

MIDNIGHT BRIDE THE CEO'S TEMPTATION

Chapter 1 - 1: Sent As A Gift

A Five-star hotel, Los Angeles, California

The pool glistened under the translucent glass dome. It was silent other than the soft lapping of water, the hotel, bright and vacant.

Crouched half-naked, Savannah had woken moments ago in the tan recliner by the poolside, her whole body aching. Sitting up, she'd glanced down and her blood-soaked thighs and hardly believe what had happened to her.

Earlier, her fiancé, Devin, had asked her to deliver some documents to the hotel where he was working. She remembered pacing into the room and being wrestled from behind, her mouth being smothered and lapsing unconsciousness. After that, it became fuzzy, like some erotic dream, in which she was surrounded by a man's breath, shackled by his strong arms, contorted around his torso, and used as a toy to satisfy his desires. She'd felt herself open up to him, her body ravished and pulsating, a burst of pain as he pushed himself into her as she cried out. And this man, the one in her dream - it wasn't Devin, her fiancé.

But now, looking between her blood-stained thighs, her body a mesh of aches and sores, she knew it hadn't been a dream.

Why? She thought. She gathered her knees up to her chest, watching the sunlight dance on the water. How could this happen in broad daylight? Her mind wandered. Should I call the police? Or... Preserve evidence?

Yes, evidence. She'd need to preserve her body; aching; bitten; bloodied and stained - keep it in a zip-lock bag and use it to punish the man who had done this to her. As her mind raced, the floor-to-ceiling glass doors creaked open.
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She glanced up - a tall and handsome stranger stepped in, a white towel slung over his shoulder, water dripping from the ends of his raven black hair, his exquisite features presenting a noble temperament. His deep grey eyes moved to focus on her, and like sparks shocked her.

That's him! She thought, rising to her feet, unsure which direction to take. It was you who did this to me! She felt white-hot anger rise in her chest at the

injustice and humiliation of it all, and her body pulled her towards him. She pounced to him like a bristling cat: "You – you asshole!" She said, clawing at his face.

He grabbed her by the arm and lifted her up and away from him. His body's heat made her breathless; his voice was like grit and gravel before a landslide, mingled with extreme displeasure: "Me?" His mouth split onto a broad-toothed smile. "Why? It was Devin who sent you to me."

Two hours before, Dylan and his nephew, Devin, had successfully settled a business deal at their family hotel. After the new partners left, Devin took two glasses of merlot to celebrate, chiming glasses with his uncle, Dylan. Dylan upended his glass and instantly felt his body ignite with a burning passion. His nephew smiled at him and invited his assistant to take Dylan back to his room by the pool.

Feeling dizzy, he was surprised when he went into his room and spied a familiar, slender figure, sprawled on his bed. She was the girl he had once seen on Devin's phone, he realized. At that time, he'd made a concerted effort to show little interest in her. She was beautiful but didn't want to tangle emotions with business. Did his nephew think he was interested in his fiancée? Had he sent her as a gift?

He realized now that, standing in front of this spat girl, of course, it had been Devin's idea, the idiot. He'd drugged them both and let them go at it. But why?

He told her.

Savannah shivered, tears filling her eyes. "What? It can't be," she said, cowed into silence. "Why would he do-" She gestured at them with sweeping arms, "this? I'm his fiancée!" The last word tasted bitter in her mouth now, like rotten fruit.

"Devin's fiancée?" Dylan frowned with, and his thin lips twisted into a smile. "I had no idea," he said, holding up his hands. His nephew had really something, he thought, glancing at her, and then Devin presented her to be bound, gagged and naked. Dylan gazed at Savannah and said drily, "It's true, believe it or not."

Reality hit her like a high-speed train. She felt herself being knocked off balance and then falling into a deep abyss. Anger, sadness, embarrassment –

they swelled within her and threatened to undo her at the seams. She glared at him, fists clenched, feet unmoving.

Her fiancé had sold her off like a slave to Dylan, and he'd eaten her up like a box of chocolates, she thought. The bastard. She needed to leave, she knew. Get as far away from this man as she could.

He noticed her turning her head, looking to run like a wounded beast. She'd go straight to the police, Dylan knew, and she couldn't be allowed to do that. In one swift motion, he scooped her up in his arms and lifted her over the pool.

"What the fuck are you doing?" she gasped, surprised by how easily she was overcome. "Let me go! Let me go! LET ME GO!" Savannah screamed, but only echoes answered.

By accident or not, she wasn't sure, but as she struggled, her shirt was suddenly torn wide open, spilling out her well-rounded breasts for him to see. His eyes turned a darker shade of blue as he looked at her toned body cradled in his arms.

"Let me go! You - you assaulted me." She whimpered, tears spilling down her face. The words sounded like a weak omission. As if by saying it, she was giving up.

Dylan looked at her, a mixture of pity and sympathy in his eyes, and let her go, splashing down into the water.

She pulled her shirt tight around her, dripping wet as she walked along with the boulevard home, the drugs slowly fading away.

"Are you okay?" Hollered a passing pickup truck. It slowed next to her, playing Bob Dylan on the radio. "Do you want me to call the police?"

What was the point? She wandered. What evidence did she have? After being thrown into the pool, would there be anything left to vindicate her accusations? She shook her head and thanked him. He shrugged and pulled away.

After Dylan had thrown her in the pool, he had watched her with a wry smile, amused as she splashed, kicking and screaming away from him. She remembered hoisting herself out at the far side and running into the night. He hadn't chased her but watched her from the recliner she'd woken on, his arms cupped behind his head, and his mouth stretched into the same amused grin.

Now, walking along the sunbaked pavement, her bare-feet ached from running. Birds were singing and could smell the sea nearby. She threw her phone on the floor, broken by being dumped in the pool. I spent half-a-months earnings on that phone, she thought as she ground her heel against it. The fucker.

She rounded a bend and arrived at a petrol station. She found a pay phone just around the side where campervans parked at night and pulled some change from her pocket and dialed Devin.

She heard a familiar voice. "Hello?"