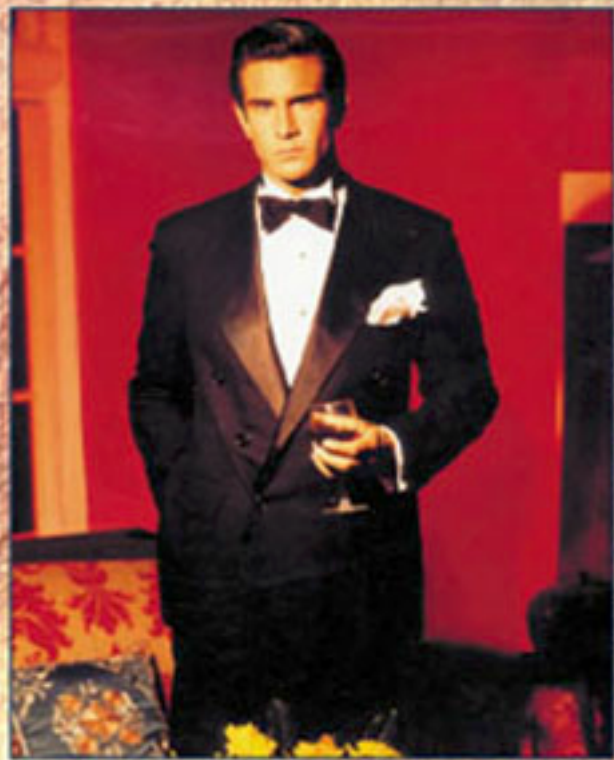


# Heart of Steel



Jennifer Probst

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This book is dedicated to  
all the good friends  
who have helped me on my journey:  
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this would never be possible

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inspire me and tell the truth.

And finally, to my niece,  
Taylor Marie Probst.  
You make the world a more beautiful place.



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# Chapter 1



Chandler Santell studied the man behind the sprawling mahogany desk and wondered if she'd lost her mind. She took a deep breath and tried not to fidget, but her expensive celadon wool business suit was beginning to itch.

How could she make a business deal with one of the most powerful men in the finance industry? Every firm she had contacted in New York City had rejected her proposal. Desperate, and almost out of time to save her Yoga and Arts Center, she decided to take a shot on one last name.

Logan Grant.

She knew why he was the “man of steel.”

Chandler ran down his list of attributes: owner of L&G Brokerage—one of the most successful companies in the city; dubbed the “man of steel” by the business community due to his ruthless reputation in closing a deal; a man whose word was law—and whose name commanded respect. His hard, steely presence in a room made people step out of his way. One word from the man's lips caused companies to double their

profits or go bankrupt from loss of investors.

Now Logan Grant held another fate in his very capable, very large hands. He held her entire future.

He read her business proposal without looking up. She studied the strands of dark sable hair cut slightly longer than fashionable. Distinguished silver steel at his temples helped Chandler place him in his mid-thirties. His features were too bold to be called typically handsome, but he had an interesting face. A tanned, almost olive complexion set off hard cheekbones and a strong jaw. Dark eyebrows lowered in a frown as he flipped through the pages of her proposal. His mouth tightened into a thin line, but his lower lip hinted at a devastating smile that could change his whole demeanor. Unfortunately, Chandler bet the man didn't smile too often.

He wore a dark charcoal gray suit, and though conservatively cut, the quality of the fabric and elegant lines told her his clothes were custom made. When he had stood to welcome her, he towered easily over six feet and radiated a tightly contained raw energy. Even as he studied the figures in front of him, his presence pressed down upon her in a purely masculine intimidating manner. Another advantage the man held when closing a business deal.

Chandler pulled discreetly at the itchy neckline of her suit and wished she was back in her studio, conducting a class in her own comfortable clothes. Four years ago, she'd walked away from the corporate world and vowed to never return. She felt an

ironic smile play about her lips. The Fates certainly possessed a sense of humor. She was now about to use all the skills she acquired from her past to convince Logan Grant to help save the Yoga and Arts Center, the school she built from scratch.

She hoped the Fates were also kind.

Logan dropped the proposal back on the polished wood and looked up. His gray gaze, as clear as ice but with a smoky intenseness, made her stare helplessly back, as if she had no choice. A shiver rose up her spine. She knew immediately he was not a kind man. Chandler fought against the sudden urge to walk out of his office and hide in a safe place.

An inner voice mocked her thought. If Logan Grant wanted to find her, there would be no safe place. She took another deep breath and braced herself for his decision.

“You are one gutsy lady.”

She blinked. “Excuse me?”

He leaned back in his chair and surveyed her. The leather creaked gently beneath his weight. “I’ve seen many projects looking for funding, but never one with so many—how should I put it? Good intentions. I’ve heard of financing a health club, but a class that helps my employees manage stress? The results are impossible to measure. How do I make a profit?”

Chandler leaned forward slightly, resisting the urge to pull down the hem of her tight skirt. Her legs itched from the scratchy material, but she wasn’t about to draw his attention there. “Your investment will come

back to you time and time again, Mr. Grant.

“As you’ve just read in my research, employees today aren’t working to their full potential. L&G Brokerage, like many firms, suffers from high turnover. An employee hired by your firm shows productive results for an average of two years. Then the employee exhibits signs of burnout, and your firm hires a batch of fresh blood. Teach an employee to deal with stress, and he or she will keep productivity steady over the years. This saves you from hiring and retraining a new work force.”

He studied her in silence. Chandler felt his piercing gaze try to strip away the cool, professional image she presented. She hoped he never saw her desperation, or she would fail. A man in his position respected strength, and she guessed he’d expected a mild mannered yoga teacher with no developed business plan. She’d spent weeks begging his secretary to schedule this meeting. Chandler knew she’d have one shot to sell her proposal.

She reached up unconsciously to push back her long hair, then realized the strands were confined in a tight bun. “Mr. Grant, if you’d let me—”

“Logan,” he interrupted smoothly.

“Logan, if you’d let me give you a brief rundown of my plan, I’m sure you’ll see the benefits.”

A soft knock on the door made her pause. A tall man with light brown hair entered the room and stopped beside her chair.

“Chandler, this is Richard Thorne, one of my attorneys. I asked him to sit in on this meeting, if you don’t mind.”

She forced a smile and stood. Offering up a quick prayer that her palms weren't damp, she reached out and shook the attorney's hand. Somehow, the idea of a lawyer listening to her proposal drove home the fact that she was dealing with major league players. She fought back a nervous giggle when she remembered she'd never even scored in the minor leagues. "Nice to meet you," she said.

The attorney's hand held hers for a moment longer, and he smiled as if he knew her thoughts. Chestnut colored eyes showed a teasing glint. "Don't let my being an attorney intimidate you," he said, with a wink. "I'm really harmless."

She laughed. His lean, angular face seemed kinder than Logan's and his smile came quick and easy. He took a chair near the window and settled a legal pad on his lap.

Chandler managed to give one leg a quick scratch, and her skirt a discreet tug as she sat back down. She re-focused her attention back to Logan.

"You've made some good points but still didn't answer my question." Logan handed the proposal to his attorney, then tapped his gold pen against the arm of his leather chair. "Why funnel money into a program that can't guarantee a profit?"

Chandler dug bronze fingernails into the seat cushion, and reigned in her frustration. Businessmen only liked the bottom line—money. People didn't interest Logan Grant. Profit did.

She concealed her rising irritation, tried not to

blink her lashes in nervousness, and gave Logan her most convincing business smile. “When employees suffer from stress, job performance also suffers. My workshop will teach them to be calm under pressure, and attack problems with a clear mind. Employees will show a more positive attitude toward their jobs. Maybe my workshop won’t make you a million dollars, but investing in people always brings profit in the long run.”

She almost bit her tongue when she caught the hard steel gleam in his eyes. Damn, she wasn’t softening him up. In fact, he looked a little angry. She tried to casually re-cross her legs. Perfect. Both men’s eyes went immediately to her hemline. The meeting was becoming a disaster, and she was definitely allergic to wool.

“Interesting point,” Logan said, his gaze rising to her face. “But you don’t sound as if you approve of million dollar profits.”

“Oh, but I do. As long as people aren’t sacrificed.”

He nodded. “Spoken like a true yoga teacher.” His gray gaze drilled into her. “I’m curious how you became involved in this field of work. Your proposal is impressive. If I didn’t know better, I’d swear you graduated with a business degree.”

“I hold a bachelor’s degree in psychology with a minor in business.” She tried to keep a straight face when she saw his surprise. “I confess I’m a vegetarian—or at least I try to be—but I hate green sprouts and tofu. I still have trouble standing on my head. But I

do take a multi-vitamin daily.”

A smile tugged at his lips. “Am I that bad?”

Chandler nodded her head and laughed. “Most people equate the term yoga with an image of a guru in a turban. I was equally doubtful the first time I took a class. I completed a paper in college on the effect of meditation on society. I researched yoga, and became hooked. Learning to focus so clearly gave me the feeling I could accomplish anything. It also gave me the freedom to be comfortable doing nothing at all.”

She shook her head at the memory. “Everyone is so caught up in the rat race. Complete a degree, make loads of money, support a family.” She leaned forward. “We start to forget the feel of sunshine on our face, the salty smell of the ocean, the taste of chocolate. We sleep through the sunrise and ignore the sunset. We don’t know how to stand still and enjoy the moment.”

She watched as a slight frown creased his brow.

Logan studied her for a moment, saying nothing. When he’d first heard he was scheduled to speak with a yoga teacher, he’d been ready to wring his secretary’s neck. The last thing he wanted was to waste time discussing proposals with a flower child of the new millennium, so he’d decided to cut the meeting short.

He changed his mind the moment she entered the room. Maybe it was the banked flame he saw in her emerald eyes; or all that dark honey hair begging to be set free of her severe spinster bun. He wondered how far it would tumble down her back.

She moved with a natural grace and had greeted

him in a low, husky voice that soothed his ears. As they exchanged pleasantries, he'd decided to humor her for a while and look over the proposal. After all, the time was blocked on his calendar, and he'd have the opportunity to satisfy his curiosity.

He hadn't expected her business plan to be good.

But what was even worse, Logan decided as he watched her fidget beneath his stare, was his reaction to the woman herself. Her passion for her plan caused an odd hunger to stir deep in his gut. When was the last time he had gotten impassioned over a sunset, or even thought of something other than his next business deal? Maybe, Chandler Santell lived moment to moment, with no intentions of settling down with a husband and family. Logan ignored the faint prickle of unease that shot through him at the image of her making love to anyone but him.

"You sound like you decided to give up the kind of life most people strive for," he said.

A shadow passed over her face as she dealt with the memories. Then she forced a smile. "There's a certain amount of reality in that world. I follow a different path. I'd like to see people made more aware of the simple daily pleasures, then they can make their own choice."

"Sometimes there are no choices, Chandler. Sometimes people do the best they can."

She blinked in surprise at her body's sudden, feminine reaction to his words. Her mouth became dry. Her stomach clenched into a tight, silken fist. Funny,

how the sound of her name from this man's lips evoked a sensation she'd never experienced before. Her body seemed to vibrate, humming to a tune she couldn't quite catch. Maybe it was just the way his voice caressed, deepening to a low, dark pitch as he spoke. Maybe it was the sudden glint of regret she caught in his eyes, that made her wonder what events had shaped this powerful man's life. Or maybe she was finally losing her mind.

This time she caught her hand in mid-air before she pushed away honey brown strands that weren't there. She tried to re-direct the conversation back to business. "This program will keep you on the cutting edge."

"How would you implement the workshops?" he asked. "To be perfectly blunt, I can't see my executives seeking out a stress reduction class."

She nodded. This was the delicate part of the negotiations. She tried to keep her mind clear and calm her nerves. "I've given the matter some thought. When a seminar is offered in a company the employees take note of which groups attend and how important their function is. For example, if top management signs up for a seminar, the lower level managers usually follow, until it works its way down the hierarchy."

She clasped her hands together and knew she had his full attention. "So, if we institute a stress reduction workshop, there's only one way every employee will attend." Chandler paused. "You have to be the first person to enroll."

A short silence fell as her words hung in the air.

Then he smiled. Chandler pulled in her breath at the sight of his dangerous, masculine smile which displayed a row of straight, white teeth. Logan Grant looked as if he'd found an interesting prey and wanted to toy with his catch. She shivered at the thought.

“You want me to go to these classes personally?”

Chandler gathered her courage and took the plunge. “Yes, I do, Mr. Grant. It's the only way this program will work and—”

“Logan,” he interrupted softly.

“I think this class will be the best thing for you.”

“How so?” he drawled, leaning back in his chair.

She crossed her arms in front of her and vowed not to be intimidated by his tone. The words bubbled out of her mouth before she stopped to think.

“I'd guess by the dregs left in the coffee pot and the tired look in your eyes that you've been up half the night, going on caffeine and raw adrenaline. I'd also guess your temper hit full steam first thing this morning by the way your secretary looks at you with fear. Papers are stacked on your desk, it took me over a month to get an appointment, and I bet the door behind you leads directly to a bathroom and sofa. You probably work day and night here. All in all, I think a class teaching you to deal with stress couldn't hurt.”

She inwardly cringed and waited for the explosion. No wonder she hadn't done well in the business world. Her father always warned her blunt honesty never closed a deal. But how could she stay quiet and watch someone go blithely through life, without really

living? Collecting the next degree or earning the next million didn't ensure peace or happiness. Once, she lived her life by a similar philosophy, and searched for something to help her forget the emptiness. Alexander Santell taught her about money and power, confident his only daughter would follow in his footsteps and inherit control of the company. She'd watched her father ignore his own family to pursue the path of success, and he lost everyone who'd ever cared or loved him. She didn't want to someday see the man across from her in the hospital because of a heart attack, where all the money in the world couldn't help. If she implemented her stress seminar, he'd finally understand.

She'd teach him to understand. If he gave her the chance.

Logan studied the woman across his desk with amusement. Obviously, she regretted her impulsive words but decided to brazen it out. She held her chin high in defiance. Admiration flashed through him. Of course, he'd be insane to accept her offer. There was no sure way to measure the results. There was no guaranteed profit.

There was no way he'd agree to her proposal.

He tapped his pen against the desk in a steady rhythm, and tried to analyze his deep pang of regret at the thought of Chandler Santell walking out the door and out of his life. He heard honest concern and anger in her voice when she lectured him on his work habits. In his long climb up the ladder of success,

many people gave advice regarding his next business move, and many shared in his rewards. But no one expressed interest in his personal health, or suggested a move to help *him*.

His eyes raked over her figure for about the twentieth time. He took in her professional appearance from her tawny polished fingertips matching her honey-hued hair pulled back into a strangled bun, to the high neckline and short wool skirt of her “show-me-the-money” green business suit, to her too sensible low heeled black pumps. She projected the image of a serious businesswoman who desired to be accepted into a man’s world, but not be particularly noticed by anyone. Especially a man.

The problem, Logan decided, was that Chandler Santell was destined to fail at her goal of men not noticing her.

He knew by the way she unconsciously lifted her hand to check her bun that her hair would spill around her shoulders in riotous waves. Anger made her green eyes flash, which would challenge a man to turn temper into passion. Her lips may be drawn tightly together, but Logan glimpsed the gentle fullness to her mouth, hinting at a certain softness and vulnerability. Her business suit couldn’t hide ripe curves, or long slender legs. Even her scent bewitched him; a subtle fragrance of vanilla that teased his senses and kept him from concentrating on their conversation.

As she spoke, he realized beneath her constrained appearance lurked a passionate spirit yearning for

freedom. He became intrigued at the thought of tapping into a hidden part of Chandler Santell. He wondered if such a spirit could be tamed to live with one man, or if she'd ever even met a man with enough guts to try.

Chandler expected ice, but his gunmetal gaze drilled into her core as if searching, testing. His eyes were the color of smoke, trapping her with his heat.

“You know a lot about me and my company. But there are certain things in life that even I allow time for.” His voice lowered to a deep, caressing pitch breaking the silence. He held the gold pen horizontal between both hands and his fingers met in the middle as he stroked it with slow, fluid motions. “Certain pleasures take away even my driving need to work...”

The pen gleamed against his bronzed skin as strong masculine fingers wrapped around the object and continued the pushing, pulling movements. His touch was light and fleeting. His gaze told her he was thinking of stroking other things. The thought caused liquid fire to race and singe every nerve ending, then pool between her thighs. Her tongue involuntarily dampened her lower lip. She saw him catch the movement, then lay the pen back on his desk. “...for a while,” he added softly.

Chandler knew he made a deliberate choice to refrain from questions, even though many were reflected in his eyes before he looked back down at her proposal. The rustle of papers cut through the pulsing silence.

She struggled for composure as she glanced over

at Richard Thorne. The attorney's eyes narrowed thoughtfully as he watched her, seemingly interested in her reaction to Logan's words. She cleared her throat. "I apologize for my outburst. I never meant to imply something was wrong with your life, I know you made a choice to work hard for your success." She smiled. "I worry about people too much. I once worked in this type of corporate climate so I've seen the kind of drive and dedication needed to climb to the top. I've also seen the damage. I'd like to help your employees handle their stress so they don't wake up one morning and wonder what their lives are about. I think they deserve more."

Logan Grant was probably one of the most controlled, self-contained men she'd ever met. She bet he carefully analyzed every emotion before he decided to express them, or bury them deep. A pang of regret confirmed her belief about corporate executives. They never let their emotions overrule business decisions. They pushed away messiness and made logic their God. A shiver ran down her spine when she thought of the way his fingers had glided over the pen. Something deep inside told her Logan Grant held many secrets behind a steel barrier, but it would take Superwoman to unveil the ray of vulnerability she glimpsed within his eyes.

She was not Superwoman, and she mustn't forget that he reached the top by being cold-hearted. She needed to be on guard.

Logan nodded. "Apology accepted. I know you have

good intentions. But good intentions don't necessarily mean good profits." Chandler braced herself for his next comment.

"Your outline is excellent. Your idea is creative. These figures show how well your clientele is expanding, but I also see your profits aren't what you need to keep the business going. Even with your research, there's still no proof these employees are doing more productive work. So, Chandler, the bottom line is that you want to use my company as a guinea pig because without my money, the Yoga and Arts Center is going under. Richard, do you agree?"

Richard Thorn looked regretful, but gave a nod. "Sorry, Chandler. Personally, I think you have a great plan, but Logan is right. We can't take a chance."

She almost closed her eyes in defeat. She'd been hoping, no betting, that with the proper appearance and some impressive paperwork, he may not see the truth. Of course, she should have known her ruse was a mistake the moment she met him. Logan made CEOs of billion dollar corporations fidget beneath his stare. A novice never had a shot.

"Yes, Mr. Grant. Your bottom line is correct." Surprise flickered over his face, before the mask slammed back down. "So, I'll guarantee a profit."

"How?"

This was the riskiest part of the deal. "Test the program out for a six month trial period. If you don't see a difference, our relationship will be terminated and I'll reimburse you in full."

It was a while before he spoke. When he did, his voice conjured up a number of disturbing images. Heavy velvet pulled over naked skin. Steel sheathed in satin. Smooth silk dragged over rough gravel. Definitely a bedroom voice. Definitely a mass of contradictions she wanted nothing to do with, so Chandler pushed away the thought and concentrated on his words.

“Do you realize your position if I decide to terminate this arrangement?” he asked. “You’d lose everything. If you invest all your capital and efforts into this program and it fails, your client base will be reduced along with your cash flow. Your whole business could go under.”

Chandler nodded. “I’m willing to take a risk. If you don’t want this offer I have a new list of names to approach. I’m sure one executive will give me a trial run.”

Logan glanced at Richard. The attorney shrugged his shoulders. “If she’s willing to back up her offer, we have nothing to lose.”

Minutes ticked by. Chandler sensed angry waves of energy radiating around Logan, and wondered why he seemed disturbed since she was the one risking everything. She waited patiently for his decision. She knew she’d done everything possible to save the Yoga and Arts Center.

“One gutsy lady,” he muttered under his breath. Her lips curved in a smile. “Do we have a deal?”  
“Yes. We have a deal.”

He rose from the chair and walked around the desk, reaching out to shake her hand. His fingers wrapped around hers.

*Fire.*

*Possession.*

*Safety.*

She fought for breath as the strange emotions whirled and crashed within her. The touch of his skin against hers made a million butterflies take flight in her stomach. She tried to reassure herself that he held her entire future in his grasp, and her body responded only to the fear of his control. An inner voice screamed she was a liar.

A smile played about his lips, as if only he knew the outcome of the game they decided to play. She tugged her hand out of his and caught the amusement in his face.

“Richard will draw up the contract,” he said.

“If you don’t mind, I’d like to use my own attorney. Harry needs the practice.”

One black brow shot up. “Harry?”

“Yes, he’s a friend of mine who recently passed the bar exam.” Her tone reflected a warm affection. “I promised I’d give him all of my business once he passed the test.”

A dark scowl passed over Logan’s features. She rushed to alter his anger. “Oh, don’t worry, he’s perfectly capable of drawing up the contract. He’s really a hard worker, besides having a big heart.”

“I see.” Actually, he didn’t. Logan didn’t like the

raw jealousy that shot through his system when he thought of Chandler belonging to another man. He frowned. This Harry couldn't be right for her. She revealed too much passion behind her proper business suit, and obviously her current lover couldn't handle her.

Knowing he wasn't acting in the rational way he normally handled matters, Logan took a step forward and closed the distance between them. Satisfaction surged through him when he spotted the flicker of awareness in her green eyes. Hmm, maybe he needed to explore these strange feelings more in depth. To satisfy his curiosity, Logan decided to move quickly.

It looked like she intended to ignore the current of sexual energy crackling through the air, and choose flight. He decided not to let her. "Why don't we get together for dinner tomorrow night?" he asked. "We can discuss the program. We'll be working closely together for a while."

Chandler tilted her head back in order to meet his gaze. The clean scent of soap, lemon, and musk teased her senses. Waves of heat radiated from his skin, pulling her towards him. Chandler took another casual step backward and prayed he wouldn't notice her panic. "Oh, I guess I thought you'd delegate another executive to work with me. I know you're very busy."

He gave her a lazy smile. "When I invest heavily in a project I like to oversee all aspects of the operation." He paused. "Personally."

She nodded in agreement and inched further away. "Fine."

Richard moved across the room and stood between them. “Chandler, it was nice to meet you. I’m looking forward to taking your class.”

She noticed Logan’s surprise at his comment.

Richard laughed and touched her arm briefly. “I discovered yoga and stress reduction a couple of months ago myself.” He shifted his feet and grinned sheepishly. “I even meditate.”

Her eyes lit up. “Richard, that’s wonderful. I can’t tell you how rare it is to meet someone in this industry who actually knows about yoga. Do you take classes?”

“I’ve taken a couple at the local YMCA.”

“Richard, we’ve got a meeting in a few minutes.” Logan’s words were laced with ice. “I’m sure you’ll get an opportunity to talk later.”

Richard nodded and said good-bye. Chandler took a step back, and suddenly over six feet of coiled muscle towered over her. She stood frozen in her spot.

“I’ll pick you up at seven tomorrow night.” Steel gray eyes burned into hers. “We can toast to our new relationship.”

With a shudder, Chandler walked out of the office and tried to ignore the flicker of unease, warning her there was hidden meaning in Logan Grant’s last statement.

Logan watched Richard Thorne neatly file his papers in his briefcase and set up for the next meeting. His gold embossed cufflinks gleamed in the sunlight as perfectly manicured fingers flipped through the pile of contracts. He was younger than Logan, by a

good five years, and possessed an uncanny ability to put people at ease. His eyes reflected a pleasant humor clients immediately warmed up to, but Logan had hired him for a different reason. His laughing smile covered up a brilliant mind who could find a loophole in a clause and maneuver a client to sign on the dotted line. His easy-going nature hid an inward ruthlessness Logan spotted from the first moment. Richard liked the good life, and had more ambition than most people gave him credit for.

“I didn’t know you took yoga,” Logan said. He walked to the window and leaned against the wall. “Always thought you were more the racquetball type.”

Richard shrugged. “I like to experiment with different things. I didn’t announce it because yoga isn’t a popular activity for men.”

“Hmmm, I suppose you’re right.”

“An interesting woman, Chandler Santell.” The rustle of papers echoed through the air. “I assume you know who her father is.”

An uneasy feeling flickered through Logan, but his voice remained bland when he spoke. “I never meet with a person I haven’t researched.”

“Thought so.” Richard looked up from his briefcase. The attorney’s eyes held a gleam of determination. Logan suddenly realized this man had the potential to be dangerous, and made a mental note to watch him more carefully. Though he trusted his attorney with business, he knew Richard hungered for success. Logan didn’t intend on becoming one of his attorney’s

victims on the man's climb for power. "I hear her old man still keeps a close eye on her, even though she wants nothing to do with him. Always wondered why she cut him out of her life."

"Yes. I wonder."

Richard snapped the leather case closed and smiled. "Well, the stress class should be interesting. I'm looking forward to it."

"I thought your case load was too heavy for extra activities."

"Like yourself, I always allow myself time for certain pleasures."

The air sparked with primitive energy. A slight smile played about Logan's lips as he recognized the challenge. He didn't know Richard's game yet, but he intended to find out. In the meantime, he needed to keep a close eye on Chandler Santell.

"Point taken." Logan pushed himself away from the wall and headed toward the conference room. "I hope you're ready to take on Tony Piscetti. I want Global Electronics on board."

Richard's tone held satisfaction. "Somehow, I feel lucky today, boss."

Logan shut his office door behind them.

## Chapter 2



Sunlight poured through the oversize bay windows of the Yoga and Arts Center and enveloped Chandler in a warm, hazy glow. She breathed deep as the soothing strains of a flute drifted in the air. Her name echoed from the distance but she ignored the sound. She floated in a calm, peaceful state of mind, and knew the moment she opened her eyes reality would intrude. As she slowly brought herself back from her meditation, she became aware of the cool, smooth wood beneath the soles of her bare feet. Her unbound hair fanned out on the mat around her and absorbed the heat of the sun. When the voice became more insistent, she opened her eyes and eased herself up.

Harrison Edward Weston III rushed through the door and stopped short. “Oh! Sorry, Chandler, I didn’t know you were meditating.”

“Don’t worry, I was just finishing up.” She rose to her feet and walked to the end of her studio to flip off the CD player. “I need to go over the contract with you, anyway. I want to be prepared for my dinner with Logan Grant.”

Harry trailed behind her. His tone held a worried note. "I shouldn't have let you handle the meeting alone. I'm your lawyer, it's my responsibility to protect your interests."

Chandler hid a smile. Ever since she'd met Harry in the sixth grade, she'd looked out for him. Being a year older, she treated him as the younger brother she'd never had, and throughout the years a close friendship evolved, bordering on family affection.

Harry's father still worked in the law firm which handled Alexander Santell's legal matters. They'd often laugh as they reminisced about their common backgrounds, since both of them had been raised in their fathers' offices. After he failed the bar exam, Harry left his father's firm to work as a legal assistant, vowing to achieve success on his own. Her heart broke each time he failed, but she admired the determination her friend showed, swearing he wouldn't quit until he passed the bar.

The mirror on the far wall of her studio reflected an image of a man to be trusted. His curly, dark hair and warm brown eyes drew women toward him, and his friendly smile helped build him a solid base of clients. His five foot six frame bubbled over with energy, and she always had trouble trying to get him to relax and focus on the task at hand. She enjoyed Harry's company, and relaxed in his presence. With Harry she never worried about any hidden intentions.

Chandler led him toward her back office and watched him sink into the worn cushions of the tattered

mauve sofa. “Maybe I should go to dinner with you and Grant.” Harry opened his briefcase with a frown. “What if he tries to put one over on you?”

She leaned against the edge of the desk and sighed. “No, I’ll be okay. This dinner meeting is a way for him to learn my weaknesses. It’s a familiar tactic I learned in the corporate world.”

Harry chuckled. “I almost feel sorry for him if he thinks he can intimidate you. Beneath your gentle image lies a mighty core. Four years ago, you were prepared to enter your father’s corporation and marry his right-hand man. Your whole future was planned. And at the last minute you left everything behind to take the time to find yourself. You’ve got guts.”

She smiled. Harry understood what it took for her to walk away from everything she thought she wanted. Her disciplines of yoga and meditation helped, strengthening both her body and mind. But late at night, she still heard her father’s taunting words the day she walked into his office and found her entire life changed.

She shook off her disturbing thoughts and poured a cup of herbal tea. The hot liquid slid down her throat with ease. “Logan will help me keep my business. I guarantee him his investment. We both get what we want.”

“The escape clause was a mistake. You never discussed the option with me.”

“You know I’m desperate. Logan behaved oddly, too. After I offered him a full reimbursement, he acted

angry. Almost as if he cared about what happened to my studio.”

Harry gave a snort. “Grant doesn’t care about people. He cares about money.”

“Yeah, you’re right. His lawyer seemed nice, though. His name is Richard Thorne, and he actually studies yoga.”

Harry lifted one brow. “An attorney of Grant’s doing yoga? That’s a new one.” He studied her face thoughtfully. “What did you think of him?”

“He’s nice. Not like Logan at all. He seemed more, well, light-hearted. Non-threatening.”

“Hmmm. Just your type.”

She crossed her arms in front of her chest. “Are you trying to tell me something?”

“Yeah, you need a date.”

“Harry, you’re so subtle.”

“It’s been too long since you had a man in your life. A lawyer who’s interested in yoga is a rarity these days. Go for it.”

“Thanks for the advice, but I’m not jumping into anything. I’m content with my life, and men make things complicated. Besides, he works for Logan. He wanted to draw up the contracts but I told them I’d use my own lawyer.”

“Good move. I’ll add a clause so you can break the arrangement within six months if you think the program won’t work. I want you both on equal footing.” He grimaced as he took a sip of the herbal tea she handed him. “Damn, don’t you have any coffee in this place?”

“Too much caffeine isn’t good for you. Besides, this tea contains antioxidants.”

“I’d rather die happy. This stuff tastes terrible.” He put the mug back down. “How will you manage the extra workload?”

“Linda will handle the bulk, but I’ll have to cut back on some classes temporarily. If this deal works out I can hire new instructors and expand without a deficit. This contract is the start of a whole new future. Can you imagine how many new students I could teach? I can renovate the building, and get that soft lighting we talked about, and new mats and—”

“What if the deal falls through?”

She raised her chin. “The deal will go through. I’ll prove to Logan this is the best program he ever invested in.”

Harry shook his head. “No offense, but I can’t believe he agreed. Can you picture the ‘man of steel’ trying to relax and clear his mind?”

“I know. I bet half of his work force suffers from ulcers.”

Harry chuckled. “Those finance boys won’t know what hit them. I bet after a month of your classes they’ll watch what they eat and breathe deeply in stressful situations.”

Chandler laughed. “I hope you’re right. But the first executive I need to impress is the man picking me up in a couple of hours.” She glanced at her watch. “I have to get home and change. I’m sure at exactly seven he’ll show up at the door in the usual

suit and tie.”

Harry went over a few details he added to the contract. “Are you wearing the itchy suit?” he asked.

Chandler made a face at his teasing remark. “No, I’m donating that to charity. I have a different outfit in mind for Mr. Grant. Maybe the white chiffon.”

He whistled. “The one with the headdress? Your father almost dropped on the floor when you showed up at dinner and caused his client to spill champagne in his lap.”

Her laughter floated through the room as she shut the door behind her.

The situation was not what she’d expected.

Chandler watched the man from across the table as she bit into a slice of crusty French bread slathered in butter. From the moment he’d picked her up in his low slung Italian sports car he’d thrown her curve balls. Instead of the usual suit and tie, he lounged before her in a casual sport jacket and black turtleneck, which molded to his body and defined his broad shoulders and chest. Black slacks clung to his muscular thighs and a pair of Nike Air completed the outfit. Logan Grant actually wore sneakers. She couldn’t seem to accept it.

What was probably worse, she thought as she stabbed her fork into her Caesar salad, was his reaction when he’d seen her outfit. She’d prepared for a shocking response, but the pure masculine satisfaction mirrored in his eyes made her nervous.

Chandler had passed on wearing her white chiffon and instead wore a black lace bodysuit that peaked out from under a sheer black blouse in the finest of silk. Her black silk skirt flowed down to her ankles, but when she moved the material parted to reveal a dozen slits cut to her thigh. A wide silver belt completed the outfit. The fabric moved with her every movement and skimmed her body with lightness.

She gave up on hair clips and pins and let her hair fall loose, allowing her dark honey and sun-bleached tawny strands to curl wildly about her shoulders and down her back. She wore no jewelry, having always preferred bare skin to the overdone-in-gold look. Many arguments ensued with her father based on her tendency to dislike clothes suitable to the business world, but Logan didn't seem to mind. In fact, she almost blushed under his direct gaze.

She sipped her white wine and watched him carry on a lively conversation with the waiter about the Giants and their chance to win the Super Bowl. The man actually knew how to talk football. This hardly seemed fair given the amount of time he spent in the office.

“Food seems to be another one of life’s pleasures. Don’t you agree?” he asked in an amused tone, interrupting her thoughts. She paused in the act of reaching for another shrimp cocktail as the waiter left.

“I try to be vegetarian and eat tofu and yogurt, but my heart just isn’t in it.” She smiled. “I feel guilty when I lecture my students on nutrition. I’ve already

made note of the dessert menu.”

He laughed. “A woman whose heart is controlled by her stomach. I respect that.” He watched her bite into the shrimp and close her eyes in delight. “I hope your profession can support your appetite.”

“If I wanted a fortune, I would have worked as a business executive.”

“So you said before. What else do you hate besides money, Chandler?”

Her green eyes glittered with a hint of moisture. “Power. People who control. Lies hidden behind smiles. The usual things most people hate.”

“It’s not so simple,” he said softly. “Most grab at an opportunity with both hands. People raised in poverty see money as their only way out of hell.”

She shook her head. “It’s a trap. They’re really giving up the self, and what they get in return is a lie. Money and power are illusions and only soothe for a temporary period. Then they wake up one morning needing more, and sacrificing more to get it. In the end they lose everything important and find themselves alone. Money can’t help loneliness.”

“That sounds like a conclusion drawn by one who followed the path and got burned. You talk from experience. What made you change?”

She looked up from her plate, startled. She never meant to get involved in this type of conversation. She didn’t like to tread in such dangerous territory, in fact she refused. Chandler forced a bright smile. “Why, my therapist, of course. Doesn’t everyone in

New York have one?”

She held her breath and waited to see if he would follow her lead. She relaxed when he smiled back. If he wanted answers she had a sinking feeling she'd have no choice in the matter. She made a mental note to be more careful of the information she leaked.

He focused his attention back to his dinner. “I’ll have Richard look over the contract and you can start the workshops on Monday.” His voice was cool and brisk. “I know your lawyer is inexperienced, but an escape clause shouldn’t have been offered. It puts you at risk.”

“Harry didn’t know until it was too late,” she said. “I came up with the idea myself. He gave me hell later.”

One black brow shot up. “Do you usually do impulsive things without telling anyone?”

She shrugged. “I only have myself to answer to, so I take responsibility for my actions.”

“Your Harry doesn’t take offense?”

Chandler frowned. “He has no say in my decisions.”

Logan watched her for a moment, then shook his head. “You haven’t met the man who’ll set a couple of rules for you.” He cut into his prime rib. “You’re too impulsive, so you need to be watched. I bet most men in your life don’t know how to handle you. You need someone with enough strength to tell you no once in a while.”

Her mouth dropped open. She took a quick grab at her temper. “I do not need, nor will I ever need, a man telling me what to do with my life,” she said firmly.

“I am a capable, rational woman who knows exactly what will make me happy. No wonder I swore off business executives. Too many of your kind think they know what’s good for a woman and refuse to converse in a normal manner. They dictate, threaten, and bully their wives into doing what they want, forgetting the bedroom is not the boardroom. I refuse to be put through that experience again.”

“Again?”

She ignored his question and forged on. “Furthermore, I’m looking for a man who listens to what I have to say and supports my goals. A man willing to compromise when he disagrees with me.”

“You’d be bored out of your mind. You need someone who will yell back in the living room, and make up in the bedroom.”

She gasped. “That is the most ridiculous, chauvinistic remark I ever heard! I want a partner, not a caveman. I’m quite satisfied with my life and refuse to change for any man. Besides, you don’t know the men I date. They certainly don’t bore me.”

Logan clamped down hard on the wave of irritation that flowed through him at the idea of her dating a wide variety of men. His free spirited yoga teacher intended to show him she refused to cater to a man’s whims. Unfortunately, he became more determined to put an end to her experiments. Hell, this was crazy, he thought to himself in disgust. He’d never been a possessive man where women were concerned. Possessiveness indicated a messy emotion, which he

normally stayed away from. Maybe this woman called to his sense of challenge. Obviously, she'd been burned by a corporate executive, and chose to stay far away from a man who wore a three piece suit.

His lips tightened. Time she learned a lesson. Chandler probably dated men she safely controlled, but she was about to discover he wouldn't stay meekly on the sidelines once he decided he wanted her.

Logan studied her face. She stuck her chin high in the air, practically daring him to challenge her. A dab of red cocktail sauce clung to her lower lip. Almost as if she knew, her tongue snaked out and licked off the drop, unconscious of how damn sexy she appeared. He waited a beat. Then made his decision.

He wanted Chandler Santell.

"You haven't met the right man yet," he repeated.

Her hand trembled around the stem of her wine glass. The certainty in his voice and the heat in his eyes made her stomach slide downward, as if she had just plunged off the peak of a roller coaster. She fought the sudden urge to fidget, but reminded herself the deal was closed, and she didn't have to plead her case. Of course, she still needed to placate him throughout the six month trial period, but refused to allow him to pry into her personal life. A strangled laugh rose to her lips. "You're impossible." She reached up and pushed back her hair. "Is this how you wear down your enemies?"

"Words won't convince you. Action will."

A chill ran down her spine. She ignored his remark

and chalked it up to one of his control moves.

He devoted the rest of the conversation to neutral topics. She enjoyed matching her wits against his sharp mind, and was surprised at his dry sense of humor. No doubt, he had his share of fair offers by the way women in the restaurant snuck glances at their table. Chandler wondered if his good looks or his money held their rapt attention. The combination was a deadly mixture.

As he escorted her into his sports car, she admitted Logan made a nice dinner companion. As long as she kept the subject firmly averted from her personal life, he'd be the perfect advisor to help her business expand.

He pulled up to her apartment building. "Why don't we finish celebrating our deal over brandy?" he asked.

Chandler hesitated, then decided she'd be rude not to agree. "Sure, come on up." They walked up the flight of stairs and Chandler slid the key in the lock. She flipped on the lights and waved toward the sofa. "Make yourself comfortable, I'll only be a moment." She walked into the kitchen and kicked off her shoes.

Logan smiled at her sigh of relief before turning his attention to the room around him. He wandered around, pausing now and then to finger an object or study a painting. The cream walls, pale yellow carpet and off-white furniture helped set off a whirling array of colors and sights that attacked the senses. Cheerful, bright watercolors hung on the walls in a blinding

intensity of images, they practically jumped out of their frames at him. They were so full of life.

Lush, green plants dangled above him as he checked the view out the window. A large ficus tree dominated one corner and half a dozen smaller plants he didn't immediately recognize surrounded it. Some sort of Christmas looking pine tree and bunches of flowers claimed the other corner plus one entire wall. Chandler obviously had a green thumb with plants—he was curious to see how green she would make his bottom line.

Sitting among the foliage were three large marble sculptures struggling for attention. Each figure stretched in a different yoga position. He made a safe assumption they were not high art, but more of an emotional attachment. Books and magazines were tossed over the floor and furniture, and Logan caught the faint smell of incense which still hung in the air. He studied the sculptures in curiosity.

“One of my teachers gave me those.” She placed two sniffers on the coffee table and sat down on the sofa. Logan sat next to her. “They were supposed to represent the new commitment I made to my life.”

“What commitment?”

Chandler smiled. “Truth in speech. Simplicity in manner. Firmness of mind. Three things to constantly strive for.”

“Have you succeeded?”

She took a sip of brandy. The heated liquid trickled down her throat and warmed her body. “I don't think

many people end up succeeding,” she said. “Peace is a constant journey. I know I’m happier and more satisfied than I’ve been in the past. Giving up the drive for wealth and power wasn’t as hard as I thought. I’ve gotten back so much.”

“Why does it have to be all or nothing? A person can still have money and reach spiritual height without giving up his dream.”

She shook her head. “I think the path sounds easier than it really is. Most people think they can have both, which may work for a while. But someone who is truly reaching for spiritual height will eventually have to choose between truth and lies. Truth must be chosen. When money’s involved, the decision becomes harder.”

Logan reached for his brandy and studied the amber liquid. “I disagree. If a person knows himself, he knows what path must be chosen. Money doesn’t corrupt, Chandler. People do.”

“Perhaps.” She settled back on the couch. “I think we talk too much about me. I want to know how the ‘man of steel’ received his nickname.”

He groaned. “If I ever get my hands on the journalist who wrote that article he will sorely regret it. I feel like I should wear a cape and be called Clark.”

Chandler laughed. “Oh, your reputation can’t be that bad,” she teased. “Your last coup with Larson Securities was very successful. Investors knock down your door to get a hint of your next target.” She swished the liquid around in her glass. “Now, I know

you started off as a stockbroker and cultivated some high number of accounts, but you've expanded since then. You're buying corporations outright now."

He nodded. "I look for companies that are solid but in trouble. I buy them out, fix them up, and make more money. If I decide it's not profitable, I just take the business apart and sell it off."

"Like Richard Gere in *Pretty Woman*."

Amusement gleamed in his eyes. "Yes, just like the movie."

"In such a competitive market you've made quite a name for yourself."

"I've managed."

"You've more than managed. But you didn't tell me how you got your nickname."

A shadow passed over his face. His voice chilled when he finally spoke. "Does it matter?"

She blinked in surprise. "No. I just thought we'd get to know one another. Since we'll be working together, of course."

"Of course." A muscle worked in his jaw, but he seemed to want to answer her question. "When I first started L&G Brokerage, I needed to score some particular deals in order to keep afloat. Steele Investments was an up and coming company earning a lot of press. I decided if I was able to acquire them, I could easily double my company's profits."

The name skittered on the edge of her memory. "Wasn't that a family owned company?"

"Yes. I researched all the members in the family. I

learned their strengths and weaknesses, in their professional and private lives. It took me months, but I finally found the weak link.”

“What?”

“The younger brother was a gambler. Oh, they kept him tightly under wraps, but he started gambling with some of their investors money. His family couldn’t do too much since he owned a large chunk of stock, and of course, jail was out of the question. So, I hired a friend of mine to pose as an investor and meet with him personally.”

A cold chill raced down her spine. “You tempted him with money, didn’t you?”

He spoke with no emotion. “I gave him a million dollars to invest.”

She gasped. “You had that much capital available?”

A slight smile touched his lips as he took a sip of brandy. “That was everything I had. I took a risk, and it payed off.”

“He took the money.”

Logan nodded. “Yes. His family found out too late. I offered them a deal. If they sold me the company, he’d stay out of jail. They signed the papers that week.”

She gripped the stem of her glass tighter. “Did the press ever find out?”

Logan shook his head. “They didn’t find out about the gambling. But after I signed the deal, the brother talked to a reporter and told him I practically threatened them to sign over the company. Said I was a cold-blooded monster who wouldn’t rest until I got

what I wanted. The article stated no company was safe from me.”

“The ‘man of steel,’” she whispered.

He looked up. “With a heart to match.” His mouth set in a firm line. “I don’t look back and I don’t have regrets, Chandler. But I always try to protect the people close to me. Even at the expense of myself.”

His gaze met and held hers. She knew Logan Grant held secrets buried deep inside; secrets revealed only in brief flashes in his gun-metal eyes. The man lied, he held many regrets—but he wasn’t about to explain, and he wasn’t going to look back.

Her breath caught in her throat as a unexpected wave of protectiveness flooded her. Why did she have this sudden need to put her arms around him and offer comfort? Why wasn’t she horrified at his story, shocked at the way he manipulated another human being?

She didn’t know. She’d met many hungry executives before, and counted her own father among them, but there was a unique difference about the man beside her. She believed Logan when he said he’d be fiercely devoted to the people he loved.

“I believe you,” she said softly. “I don’t hold every businessman in a negative light, and I try not to make judgements on what I hear or read. People deserve a chance.”

“Does everyone deserve a chance? Or just the people you can keep at a safe distance?”

She pushed back her heavy mane of hair. “I don’t

keep myself at a distance. I always try to give something of myself to people.”

“Even men?”

She bristled at his comment. “Everyone. Men and woman. I don’t draw distinctions between the two. If you’re talking about a romantic sense I’m bound to disappoint you. I never get involved with my students or my business partners.”

He raised an eyebrow at her warning. “Doesn’t leave a lot of territory open now, does it?”

She rose from the sofa and wondered how this man got her so defensive on the subject of her love life. Or lack of it. She glared at him. “Quantity is not my concern, Logan. Quality is what makes a relationship work, and I can guarantee I won’t find that with a man making a six figure salary, but is too busy to come home at night. I need more.”

He studied her in silence. Intensity radiated around him. She struggled to take a deep breath, suddenly afraid of him, of the powerful emotions that crackled in the room like a burst of summer lightning. She backed away a bit. He was no longer her charming dinner companion, but a dangerous man who seemed to feel something she couldn’t understand.

And she was alone with him.

Slowly, Logan stood up and placed the snifter on the table. He crossed the room in two strides and stopped before her. “Your apartment suits you.” His voice vibrated through her body like a caress. “It reminds me of a woman filled with life—one who

uses every moment to feel pleasure.”

His hot steel gaze burned her. She stared, transfixed by his words and his voice and the heat that emanated from his body. “But at the same time there’s a part of you that remains in control, selfishly contained in a small, dark space. That part is cold and clinical, and vows to never melt into the other.”

He took the glass from her hand, set it beside his, then moved closer. The back of his hand caressed her face. “You hold yourself back, Chandler, waiting for someone who will never come; a fantasy figure who seems safer than a man of flesh and blood, a man who will probably make mistakes and possibly hurt you. But the man you deny yourself could also make your spirit soar. You’re too afraid to reach out and take him.”

He pulled her towards him with slow, deliberate movements. His warm breath penetrated her hair as his arms pressed her body into his. “Don’t run from me.” His voice commanded, whispered, in her ear. His mouth came down on hers.

Caught in the fog enveloping her mind, Chandler held herself perfectly still in his embrace. Her senses were overwhelmed by his unique scent as it mingled with his cologne. The heat of his kiss and the coiled power of his hard body ignited a raw sensual energy that threatened to engulf her. Fearful, she withdrew a bit.

As her mind cleared, she realized the position she’d put herself in, but decided to let him complete his experiment so they could put the whole episode

behind them. Chandler knew he intended to prove her wrong regarding her attraction to corporate executives. By her denial, she'd waved a bright red flag in front of him and challenged his ego. So, she'd let him kiss her, he'd realize his mistake and apologize, and they'd continue their business arrangement and avoid future pitfalls.

Logan felt her refusal to respond to him. He clamped down hard on the fierce need that raced through his body to make her surrender to her emotions, as he'd been forced to. He deliberately relaxed his hold and eased the pressure of the kiss, moving his lips teasingly over hers, inviting her to kiss him back. Slowly, he sipped at her mouth as if she were a precious drink of water in the hot desert sun, learning her taste and texture. Nibbling at her lower lip, his tongue teased its pouty outline as he continued a maddening game of arousal and retreat attempting to both sooth and ignite her.

Chandler unconsciously pressed her body closer to his, seeking something more to quench the fire in her belly that suddenly flamed to life.

The strong hands that had first dragged her to his embrace now glided over her shoulders and down her arms in a gentle caress. His fingers smoothed her flesh through the sheer black silk and made her wonder what his touch would feel like on her bare skin. Her mind clamored for her to push him away when his grip loosened, but her body longed to feel the promise behind his teasing kiss. The blood pumped through

her veins with each deliberate movement of his hands and mouth.

Logan's mouth brushed hers, then withdrew. He pulled his hands through honey streaked hair tumbling past her breasts, rubbing each strand between his fingers in slow, easy movements. He lightly touched the tips of her breasts which immediately hardened under her stretch lace bodysuit. A feminine whimper of longing rose to his ears.

"Open your mouth for me, Chandler," he whispered. And then he was inside, his tongue pushing through the seam of her lips. His tongue glided over the smoothness of her teeth and plunged into the sweet recess of her mouth to engage in a passionate battle. He drank in her taste with a hunger he could no longer fight. Her arms slid up and around his shoulders and pulled him closer.

He crushed her soft, full breasts against his chest and insinuated one thigh between her legs, pushing her slightly off balance. Deftly he undid the buttons of her silk blouse down to her waist and pushed it off her shoulders. The material fell away and he felt the cool air kiss her warm flesh. He dragged his mouth away to look at her, taking in her swollen lips and wide, dazed eyes. "Do you realize how much I want you?" She trembled as his fingers stroked her breast. Her nipple rose into his palm as his thumb made teasing circles. "I knew it would be like this between us."

Logan eased the stretchy black bodysuit over her shoulders and exposed her naked breasts to his gaze.

Waves of hunger, heat and need raced through his body. When she silently arched toward him he gave a low, satisfied laugh and stroked her breasts lightly, his fingers gentle as he plucked at her rosy buds. His hands feasted on her creamy skin and full curves. He gathered her hair at her nape and tugged her head back to drop over his arm. "You're so beautiful."

Chandler felt like a pagan goddess about to be sacrificed. Her hair hung down her bare back, her breasts tilted upward naked to his gaze and waiting for his mouth. Her body greedily demanding the pleasure this powerful man could give her, needing to be free of the constraints her mind imposed over her many years of discipline. For the first time, Chandler realized by letting her body take over, she felt gloriously free.

His warm breath teased her nipple as he lowered himself over her and opened his mouth fully over her breast. Throaty moans escaped her lips as he bestowed pleasure, bringing her to a fevered pitch of longing, knowing there was more. She became sensitized to the scrape of his teeth, the stroking of his tongue, the touch of his lips. A throbbing ache settled between her thighs. Overwhelmed by the sensation of being totally possessed, she sank into a place where only pleasure ruled. All her seething emotions and erotic desires, long hidden, suddenly burst free.

When Logan swept her up into his arms and carried her to the sofa, there was no thought in her mind to protest. He pressed her deep into the cushions, fully removed her blouse, and further pushed her bodysuit

down to her waist. His leg lay heavily over hers, causing the slits in her skirt to fall open to mid-thigh.

“Touch me.”

His softly spoken demand made her tremble as she tugged the turtleneck out of his waistband and pushed the material upward, sliding her fingers beneath. She lingered over his hard stomach, tracing the swirling pattern of dark hair that covered his torso. He groaned when her nail brushed his flat nipple, causing her to pull back, unsure. When he remained perfectly still, her fingers retraced her path with wonder. His chest rose as he dragged in air. The crisp hairs tickled her palms as her gaze followed the dark line past his stomach to pause at the edge of his belt buckle.

He almost chuckled when he caught her hungry look focused on the disappearing line, but his laughter turned to longing when she innocently traced the hard steel outline of his slacks and let her hands linger.

Logan captured her wrists and pinned them above her head in one swift motion. Green eyes flashed sparks of fire back at him as he lowered his lips to hers again. His other hand slid up her calf, and stroked the sensitive skin behind her knee before he ventured higher and encountered the edge of her stocking. He let his fingers slide on the bare expanse of skin at the top of her thigh. Slowly he unsnapped her bodysuit between her legs and played with the line of her panties, letting one finger slip under the elastic, then moving away.

Between kisses he felt Chandler fight for breath.

When he raised his head she looked torn between begging him to continue and begging him to stop. His gaze held hers as he settled his palm over the apex of her thighs. The damp heat of her response burned him through the fragile lace.

Slowly, he pressed.

Chandler arched upward and cried his name. Instantly his mouth was back on hers, kissing her without restraint as he continued the rotating, stroking motions of his palm. He drank in the tiny gasps that broke from her lips.

“Tonight I’m going to teach you how good we are together, Chandler. Give yourself to me and I swear you won’t regret it. I’ll take care of everything.”

His husky words had the effect of dumping a bucket of icy water over her. She froze, her mind frantically going over the implication of his last statement.

*He would take care of everything.*

With dawning horror, she realized how close she’d come to making another terrible mistake. Logan Grant wanted to take her to bed to prove a point. He’d deliberately planned to seduce her, using his cold-blooded logic to justify his actions. Her seduction gained him more control, which would be an advantage in their business dealings. His ego also benefitted by conquering her objections to corporate executives. Once he accomplished his goal he’d tire of her, and then terminate their contract.

One night of passion could cost her the career she worked for all of her life. Nothing was worth that.

Not even the pleasure she found in his arms.

It took a few moments for Logan to realize the woman beneath him wasn't struggling to get closer, but to free herself from his embrace. Her green eyes once sparked with passion now filled with growing panic. Her body stiffened, and the arms that had clung to his shoulders now pushed him away. Logan took some deep breaths to try and clear the fog from his mind, annoyed she now seemed to fear him on some level.

"You don't have to be afraid of me." He tried not to focus his attention on her lush mouth, swollen from his kisses. "I'd never do anything you didn't want. I think you're afraid to admit you want me. I don't fit the image of your perfect lover." His gaze took in her abandoned figure, naked to the waist, breasts aroused. His voice dropped. "But your body betrays you."

"Please let me up." She crossed her arms in front of her. His gaze clashed with hers in a battle of wills before he slowly rose from the sofa. She pulled her bodysuit up with clumsy hands and turned to face him. "I apologize."

One dark brow shot up in question. "Excuse me?"

"I think this is just a communication problem. I mistakenly made remarks leading you to believe I'd never be attracted to an executive. You subconsciously tried to prove me wrong, and you did. I admit defeat," she said.

He watched her with interest. Her shoulders sagged with relief; she had his attention. Surely, once she

presented the complications of getting involved with her, his normal, logical thoughts would take over. He'd agree to put the entire episode behind him. She needed to show him some concrete reasons to avoid an affair.

“Now, I think our best solution is to admit we had a brief attraction which originated from your desire to prove a point, and my surprise at your sudden actions. We both got a little carried away but we stopped our mistake in time. I think we can put this behind us and continue with our working relationship. Keeping distractions to a minimum is crucial for this project to work. Don't you agree?”

She took his silence as agreement; he seemed to listen intently. “We'd have some difficulty keeping our personal lives separate from business, which could affect the result of the program. Second, the reaction of your employees could be detrimental. They could decide you weren't serious about the workshop and only implemented it to satisfy your current lover.” Her tongue stumbled over her last word before forging on.

“So, I think it's in our best interests to stick to our original agreement.” She laughed nervously when he remained silent. “We would have been a disaster, anyway. We're much too different, and I'd never be able to handle a casual affair. Not that you have casual affairs all the time, but you're probably much better at them than I am,” she stammered, trying hard not to blush at his pointed stare. “Well, I think we settled the problem. I'm glad we talked, and again I apologize if

I led you on in any way.”

Chandler began to walk him politely to the door when she suddenly realized Logan Grant was furious.

Over six feet of coiled muscle towered over her. Dark brows drew together in a fierce frown, and icy gray eyes held her spellbound. Waves of raw, primitive energy radiated from his body in a swirling mixture of anger, frustration, and desire. Her breath caught in her chest. Her body swayed. Her nipples rose to meet him. Liquid heat pooled and throbbed between her thighs. She wished she felt fear. She wanted to be afraid. But her body dared him to take her.

Horrified by her own response, she took a step backward.

He closed the distance between them. She gazed up and knew he glimpsed every naked emotion she attempted to hide. Confusion. Defiance. Desire.

He reached out and roughly caught her chin with his hand. His thumb caressed her swollen lips and gently parted the tender flesh as he watched her struggle to contain her body's reaction. His eyes gleamed with satisfaction, as if he knew what she was feeling and thinking; as if he knew the game would be played by his rules and she was helpless to stop him.

“Good night, Chandler.” He abruptly released his hold and walked out the door.

## Chapter 3



Chandler stood and stared at the closed door. She struggled against a burst of panic threatening to overwhelm her. Logan Grant would not give up until she was in his bed. She'd made a mistake the moment she responded to his first kiss. He sensed a weakness and was going in for the kill.

Just like any ruthless businessman. Except this time she wouldn't let him win.

She gave her bodysuit a firm tug, scooped up the two sniffers, and made her way to the kitchen. How long had it been since she let her guard down with a man?

Chandler cursed her stupidity. She believed in total freedom, and had been careful not to tie herself down to anyone who threatened her lifestyle. She took each moment life offered and enjoyed it to the fullest. But she always shied away from sexual encounters. She enjoyed dating, but when she considered taking the relationship a step further, something within her balked. She never lost sleep over her decision. What she really wanted was a man who set her blood on

fire. One who wanted a family. A man whose soul burned for honesty and openness. A man who would make her the most important part of his life.

A man who was definitely not Logan Grant.

Chandler undressed as she walked into her bedroom, leaving a trail of clothes on her plush, pale daffodil carpet. She stepped into the shower and let the stinging jets of water soothe her muscles. Her body still tingled from his caresses, and an empty ache throbbed between her thighs. How could she face him Monday and continue as if nothing had happened? She groaned in despair. It would take all of her will power not to blush when she met those charcoal eyes and smug smile. How dare he put her in this position? How could she have let herself respond so wantonly to a man who was practically a stranger?

She scrubbed her skin until it glowed, hoping to wash away the feeling of his hands on her. She'd never reacted to another man that way. Even when she thought she was madly in love with Michael she never wanted him with the same feverish longing.

The faint memory tugged at the fringes of her mind. Chandler cringed at the innocence of the girl she'd been, of her foolish dreams of love and romance, and the cruelty of her awakening.

The floodgates burst open, and a swirling array of images flowed before her. Being introduced to Michael Worthington at one of her father's business dinners. Overwhelmed by deep blue eyes and golden hair; by her father's booming acknowledgment that he

was a rising star in the company; and by his charming, witty demeanor. He'd escorted her home with Alexander Santell's blessing. With a brief kiss, he asked her if she'd see him again. She agreed.

As their courtship continued, she was wined and dined by a handsome man who flashed dazzling smiles and whispered words of love. Suddenly, the pieces of her life fell into place. She'd graduate from college and take her position in her father's company. She'd marry Michael and have a family.

And through every step her father would be there, with his silver hair and sharp green eyes, watching and guiding her in the right path as he had done since she was a little girl.

On the night Michael proposed he presented her with a diamond ring on bended knee. She felt like a princess from a fairy tale, so when his kisses became more insistent she gave herself up to the moment. He led her into the bedroom, and she ignored the tiny seed of warning that flashed to life, chalking it up to nervousness.

Afterward, he held her in his arms while she cried, telling her it would get better because her virginity made it difficult. When he left he promised they would tell her father the news of their engagement in the morning.

Chandler stepped out of the shower and wrapped herself in a towel. As she sat on the edge of the lacy Victorian comforter, the years faded away as the memory of her ultimate betrayal played in slow

motion before her closed eyes.

She saw herself arriving at her father's office, filled with excitement. Breezing past his secretary's empty desk to the partially closed door. Stopping short as she heard Michael's voice say her name. Listening in horror to the conversation unfolding, trapped in a nightmare of her own making.

"It's all taken care of," Michael said. He threw a bunch of documents on the desk. "Chandler was ecstatic. I did my part old man, now it's time you sign the papers."

Alexander Santell chuckled. "Not so fast, dear boy. The agreement was the delivery of the contracts after the wedding ceremony. I didn't hear a set date."

"I'll convince her to speed up the normal process. She's eager to marry me, and I see no need to wait more than a couple of weeks."

"I knew you'd be perfect for her the moment I laid eyes on you, and my daughter's reaction proved me right." A booming laugh rang out. The sound echoed and bounced off the paneled walls of his office. "Three months ago I thought the Walterson contract would be impossible to close. The most prestigious investor in the city almost ran for the door when he heard my daughter wasn't settled down. Can you believe such outdated crap? He actually told me he only felt secure investing in a firm that showed values and stability, which he translated as family."

Chandler huddled at the door. Her stomach lurched as Alexander Santell's words drifted up to her ears.

“That’s the first man I’ve dealt with who didn’t care about my profits. He was concerned that if I dropped dead Chandler would inherit control and not have a husband.” Alexander snorted. “As if my daughter needed one.”

“Then why me?” Michael asked smugly. “If you’d been certain she didn’t need a husband you would’ve convinced Walterson she could handle the company. Instead you offered me a full partnership the moment I put a ring on her finger.”

“Walterson was impossible to convince. That’s when I decided to introduce you to my daughter.” Alexander lit a cigar and puffed furiously. “Chandler’s a good girl but she has started to stray. All those crazy psychology courses and projects. Books can’t help you in a business deal when you have to go in for the kill.” Silver brows lowered into a frown. “Ever since her momma died when she was young, I promised myself I’d give her something that would last forever. And I’ve succeeded. My daughter was born to run this company and keep the family name alive, even though she may be a bit soft-hearted. I haven’t broken my back all these years just so she could get some notion in her head about finding herself.”

“I assume Walterson approved of Chandler’s decision?”

“The man lit up like a Christmas tree when I let him know she was safely engaged. He agreed to sign the contracts after the wedding.”

Michael sighed. “Chandler’s a bit of a romantic. She wouldn’t have agreed to this marriage if she didn’t think I was in love with her.”

“You’ll fall in love with her eventually, son. She’s a jewel. But for now a business marriage based on shared values and commitments is nothing to bark at. It’s as good as any nowadays.”

Michael muttered something under his breath which was overshadowed by her father’s chuckle. Chandler slowly backed away from the door and turned, stumbling down the hall in a daze. She couldn’t remember how she found her way home. She only remembered the feeling of her safe little world ripped to shreds, and the fear of knowing she’d never be the same person again.

Chandler slid beneath the cool sheets and shivered. When Michael knocked on the door that evening she knew what needed to be done. She remembered his cruelty when she’d given him back the ring; his reminder that her father controlled her life and could force her to marry him.

The stark truth of his words took her breath away. Michael was right. Her father’s money financed everything. Her job and future was his corporation. She had no other family, no friends, and no one she could depend on. If he ordered her to marry Michael, what could she do?

Chandler remembered her fear and hatred four years ago. The anger and loneliness at being trapped, forced to play out a role because her father controlled

her destiny. Then she'd made the hardest decision of her life.

She left.

Chandler flicked out the light and forced back the memories. She'd made a decision to start a new life for herself, one which would never tie her down to another human being like her father. She refused to think of regrets this late in the game. The present seemed enough of a challenge.

Using one of her techniques to clear her mind, she focused on her breath and consciously let go of any thoughts. Soon, each part of her body relaxed and sank deeper into the pillowed mattress. As she drifted toward sleep she was grateful the last image flickering before her eyes was not Michael.

But she dreamed of a dark haired man whose touch set her blood on fire.

Logan sat in front of the fireplace and stared into the crackling flames as he thought about Chandler Santell. The haunting strains of Beethoven filled the air and soothed his nerves. His gaze took in the sparsely decorated room. He wondered why it felt so empty now that he had seen her apartment. He'd always liked his home, feeling it was suitable to his busy lifestyle. The wraparound sofa was a soft, buttery leather, which matched two easy chairs across from it. The contemporary teak furniture complemented the bare wood floors nicely without adding unnecessary clutter. There was a huge entertainment wall, a desk,

and a teak and marble coffee table. The hand rubbed Tuscan beige walls were bare of paintings and pictures, offering no distractions to the elegant lines of the furniture.

Maybe the room needed some distractions. Some paintings. More plants. Chandler.

He sipped his cognac and tried to ignore the odd hunger clawing at his gut. When he stepped into Chandler's apartment, he'd been struck by a sense of joyous clutter, almost like the woman herself. He pictured her floating through the rooms, tossing things over the furniture and floor, flipping through random books and magazines without ever worrying about replacing them in their proper location. He had wondered if she'd bring the same wild abandon to the bedroom.

Now he knew.

Logan groaned and tried to force the erotic image from his mind. She'd gone up in flames in his arms and surrendered completely. He'd met many woman who experienced passion, but he always felt as if they played a game, and he was the prize. His money. His name. His reputation. Never had he felt the sheer honest response of a woman melting beneath him, needing him as much as he needed her.

Until tonight.

A flicker of unease shot through him. He'd been prepared for her to turn in disgust once she heard the circumstances surrounding his famous nickname. Instead, there had been a light of understanding in

those jade green eyes; a gentleness in her demeanor that touched him. Chandler Santell was a woman who walked in the sunlight, yet she willingly reached out for someone in the darkness and invited him into her world.

He wondered how it would feel to live in such a place.

Logan swirled the amber liquid around in his glass and let the lilting strains of music wash over him. Their encounter presented him with more questions than answers. It had taken every shred of his willpower not to pull her back in his arms during her tidy speech, and force her to acknowledge her feelings. He only stopped because of the sheer panic in those green eyes, and his determination to find out what was the cause. Or who.

A flare of jealousy gripped him, but Logan stamped down hard on the strange emotion. His yoga teacher may not have realized it, but she'd started the game the moment she melted so sweetly in his arms.

He intended to finish it.

His instincts told him he needed to move carefully. He suspected Richard Thorne could prove a problem. The man knew something about Chandler, and in order to play the game properly, Logan needed to find out the rules. First thing in the morning, he'd contact his friend to start some research.

Logan tapped his finger absently against the crystal rim and frowned at the strange restlessness flooding through him. Hell, he'd never bothered to question

his life before. Crazy to start now. He pursued a strict path to achieve money and power, and never looked back. No regrets. After all, there had never been a choice.

Growing up in the slums, he watched his mother struggle to support them after his father left. He vowed one day he'd be successful. She regaled him with tales of a world that was limitless, urging him to make the most out of himself and break away from the vicious cycle of poverty. As his mother grew weaker, he'd been driven by a hunger that constantly ate at his gut, and spent each day working furiously. He was determined to make a home for them someplace safe, where guns and drugs and crime didn't dominate the streets. He longed to see his mother happy again, instead of offering a tired smile when she came home from the restaurant where she worked, counting every penny from the tips she received.

He delivered newspapers and ran odd errands. He worked as a cashier and waited on tables. The neighborhood knew him as the boy who'd do any job as long as the pay was good. And, slowly, he began to build a reputation.

His big break came in high school, when he was recommended for a summer internship by one of his teachers. He took the train into the city every day and worked late into the night at a well known financial firm. By practically living at the office, he soaked up every bit of information. He learned he had a head for figures and a talent for getting what he wanted.

Emotions had no place in the world of high finance, and Logan found himself easily slipping into a role that demanded nothing but the accomplishment of profit. At home, he was overcome by feelings of guilt and helplessness. When he stepped into the office, he felt nothing, and as time passed, he realized he had started earning a name for himself. Negotiating the acquisition of companies demanded a businesslike approach and certain ruthlessness, especially in hostile takeovers. Logan realized early on in the game it was easy to tap into those parts of himself. He remained cold when faced with pleas and objections from family companies not wanting to merge. He made a man sign on the dotted line with whatever ammunition he could get, and he learned how to play dirty.

One day his mentor failed to show up for a meeting. Familiar with the deal, he closed the contract personally with a higher margin of profit.

The company fired the executive and hired him immediately. Logan never looked back.

Until now.

He set the snifter on the coaster and got up from the easy chair. No need to start questioning himself. He achieved his goals and finally proved his worth. Just like his mother always wanted.

He grabbed the poker and stirred the fire. Hissing logs popped in the silence. He must be tired. He certainly wasn't lonely. His life was too busy to waste precious time exploring the strange emotions bubbling up inside of him. By morning, he'd be back in control

and start on his plan to get Chandler into his bed.

“May I have your attention, please?”

Chandler gazed at a dozen pair of eyes, all filled with doubt and curiosity. Shorts and t-shirts replaced the business suits. The excess office furniture had been moved into storage and in its place exercise mats were spread out on the floor.

The late afternoon sun cast relaxing patterns about the spacious room. Chandler immediately surmised that her students, which mostly consisted of males, were not too keen on the idea of dealing with stress. Brows lowered in confused frowns. Low murmurs rose and fell through the air. She guessed their distress was caused by the noticeable absence of their esteemed leader, who had yet to show. She fought back a surge of anger and decided to start the class. If the other night caused a change of heart in Logan Grant, so be it. She'd make her workshop a success without him.

“My name is Chandler Santell and I'll be the instructor working with you over the next few months.” Her gaze swept the room. “I regret we have to start without Mr. Grant, but I'm sure he'll join us later. As we all know in the business world, sometimes we get caught up in pressing schedules which demand most of our time.”

“Ah, but as someone once told me, we must always allow time for certain pleasures.”

Chandler turned at the masculine voice behind her. Her gaze collided with amused gray eyes. She felt her

cheeks burn as she remembered their prior conversation. Keeping her voice neutral, she said. “Please join us, Mr. Grant. I’m glad you could make it.”

His eyes swept over her figure as he closed the distance between them. He smiled lazily. “Please call me Logan. I prefer to be on a first name basis with people I work closely with.”

She fought the next blush threatening to overcome her, and nodded her agreement, not trusting herself to speak. Logan lowered himself to the mat and stretched his long, powerful legs in front of him. He propped his hands up behind his back and exchanged easy banter with his employees. Grudgingly, she admitted he looked as much at ease in his gray sweatshirt and jogging shorts as he did in his expensive tailored suits. His forearms and legs were sprinkled with dark hair, his lightly tanned skin gave him a healthy glow. His pose made his sweatshirt stretch and cling to his broad chest, reminding her of how his muscles had jumped under her touch. Chandler cleared her throat and forced her thoughts away from the man who’d haunted her dreams last night. She refused to let him bully her with his deep, rich voice or his sexual innuendoes. She pulled herself back to reality and turned to face her class.

“Most of you don’t know what to expect from this workshop so I’d like to give you an overview. First, I want to assure you I won’t make everyone sit in Lotus position while we chant to relieve ourselves of stress. At least not the first week.” Everyone laughed.

“We all want to learn how to be more productive on our jobs by taking care of ourselves and our needs. This encompasses not only dealing with stress, but also being aware of our diet, personal habits, and bodies. We’ll talk about nutrition, exercise, stress, and awareness. I’ll show you some easy breathing techniques and stretches to loosen some of the tension.”

She lowered herself to one of the mats and sat in a comfortable, cross-legged position. “I’ve been involved in the corporate culture,” she continued easily, “so I know first hand the pressures involved on a day to day basis. It seems easier to keep continuing to skip meals, drink more coffee, and close one more deal. But if we continue the behavior, all of us are going to burn out. Then we’ll be nowhere, except maybe a hospital.

“What does this have to do with your current job? Let’s say you’re in an important meeting and the client is ready to close the deal. You’ve been up all night poring over the contracts and you’re tired. There’s been no time for breakfast so you gulp down some coffee to get started. You’ve done all the research, wined and dined the client over lunch or dinner, and it’s time to sign them on the dotted line.” She paused. “Let’s say the client balks. Asks for more time. Wants a better deal.”

A combined groan rose from her group.

“What are you going to do? If you’ve been up all night on a diet of caffeine, stressed to the limit, couldn’t your temper snap? Or what if you’re not

thinking clearly, so you offer him what he wants, no matter what the price?" A burst of laughter rang out as Logan frowned and shook his head.

Chandler smiled. "At that moment, anything can happen because you've lost control of your mind and body. In a stressful situation, our adrenaline takes over and we act on instinct. In a business meeting you only want to rely on your wits. So, if you've been taking care of yourself and the client balks, you can clearly see options. You can catalogue his weaknesses and strengths; decide whether to bluff or walk away from the deal; make a judgement if he needs more finessing or his mind is made up.

"That's what we want to learn. This class may not cause miracles to happen, but it will teach you to become aware, and with awareness comes control. Mr. Grant hopes this seminar will give you a fuller, healthier lifestyle which will be reflected in your work and keep you here for years to come."

Chandler knew she had their interest. The women nodded as if in agreement, and the men looked less skeptical about the entire program. Even Logan seemed to watch her with approval. She ignored the warm rush of pleasure and decided not to probe her feelings too deeply. "I'm going to teach you some breathing techniques and then we'll discuss various causes of stress. I'd like everyone to get comfortable with me at this point."

The rest of the time flew by. From the corner of her eye, she noticed one of the women inch her way

toward Logan. She'd never seen a breathing pattern that made a woman's breasts lift so high, nor strain against the material of a t-shirt so tightly—all in perfect view of Logan's eyes.

When the class ended Chandler noticed them laughing together quite intimately. The woman touched his shoulder in a familiar gesture. Chandler determinedly ignored them as she went about folding mats and chatting with the employees on their way out. It was no business of hers that the boss was on such friendly terms with his workers.

“Do you need some help?”

She turned to face Richard Thorne. “Thank you. Let's put them over there in the corner.” They finished clearing the mats and stacked them on top of one another. “It's good to see you in class. What did you think?”

He smiled. “I loved it. My days are so stressful, I find if I don't do something to come down at night, I'm wired. Yoga is a great way to relax.”

“I agree. When I first started my practices, I realized how I'd been mistreating my body. Now, I know exactly when I've been pushing too hard.”

“Same here. I can't even eat a jumbo burger anymore.”

“Are you a vegetarian?”

He shrugged. “Yeah. But I don't like to publicize it too much.”

Chandler studied the man before her with growing admiration. Not too many males had self awareness

about their lifestyles, but Richard Thorne seemed to have reached a nice balance. He was a successful businessman, but knew how to have a healthy life.

Dressed in a white t-shirt and navy blue sweats, he radiated an open, friendly energy she was immediately drawn to. Light brown hair fell in neat waves over his forehead. Chestnut eyes gazed into hers with a steadiness that soothed her. Nothing like the silver heat from the man last night. She couldn't picture Richard dragging her into his arms and seducing her on the couch, swearing he would "take care of everything."

Not like Logan Grant.

"Chandler?"

She shook off her thoughts. "Yes?"

"Would you like to have dinner with me tomorrow night?" he asked. "There's a great new Thai restaurant I wanted to check out."

She hesitated. Then watched Logan say his good-byes to the rest of the employees and stride across the room. He moved with a powerful, masculine energy that made her weak all the way down to her toes. Especially when she remembered last night. His lips over hers. His hands on her body. All his intense concentration focused on giving her pleasure.

Oh, God.

She'd sworn off all businessmen, but Richard Thorne seemed different. Safe. He was the type of man she might be able to explore a relationship with. She tore her gaze away from Logan.

“Yes, I think I’d like that.”

A pleased grin curved Richard’s lips. “Great. I’ll get your address tomorrow and we’ll set up a time.”

“Fine. Have a good night, Richard.”

“You too. Hey boss, see ya tomorrow.” He gave her a friendly wink as he passed Logan, obviously ignoring his boss’s thunderous expression. Chandler swallowed hard and tilted her chin up.

“Set up a time for what?” Logan demanded.

She shook her head in exasperation. “For dinner. We’re going out tomorrow night.”

A range of emotions flickered across his carved features, then quickly disappeared. “That’s not a good idea.”

She arched one eyebrow. “Excuse me?”

“You’re doing this to prove a point, aren’t you?”

Her mouth dropped open. “Why do you think everything has to do with you? I’m going out with Richard because he’s a nice guy, and I think we’ll have a good time.”

“You think he’s safe, and you’re scared to death of the way I make you feel.”

She sputtered with indignation. “That’s ridiculous. You have no right to make assumptions about the way I feel.”

He didn’t respond. His charcoal gaze raked over her face, as if searching for some expression she refused to show. His voice dropped. “Chandler, I want you to stay away from him. He’s not who you think he is, and until I find out what’s going on, it’s best if

you don't see him on a personal level.”

Anger shot through her. “Businessmen are all alike.” She clenched her fists at her sides. “You want to control all aspects of a relationship. A few kisses and you're ready to claim me as your own personal property to the world, and God forbid any other man challenge you.”

“Chandler—”

“There's nothing more to Richard than what he shows. He's a hardworking man who's trying to balance his life. I didn't see any hidden motives, or evil plans to take over the world. And I'm going to dinner with him tomorrow night.”

“Chandler—”

“I mean it, Logan. We have a business relationship but I will not let you dictate to me who I can go out with.”

She took a deep breath, ready to do battle. She waited for an explosion of testosterone temper and steeled herself for a defense. Logan was being outrageous. Okay, so she'd let things go a bit far last night, but he had no right to bully her.

His lower lip kicked up in a grin. She gazed in astonishment when he shook his head in typical male exasperation. “I thought yoga teachers never lost their temper,” he said. “Now I find there's a hellcat waiting to get out. You just cover it up with all that deep breathing and chanting.”

She opened her mouth to speak but no words emerged.

He reached out and ran one thumb over the curve of her lips, an indulgent light gleamed from his gunmetal grey eyes. “I figured you wouldn’t listen to me. Go ahead and make your dinner plans. Convince yourself you’re crazy about Thorne. Pretend our kisses meant nothing.”

With that last statement, he turned on the heel of his leather Nikes and strode out the door.

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# Jennifer Probst

I've always wanted to be a writer. At twelve, I took a pen in hand and wrote my first love story. I haven't stopped since. Those heroines taught me valuable lessons that served me well. I learned to keep my head up high and surge forward when I was afraid; I learned to demand respect in a relationship; I learned about compromise and dreams and independence. Those are the stories I want to write, and I can only hope I give back some of the joy I received over the years.

I live in the beautiful Hudson Valley in upstate New York. I've traveled to many places but always seem to be drawn back to the mountains. I graduated with a business degree and spend my days working at Mercy College—the other hours I dedicate to my characters. I've pursued many career paths such as travel agent, yoga teacher and insurance salesperson. I've wanted to be an airline pilot, a cat burglar, a dancer, an archaeologist, and a vineyard owner. I have been all of the above through romance novels, and intend to explore many more.

I met the love of my life when I had finally given up on my own romantic journey. The first time he asked me out he promised to buy my book if he could buy me dinner. We had dinner and fell in love over sushi and haven't been apart since. I learned it wasn't about happy endings. It was about happy beginnings.

I welcome any response to the following email address: [jpro121@hvc.rr.com](mailto:jpro121@hvc.rr.com).



# Jennifer Probst

A compelling read, highly sensual and very enjoyable. The romance between Chandler and Logan held me captive *Janet Lane Walters*  
*author of Mysteries and Romances*

Delightful opposites attract. Complex, interesting characters with a refreshing bonus of a hero. Logan Grant tugged at my heart. A high-stakes gamble worth every reader's time. Highly recommended.

*Eileen Charbonneau, author*

Logan Grant knew he was in trouble the moment Chandler Santell walked into his office. He agrees to her crazy deal only when she risks all and guarantees him a profit. Behind the scenes a dangerous game of love, power and greed begin to play out—a game Chandler knows nothing about. The payoff is worth millions to the man who can win Chandler's heart.

Chandler Santell avoids men—especially the rich and powerful ones who believe more in money than people. Desperate to save her struggling Yoga & Arts Center, her last hope is the most powerful man in the finance industry, a man reputed to have a “Heart of Steel.”

Heart of Steel is a wow! You will love the sexual tension and conflict...wonderful characters...well crafted twists. Jennifer Probst is one talented writer.

*Nan Doporto, Romance At Its Best*