facilities manager. I am here to oversee your vacation of the apartment."

Alexandra barely made it to the bathroom before she lost the little bit of food she'd forced herself to eat that day.

When she came out, the brunette was directing the two men in the packing of Alexandra's things with an officious looking clipboard in one hand and a pen in the other. The facilities manager used her pen to point at a small Lladro figurine Dimitri had bought Alexandra when they were in Barcelona together.

The bald man picked up the statuette and began wrapping it in paper before putting it in one of the numerous boxes the moving team must have brought with them. Alexandra stood in appalled fascination as every item she could claim as her own was packed in a similarly efficient manner from the living room.

The last three days had been nightmarish, but this was beyond a nightmare. It was so horrifyingly real, she almost buckled from the pain of it.

“He sent you to evict me?” She asked the words in a bare whisper, but the other woman heard.

She turned to Alexandra, her face impassive. “I have been sent to facilitate your move, yes.”

“Have you evicted many of his ex-lovers?” Alexandra asked.

The other woman’s eyes twitched. “Your relationship with Mr. Petronides is not my business. I am simply following through on my instructions.”

“War criminals say the same thing in their defense.”

Her mouth tightening, the brunette turned away without answering. Alexandra did not push it. Instead, she marched into the bedroom she had shared with Dimitri and started packing her clothes. She didn’t want those men touching them. She already felt violated by their presence and the way they went through her home removing her things, removing traces of her.

Two hours later, the packing was done. Alexandra returned to the living room and surveyed the neatly piled boxes the two men were preparing to transport out of the apartment. Were they going to take them down to the lobby and leave them there? Out onto the street?

Suddenly emotions that had gone numb in the face of Dimitri’s cruel ejection of her from his life, came back to life and Alexandra shouted, “Stop!” as the bald man went to pick up one of the boxes.

The man stopped.

“Some of the items you packed don’t belong to me. You’ll have

to wait while I sort through the boxes and take them out.”

“I had a very specific list from Mr. Petronides,” the brunette began to say.

“I don’t care.” Alexandra stood to her full five feet, nine inches and glared the other woman down. “I’m not taking his property with me.”

The movers must have read her determination on her face because they didn’t attempt to dissuade her again. It took forty-five minutes, but in the end she had removed every single thing Dimitri had ever given her. She’d gone through her clothes as well, chucking sexy lingerie from her suitcases along with designer dresses...anything and everything he had bought.

When she was done, there was a pile of objects mixed with crumpled manila newsprint on the living room floor along with two stacks of neatly folded clothes.

“There’s one more thing.”

The brunette just nodded, her eyes registering some emotion after watching Alexandra’s feverish attempt to purge her things of all items related to her ex-lover.

Alexandra picked up her purse and pulled out the white stick she’d replaced yesterday after the disastrous confrontation with Dimitri along with the jewelry case he’d left lying on the café table. She dropped them both on top of the lingerie pile. She stood up and grabbed the handle of her suitcase, slung the matching overnight case over her shoulder and exited the apartment.

Alexandra waited a week to hear from Dimitri, hoping time would calm him to the point of rationality. Seven days after she'd been evicted from their apartment, she read an article in the society column announcing his upcoming wedding to Phoebe Leonides. The girl looked about nineteen and as innocent as any virginal bride should be.

Alexandra checked out of the hotel she'd been staying in, arranged for her possessions to be shipped to the U.S., terminated her contract with her modeling agency, closed her Xandra Fortune checking account, canceled her credit cards under that name and bought a ticket back to the states in the name of Alexandra Dupree.

Xandra Fortune, fashion model and ex-lover of Greek billionaire, Dimitri Petronides, ceased to exist.

A little over two months later, Alexandra walked out of the prenatal clinic into the hot, sticky air of early autumn in New York City. She glanced down at the snapshot of her recent ultrasound. She'd put the videotape in her bag, but hadn't been able to tuck the photo away. She was enthralled with this proof of the baby growing in her womb. The baby she could not yet feel or even see in her only slightly thickened waistline.

It was a boy. A part of Dimitri Petronides she was free to love, someone who would return her love. Even weakened by constant morning sickness and exhausted from her pregnancy, she wanted to shout for joy.

Desperately wanting to share her news with someone, she

flipped open her cell phone and dialed her sister's number. She got the answering machine and opted not to leave a message. She could tell Madeleine the news when she went home later. She considered and discarded the idea of calling her mother. Alexandra was not up to another dose of "You've brought shame to the family name."

Compulsion she could not deny had her dialing the number to the Paris apartment. There had been no news of Dimitri's wedding in the New York society pages. Fool that she was, she couldn't stop herself from looking and even more foolishly hoping. Had he come to his senses? Called off the wedding?

Perhaps the latter was too much to hope for, but surely after two months he would have had enough time to calm down and realize Alexandra would never have been unfaithful to him.

The phone rang several times and Alexandra remembered belatedly it would be the dinner hour over there. Perhaps he was out, or not in Paris at all. She let the phone continue to ring, knowing she didn't have the courage to call his cell. For some reason this was news she needed to tell him when he was in the apartment they had shared.

The other line picked up. "Hello?"

Alexandra almost dropped her phone. It was a woman's voice at the other end of the line. She forced her vocal chords to work, praying the unfamiliar voice was that of a new housekeeper and not Dimitri's newest woman. "Hello. Is Mr. Petronides available, please?"

"I'm sorry, he's out. This is Mrs. Petronides. Can I help you or would you like to leave a message?"

Mrs. Petronides. Alexandra stopped breathing. The bastard had gone through with it. He'd married another woman while Alexandra was pregnant with his child. Funny, until that very moment, she hadn't truly believed he would do it. And it was only in the absence of all hope that she realized how much she'd been living on the unspoken faith in a man who cared nothing for her and clearly never had.

"Are you there?"

"Yes."

"Did you want to leave a message for my husband?"

"No. I..." The words simply trailed into nothingness as the joy that had buoyed her up since discovering she carried Dimitri's son drained away.

"Who's calling please?" The young woman, Phoebe Leonides, no...Phoebe Petronides now, sounded impatient.

Because Alexandra was so emotionally devastated, she answered the other woman's question without thought. She couldn't think. Her brain had ceased to function. She gave the name an occupant of the Paris apartment would expect to hear. "Xandra Fortune."

"Miss Fortune, where are you? Dimitrius has been looking for you. He's desperate about the baby."

Dimitri had told his wife about her, about their baby? Alexandra pulled the phone from her ear and stared at it in her

hand as if she didn't know how it had gotten there. She could hear the woman's voice, but not the words she was saying. She sounded frantic.

Alexandra cut the connection without putting the phone back to her ear.

CHAPTER THREE

DIMITRI took a sip of his neat whiskey and walked out onto the terrace of the New York high-rise apartment. It was empty, no doubt due to the chill in the air brought on by November's cooling temperatures.

He'd come late to the holiday party, at the insistence of a business acquaintance who'd told him the host was an investment banker he thought Dimitri should meet. For the past four months, Dimitri had had very little interest in making money. He'd had little interest in anything, but finding the mother of his child.

He was in New York because that was her last known whereabouts. She'd had her things shipped to a Manhattan receiving office and picked them up on the day of their arrival. One day before he had instigated a search for her. After that, there had been nothing. His investigators had been unable to find a single lead.

She'd canceled her contract with her modeling agency. She'd even closed her credit cards and checking account. No one had seen or heard from Xandra Fortune in three months.

Well, that was not strictly true. She'd called the Paris apartment four weeks ago and spoken to Phoebe. Xandra had hung up without saying why she'd called or answering Phoebe's questions about where she was. The call had been placed on an untraceable cell phone.

Dimitri still cursed whenever he thought of that ill-fated phone call. Would she have told him where she was if he had been there to answer the phone?

The sound of voices drifted out onto the almost deserted terrace and he asked himself why he'd bothered to come. He spun on his heel, intending to go when a woman caught his eye. She had her back to him. Long curling blond hair reached to the center of her back, a back that looked much too familiar. Then she moved, gripping the balcony railing and letting her head fall back as she took a deep breath of air.

"Xandra!"

She spun around to face him and his heart tightened in a painful knot, for although the woman had enough surface resemblance to Xandra to be her sister, she wasn't the model.

She smiled, even white teeth gleaming in the cool glow of the outdoor lighting. "Hello. I didn't realize anyone was out here."

"I came for the solitude," he admitted.

Her smile flashed again. "I know what you mean. I adore socializing, but once in a while the crush gets to me and I just need to breathe some air that's all my own."

He felt himself smiling for the first time in months. "Then I'll leave you to it."

She waved her hand. "There's no need. I don't mind sharing my little oasis of quiet. You said you knew Xandra?"

"Yes. I know her."

"She was an amazing model, wasn't she? She had just the

right combination of innocence and passion to shoot her to supermodel status. It's too bad she refused to take any New York commissions."

"She prefers working in Europe."

Something odd passed across the woman's face. "Yes, I suppose she did."

"You keep talking about her in the past tense." Had Xandra given up modeling for motherhood?

"That's because Xandra Fortune is gone."

Everything inside him went still. "What do you mean gone?"

The blonde sighed. "According to my sister, Xandra Fortune is dead, if not buried six feet under."

The words had the effect of multiple body blows and he felt his knees begin to buckle. He reached out blindly for the balcony railing and it was only by sheer force of will that he remained standing. "She's dead?"

He tried to breathe, but his lungs refused to cooperate. He felt the whiskey glass in his hand break and the sharp pain of one jagged edge pressing into his hand.

"Oh, my word. Are you all right?" The woman's voice was filled with concern. "Wait right there. I'll get something for the cut and to clean up the glass."

He looked down at the blood beading against the dark skin of his hand and could not connect it to anything he felt because all he felt was numbness. Xandra was dead and his baby with her. That thought pounded through his consciousness with the power

of an express train pushing away all other considerations.

It could have been minutes or hours later, but the woman returned armed with a first-aid kit and the maid behind her carrying a bowl of water and some small towels.

“Put those down on the table and close the door on your way out,” the woman instructed the maid. She gave Dimitri a small smile. “I don’t want an incident at the party. Hunter, my husband, doesn’t like scenes.”

“You said Xandra was dead.” Perhaps he had misheard her.

“Yes.” She bathed his hand and fixed a plaster over the small cut with gentle efficiency. “I didn’t mean to upset you. I forget that others don’t know...” Her voice trailed off and he didn’t press her to continue.

He didn’t care if anyone else knew Xandra had died. “Was it...” He swallowed. “The baby?”

Her hands stilled in their task of putting the first-aid implements to rights. “How did you know about the baby?” Her light brown gaze pinned him and her charming air had transformed to one of suspicion.

“She told me.”

“You’re Dimitri Petronides?” The woman spit his name out of her mouth as if it were a foul tasting substance.

“Yes.”

He didn’t see the blow coming, but he felt it. Her hand landed against the side of his face with enough force to turn his head and make him stagger back a step.

“You filthy pig! I’d like to strangle you with my bare hands. How you have the gall to come here, to my home after the way you treated my sister.”

“What the hell is going on out here?” Another man came storming out onto the terrace. A veritable blond giant. “What have you said to upset my wife?”

“Hunter!” The woman threw herself at her husband. “It’s Dimitri Petronides. He’s the one. You’ve got to get him out of here. If Allie sees him, she’ll have a relapse. She’s just started sleeping at night. Do something!”

None of the woman’s words or actions had made sense since she’d told Dimitri Xandra was dead, but then how could anything make sense in the face of that devastating fact?

He turned to go, more than willing to abandon the scene.

Alexandra could hear her sister’s voice raised in agitation from where she sat chatting with one of Hunter’s many business associates in the penthouse’s living room. She excused herself and stood up. Madeleine’s voice had lowered to the point where Alexandra could not make out what her sister was saying, but the urgency was still there.

She walked through the dining room tastefully decorated in autumn colors for the Thanksgiving holiday and out onto the balcony. Madeleine was gripping Hunter’s biceps and saying something about getting rid of someone. A bowl of water, tinged pink and a bloodied towel lay on the table to her right and the smell of spilled whiskey permeated the air. A small pile of broken

glass lay winking in the outside lights near the outer wall of the terrace.

“Madeleine, are you all right, chérie?”

Madeleine whipped around, her expression horror stricken. She rushed to Alexandra and grabbed her wrist. “Come on, Allie.” She started tugging.

Alexandra resisted simply because she didn’t understand the urgency in her sister’s voice and wanted to know the reason for it. She looked down the length of the balcony to see if she could discover the source of her sister’s agitation and froze. Dimitri Petronides was heading in the opposite direction, toward the sliding glass doors leading into Hunter’s study.

He stopped at the open doorway and turned. “I didn’t mean to upset your wife,” he said to Hunter in a voice unlike anything she had ever heard out of Dimitri’s mouth.

His gaze flicked over the tableau she made with her sister pulling frantically against her arm.

His eyes appeared unfocused, as if he wasn’t even seeing them. “I’ll see myself out.”

Then he was gone.

Again.

He’d walked away from her for the second time without a backward glance. It was no consolation that this time he would have been hard pressed to recognize her.

“I’m sorry, Allie. I don’t know how he came to be here. Are you going to be all right?” Madeleine’s voice buzzed in

Alexandra's ears. "I slapped him." Her sister's words finally registered.

"You what?"

"I slapped him and I called him a pig."

Alexandra almost smiled. "He deserved it."

"Yes, he did."

"How did you know who he was?"

"I told him you were dead, I mean Xandra Fortune. Anyway, he asked if it was because of the baby and I just knew."

"You told him Xandra was dead?"

"Yes, she did, but it's not true is it? You're alive and I'd like to shake you both until your teeth rattle." Dimitri's fury filled voice sent Alexandra's nerves into overdrive.

Madeleine dropped Alexandra's wrist in shock. "Go away!" she shouted at Dimitri.

He towered over them, his skin an unnatural shade of gray, his eyes registering anger and a brief moment of vulnerability that disappeared before Alexandra could be certain of its existence. "I'm not going anywhere. In fact, I think it is you and your husband who need to go so Xandra and I may speak in private of affairs that do not concern you."

Madeleine opened her mouth to speak, but Alexandra forestalled her. She pivoted her body so she faced Dimitri fully and fixed him with a bored stare. "My name is Alexandra Dupree and I'm sure you and I have nothing to discuss."

Since leaving her Xandra Fortune persona behind, she'd run

into former colleagues and none of them had recognized her. She'd had her hair cut short and dyed back to the rather mousy-brown color she'd been born with. She'd ditched the green contact lenses and her body at five months pregnant in no way resembled the willow thinness of Xandra Fortune's trademark figure.

There was no reason she couldn't bluff this confrontation with Dimitri out. And a very good reason why she wanted to. She'd thought and thought about why he would tell his wife about her and the baby and the only logical solution she'd been able to come up with was that Dimitri had decided that though he no longer wanted his ex-lover, he did want their child.

Something dangerous flashed in Dimitri's indigo blue eyes. "Do not play games with me."

"I am not playing any games. If you do not believe me about who I am, I can show you identification. I've been Alexandra Dupree my whole life. I should know." She deliberately infused her voice with a New Orleans accent, one she hadn't spoken with since being sent to convent boarding school in France at the age of eight.

"Ten minutes ago I believed you to be dead."

"I can confirm without question that Xandra Fortune is indeed dead, but I am not and I am Alexandra Dupree."

He didn't even look disconcerted. "You may be Alexandra Dupree, but you are also Xandra Fortune and how you believe you could deny such truth to me, the man who knows you

more intimately than any other, I cannot understand.” His usual flawless English was heavily accented with Greek intonation.

“I assure you, you do not know me intimately at all.” And that was the truth. If he had truly known her, he could never have suspected the baby had been fathered by someone else.

Terrible rage reflected in Dimitri’s eyes before he leaned forward and swept her high against his chest, his arms as tight and inflexible as steel bands.

Madeleine shrieked, “Put her down!”

Hunter strode forward to grab Dimitri’s shoulder.

Dimitri glared at him, his body tense with primitive masculine aggression. “Take your hand off me.”

“I won’t allow you to take my sister-in-law out of this apartment against her will.”

The entire situation was unreal. Dimitrius Petronides doing something so uncool as to attempt to kidnap a pregnant woman from a party was beyond the scope of her imagination, much less believable reality.

Dimitri looked down at her, his blue gaze compelling agreement. “Tell him you want to come with me.”

She glared back at him. “I don’t.”

Dimitri stiffened and Hunter became more menacing, but in his fury, Dimitri shrugged off Hunter’s restraining hold as if it were nothing more than a wispy cobweb. He spun to face Hunter. “I’m not going to hurt her. She’s mine. She’s pregnant with my child and we’re going to talk.”

After that, neither Dimitri nor Hunter spoke for what seemed like several minutes, but was in all probability only seconds. Then something passed between the two men and much to Madeleine's dismay and Alexandra's irritation Hunter nodded.

"You can talk to her, but you'll have to do it here."

Alexandra tried to shove herself out of Dimitri's arms. "I'm not talking to him."

His hold tightened. "Be careful. If you fall, you could hurt the baby."

"What do you care about my baby?"

If possible, his expression turned grimmer. "I care."

Those two words scared her more than the thought of giving birth to a child. He was going to try to take her baby from her. She knew it. "I'm not giving you and your little Greek paragon wife my baby. I'm not!"

He shook his head. "Talk. Xandra. We need to talk."

"You didn't even believe the baby was yours at first," she said, giving up any hope at deceiving him about her identity.

Emotion passed across his chiseled features. "I do now."

"What changed your mind?" she demanded, ceasing her struggle against the increasing pressure of his hold.

He smelled like whiskey, expensive aftershave and sweat. Something had made Dimitri sweat. In fact, his hairline still showed evidence of moisture. The thought of losing his baby must have really destroyed him. She could almost feel sorry for him, but she refused to be so weak. He'd denied his paternity of

their baby. He deserved what he got.

“I spoke to a doctor. He told me it was actually quite common for a woman to have one or even two menses after conceiving a child.”

“So you believed some stranger over me. I’m impressed, Dimitri. It certainly shows where our relationship fit in the scheme of your life.”

“He’s not a stranger. He’s a friend.”

Who cared how well he knew the stupid doctor? “I’m not giving you my baby!” she reiterated while inside she cursed the doctor who had put her bond with her child at risk like this.

“If you don’t put my sister down this instant and leave my home, I’m calling the police,” Madeleine interrupted.

Eyes deadly with intent, Dimitri met Madeleine’s gaze with his own inflexible one. “Go ahead.” He turned to Hunter. “I’m not going anywhere without her.”

Hunter sighed. “You can talk out here. We’ll close off the doors to the house so you’ll have some privacy.”

Alexandra shuddered. She didn’t want privacy with Dimitri. “If I have to talk to you, I’d rather do it somewhere public.”

“You don’t have to talk to him at all,” Madeleine’s angry voice interjected.

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