

## INTO THE NIGHT

by  
Lisa Michaels

Kate Grayson glanced at her watch. A few minutes left to board and still no sign of the legendary Tyler Matthews. Wonder Boy was exactly the type of client she depended on and dreaded: Hollywood alumni, handsome at least on the big screen, and probably vapid. She wondered if he was still styling his hair. *It probably takes him longer to get ready than it takes me.* Be nice Kate, she reminded herself. She looked around the Cessna 400's interior and smiled. She loved flying, and it was the beautiful and the rich who made flying possible. Funny how things turn out, someone like me, makes a lucrative living among people who love *the roar of the crowd.*

A sudden blur of motion caught her eye, and she looked up through the windshield. Fans and too many of them! Yesterday Tyler had wrapped shooting a romantic comedy in New Orleans. The film was a departure from the heroic action roles he typically played. The buzz, according to his agent Susan Anderson was once this film was released his star would supernova.

It was hard to imagine that he could become even more famous. His arrival for the New Orleans shoot had turned into pandemonium at the airport causing a rush hour nightmare covered

by the local media and picked up by cable news. One woman was arrested sans clothing with tears streaming down her face – reverently murmuring his name.

Hoping to avoid the frantic fan scene that greeted him when he arrived at the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport, Kate suggested departing from the Lakefront Airport. Now she wondered if the smaller airport could withstand the onslaught since it was obvious the word was out. A crowd with a frantic kind of energy had made it past the temporary fencing, actually trampling a section. Several fans carried signs detailing their affection. One sign proclaimed in hot pink, *I'll have your baby*; another read, *Beautify America! Clone Yourself*.

Kate blinked as a powerfully built man opened the forward passenger door and gave the interior a thorough once-over. She saw his shoulder holster and gun as he leaned forward, his muscular upper torso filling the doorway of the cockpit. His authoritative demeanor, crew cut, and solid physique telegraphed former CIA or special ops. “Ms. Grayson, I’m Niles O’Shea, security. I work for Tyler Matthews. I wanted to make sure his gear was delivered and loaded. Sit tight. We’ll be boarding soon.”

“Yes, a suitcase and an overnight bag are onboard. I’m sorry, did you say we?” Kate thought she detected a trace of worry in his distinct Irish brogue.

“He’s taking a break from all of us, me included. Can’t imagine that, can you? Right now, we’ve got a little logistical hiccup.” Pointing to the crowd, he said, “Getting a wee packed out in the airport lobby. So, I’ll be routing him directly here. There are a few last minute details I need to update Mr. Matthews on. This looks to be secure,” he indicated the plane’s interior. “I

will be quick about it and then you two can be on your way.” He didn’t wait for a nod of agreement much less her answer. He closed the door, disappearing as quickly and quietly as he had appeared.

The noise and clamoring reminded Kate of the one and only time she attended Mardi Gras. She shuddered. She loved New Orleans but not Mardi Gras. Once had been enough to last a lifetime. Suddenly to her amazement, the entire group did an about face, following a ripple moving through their ranks. At the far end of the runway, a sleek Lear jet was taxiing into position. Lemmings, she thought, they’re lemmings. The crowd, a noisy and colorful blob surged across the tarmac toward the plane.

The door opened a second time, before her stood a man with all the essential some things in the most pleasing composition. “Evening. Tyler Matthews checking in. Great night for a flight isn’t it?” His voice was deep and commanding.

Kate tallied the inventory – dove grey eyes, ebony colored hair, a voice like fine chocolate – dark and rich, the hint of a five-o’clock shadow, cast-iron abs, perfectly defined thighs, and those biceps. Biceps? Since when are biceps in my vocabulary? Yikes! Way past drop-dead gorgeous straight to heart breaker.

“I’m Kate Grayson, nice to meet you Mr. Matthews she managed to say in an even tone as Niles seemed to magically appear behind Tyler.

“Got it under control but let’s board, don’t want to chance being spotted,” Niles urged in a firm tone as he pointed to the crowd.

“Yes, please both of you hop in. By the way, Mr. O’Shea when I filed my flight plan, the administrator assured me they could ratchet up security as warranted, fans notwithstanding.” Kate had no doubt airport security was activated, but so many people packed in one place heightened her alarm.

“No worries, Miss, and call me Niles. Mr. O’Shea, now he would be me father.” Niles answered. Kate nodded to Niles but her attention was fixed on the crowd circling the Lear jet and security closing in on them. She smiled in appreciation. Niles did a good job creating the diversion on the opposite end of the airport. The crowd was responding. To make it through that mob, one would need a sizable armed escort. What a way to live she thought glumly.

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Tyler slipped into the front passenger seat shooting Kate a wide smile, “And please, call me Tyler.” He turned to Niles who had settled in the rear seat adjacent to his. “O’Shea, anyone ever tell you that you have a talent for ruining a peaceful evening?”

“May have heard that a time or two from me ex-girlfriends. It’s lovely to see you again, and so soon Miss,” Niles said tilting his head to Kate and shooting her a half grin. Then his demeanor and focus shifted to all business, “Everything we’ll be discussing is confidential. I assume that’s covered in our contract.”

“Of course Mr. O’Shea, I mean Niles. We provide an iron clad confidentiality guarantee in our contract with all high profile clients. Clients that include movie stars, royalty to politicians. Your secrets are secure.” Kate stated flatly.

Tyler chuckled softly, “Rest easy Niles. I think we’ve been put in our place. I don’t think any of our business ranks as sensitive as state secrets or policy.”

Niles shrugged and directed his attention to Tyler. “I got the latest report on DuMont about twenty minutes ago—and this.” He handed an envelope to Tyler. “A token of affection, let’s say.”

Tyler’s smile faded as he scanned the one-page letter. “Affection or affliction? Same as the others,” he said in a flat voice. But that was the trouble. His eyes returned to the same three lines that appeared in the previous letters.

*Once I lost my most precious thing.  
Do you know how that feels?  
Take care, my friend.*

He looked back at Niles. “He’s out, then.”

“Yeah, again. They could only hold him for forty-eight hours. Seems his therapist and lawyer did what they’re paid to do.”

“His wife, where is she now?”

“Make that ex-wife officially. Still in L.A. but she’s feeling the pressure. Thinking it may be time to leave the area. She seems more anxious now that the divorce’s gone through and he’s wandering around. As we well know, DuMont is good at lying low until he wants to be seen. And he’s off the radar for now.”

Like my marriage, another divorce, one more statistic. Tyler thought. But this man’s divorce was somehow dangerous or so Niles seemed to think. Something was driving this guy to the edge of reason. And for those keeping track, Tyler knew that his marriage was notable for its

brevity and notoriety. It was still occasional news in the magazines and on the 24-hour news cycle, a public train wreck with craziness of a different kind than this DuMont business. “What about the restraining order?” he asked.

“Two for two. Along with yours, the ex-wife’s got one too. But I wouldn’t rest easy with a piece of paper between me and that whack job.”

Tyler shot Kate a glance, “Sorry, this kind of thing always sounds worse than it is. The guy we’re talking about is just another nuisance fan. A minor annoyance goes with the job.”

“No problem,” Kate said. “I can step outside and get some air if you want to discuss this in private.”

“No, please stay put,” Tyler said. “If anyone moves outside it’ll be us.” Tyler answered.

“Let’s all stay put. More comfortable in here and no zoom lens where we sit. Anyway we’re nearly done,” Niles said.

“If her relocation is contingent on money makes sure she gets what she needs. Anonymously,” Tyler added as an afterthought. Niles was watching him for any emotion, but Tyler betrayed none.

“Consider it done, boss. You know I’m not one to leave calling cards.”

“Thanks, Niles. Sorry, I know you how to do your job.” Tyler added, “I guess I’m a little off my mark. Maybe you and Susan are right.”

“Well, yeah, I suppose even me and Susan are known to get it right – once in a blue moon, eh Tyler?” Niles laughed. “But I forget, what is it we are right about?”

“Maybe a little down time will help put things back into perspective. You take the good with the bad. And most of the time the good far outweighs the bad.” Tyler’s eyes slid over the paper once more, tightening. “But every time we deal with a nuisance or the lunatic fringe, I momentarily ask myself if it’s worth it.”

“Easy boss, I got your back. You busted your ass to get this far. Between Olivia and this clown, you haven’t gotten the break that comes from paying your dues. Maybe the worst is over. Olivia played her final hand; you’ll survive that. The divorce was just the segue to the final act, her book. And if that’s half as sexy as they’re saying, you’ll get more mileage from it than her. As for Mr. DuMont,” Niles made a gesture like swatting a fly. “He’s going to make a fatal miscalculation, and when he does, he’s going down for good. The good news is that in a couple hours you’ll be chillin’ on the Emerald Coast. Ever been there?” he asked.

“No, but I’ve heard some good things.”

Niles nodded. “Susan said she wanted to find a laid back place, I suggested Phillips Inlet. I like it; it’s a little bit of heaven.”

Kate nodded in agreement, “Excuse me for interrupting but I concur.”

“Interrupt away,” Tyler said flashing a smile that was perfect but real. “And speaking of Susan, punctual as always.” Tyler consulted the old silver pocket watch that had belonged to his grandfather and then his father. “Welcome to the Matthews convention,” he said opening the door.

Smiling sheepishly, Susan climbed into the plane. “Hello Kate. Bet you didn’t expect to see me here too. I’m sorry about this,” she said settling into the passenger’s seat. “We had a

little snafu. I need to go over a couple of things with Tyler too. I need to confirm the confidentiality—”

“Hey Susie-Q,” Tyler interrupted, “We’re good, got it covered.”

Susan stiffened slightly, “Of course you do. Sorry Kate, I’m a little agitated. The last few hours have not gone according to plan.”

Kate smiled slightly, “I understand.”

Susan placed her briefcase on her lap and popped it open. She passed a bound script to Tyler. “Down time or not, this is *Dancing on the Moon*, the script I mentioned. I just received your updated copy. It’s well worth reading. I’m thrilled it presented itself before you sign for *Savage Love*.

“I’m out,” Niles said. “Nice to meet you Miss Grayson. Susan, Tyler, until later.” Niles disappeared from the plane in a single movement.

*Right on cue.* Niles didn’t want to be party to any discussion about *Savage Love*. Tyler didn’t blame him; neither did he. He looked at his agent. “You worry too much.”

“You pay me to worry, remember? Besides I only need a few minutes with my favorite movie star.” Susan flipped her bangs out of her eyes, casting a quick look at Niles’ empty seat. Tyler caught her smiling. “Look, Tyler, you wrap one picture, and it’s on to the next. If you’re bent on working nonstop, don’t settle for *Savage Love*. Make it something meaningful, like this script.”



“You know why I decided to do *Savage Love*. I owe Gabe, you remember him Susan, the only director who took a chance and cast me when nobody else would even let me read. Besides, Electra’s bankable property.”

“You aren’t a big fan of Electra, are you Kate?” asked Susan.

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t know then you’re probably not a fan. Good enough. Look Tyler, she’s bankable property yes, and notorious, difficult, and outrageous. Have I left anything out? I don’t think you need this in your life right now, from a personal or public-relations standpoint. You know we could use a little friendly PR not the Electra brand.”

He nodded. “From a PR point of view, you are right. But she’s a draw and Gabe could use that right now.”

“Fine, then it’s my responsibility to remind you of a recent conversation,” she said in a familiar tone. The inflection in her voice signaled she was resisting the urge to present the detailed notes citing the exact time, date and content of the discussion. Notes that he had no doubt were within her immediate reach. “You told me you wanted to move away from the hunk image, remember? So think about it. This film’s has hunk stamped all over it, in neon, capital letters.” Susan cleared her throat. “What’s more, I think you’re forgetting: Electra has a reputation for literally putting a lot of herself in her projects.”

“I’m a pretty good actor; I can survive one more movie like this. It’s a debt repaid.”

Judging by the little groove that appeared between her eyes, Susan was unconvinced. “You know she lives to generate copy around her leading men. If she can’t base it on fact, she

creates the illusion. She's not happy until the press is hanging off her. Tyler, she loves scandal and controversy, at a time when you—"

"Since when did scandal become a negative in my profession? You know I can manage Electra and the press. What's going on, Susan?" He braced himself for the inevitable. Susan was particularly diligent when he reached conclusions she felt were counter to his best interest.

She sighed and her eyes went from Kate to Tyler. "Heaven knows, as your agent I'm never supposed to try and talk you out of something that's bound to make you tons of money, right? But the truth is I'm tired and you are, too. It seems like your life is more insane than usual, something I would have sworn was impossible a year ago. I mean for Heaven's sakes, we're meeting in a Cessna." She hesitated, "And maybe most importantly, Tyler, I'm not sure you've had the time to deal with the divorce, your loss."

"Don't you think a year is more than enough time to deal with a marriage that barely lasted a month? I dealt with it a long time ago." He hoped his grim expression signaled that he damn sure didn't intend to rehash it now.

Susan looked at him, then Kate and back to Tyler. "You're right, case closed." She said forcing a smile. "On to something far more pleasant...you're on your way to some well deserved rest." She checked her blackberry as silence settled between the agent and the actor. Kate shifted in her seat.

"About this trip," Tyler said, "Good timing as usual: Olivia's book hits the stands, and I disappear for a few days. Do I pay you enough?"

“We’ll talk about my big fat bonus when you get back,” Susan said. “Enjoy your getaway Tyler. Your pilot and the destination come highly recommended.”

“We’re done then?”

“Yes, all done. She turned to Kate. “Take care of him; you are just about to really earn your money. Tyler opened his mouth to protest but Susan gathered her briefcase and wagged her finger, “Not a word you know it’s true. See you when you get back,” she said stepping from the plane.

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“Alone at last,” Tyler leaned forward and smiled. “Quick, let’s get out of here before they remember something else and come running back.” He gestured toward the smoke-colored clouds illuminated by the airport lights. “I’m guessing the weather won’t be a problem.”

“Shoulder harness and buckle up, too, please. We’re good to go, but we need to move it before my clearance gets voided.” Double-checking her instruments, then him. My God, still remarkable, even close up. That’s just wrong. The rain was beginning to fall, making sounds against the roof, small quiet murmurs in the descending darkness. “No, I wouldn’t worry about the weather. Far more manageable than your fans.”

His laughter filled the cockpit, a low chuckle. “Ah, yes: the fans. They are resourceful, sometimes more than we’d anticipate, but Niles has it under control.”

“I see what you mean. Nice timing.” A limousine pulled up to the Lear jet as Kate taxied her Cessna in the opposite direction down the runway. Obviously, his fans expected Tyler to step from the limo. A line of grim-faced security officers were trying to restrain the crowd behind a temporary barricade.

“One advantage of having money, you can afford the best, and Niles is that. There are times I’m sure it’d be a disaster if he weren’t in charge of security.”

“I guess you don’t get much privacy?” A rhetorical question if ever there was one.

“Some days are worse than others,” he said. “As you heard, you caught me at particularly bad time.” His tone was resigned, but cheerful. However, Kate noticed that the stiffness in his shoulders and the tension on his face seemed to suggest a slightly different story. Yet Kate knew that after a few days out of the spotlight, her star clients longed for the insanity, the crowds, and all that glittered. Though Kate couldn’t imagine stepping back into the fire as eagerly as she had seen them do, she was grateful for the Hollywood connection. These bookings in particular created referrals and paid top dollar. Because of them, she could afford to be selective and charge less for clients involved in more interesting pursuits like eco-tourism.

In one week she’d be off on a flyaway she loved, the Yosemite National Park. For the money Tyler Matthews was spending, she truly hoped that he’d find a brief respite from his shiny Tinsel Town.

Handling a plane was serious business, no matter what the weather conditions, so Kate turned her attention away from amateur analysis of her passenger and towards the familiar pattern of pre-flight checks. They were easily in the air within minutes. Once the Cessna had

climbed to cruising altitude, Kate again found her attention drawn to Tyler. Yep, certified heart breaker. Some minutes later, she realized he'd fallen asleep. Probably exhausted. It's those fans. She would not last five minutes with them, much less the five years since Tyler Matthews had come on the scene.

For wealthy and famous clients like Tyler Matthews, Kate offered an escape into anonymity—a viable adjunct to Destinations Unlimited, her sister Jill's travel agency. Jill and her husband provided the real estate and financed more than a million dollars in planes. For her part, Kate piloted the getaways and once on the ground acted as guide, hostess extraordinaire, shrink, whatever was needed to ensure each client received their money's worth. She and Jill dubbed this particularly lucrative aspect of the business as the *Funk Junket*. These getaways were for actors who suffered from overexposure, quite literally in the case of some of the women. They were down in the dumps, in a funk, and stressed. Trendy spas were not enough for this over-extended group. It was one of life's ironies: their lives made them famous, and made them nuts.

Kate paused to consider the fact that she was sitting within easy reach of Hollywood's reigning king at the box office. Even someone like Kate who found entertainment news unworthy of her time knew all about Tyler Matthew's rapid rise to fame. She took a longer look at the tall, muscular frame cramped in the cockpit, inhaling the slight fragrance of his aftershave, soap, and him. Jeeze Louise, he even smells good. His face conformed to the classic lines, high cheekbones and a strong jaw; his eyelashes were thick, and this close she could see streaks of silver threaded in his dark hair. The man was trouble, the kind of trouble to which most women

fell prey, and he had the ticket sales and rabid fans to prove it. Despite Kate's disinterest in the Hollywood scene, she had to admit that she was in agreement with the public on this one. Tyler Matthews was hot and he knew it. Knew it? Hell, he epitomizes it, she thought. Somewhere there's a dictionary and next to the "hot" entry is this guy's picture.

## CHAPTER TWO

Stop being a sexist, Kate Grayson and give the guy a break. Perhaps there was more to this man than his disconcerting physical perfection and the fact he smelled damn good and those arms, those abs, those biceps. Stop! Kate sighed aloud and settled in for the two hour flight. Tyler Matthews, another handsome hunk grabbing a brief moment away from his fame and fans. One week and then his life would resume its normal pace, whatever that might be.

They continued flying at 8,500 feet, hitting an occasional rough current. They were making a little slower time because of the weather but it was an easy hop, one she made frequently. Now she licked the last bit of cream and crumbs from her fingers. She had tried without much success to nudge Tyler awake to offer to share her in-flight meal; a box of Twinkies. He hadn't answered except to murmur something unintelligible. I guess it's tiring being a movie star.

Less than an hour from their destination, he woke, tamping down his sleep-tousled hair with a hand and shooting a winsome grin at her. "I fell asleep? How long was I out?"

"We're nearly home." She couldn't help but smile. A tuft of hair was still sticking up on his crown. "You seem pretty relaxed."

"Shouldn't I be? I'm in your capable hands, after all." She hoped he didn't catch the way her grip tightened around the control stick. "I do a lot of flying," he said, "although I am

usually awake except on international flights. When I have a choice, I fly during the day. I like being able to see where I'm going."

"Sunny weather can be dangerous, too." She watched him try to stretch his long legs and shift in his seat. Kate had not noticed the closeness of the Cessna; before it had always seemed roomier.

"How?" he asked as he settled into the seat.

"Density altitude. Too much humidity and temperature, and that's what you get. Less climbing power, longer take-off time, faster approaches, and—" She looked at his face. He seemed disinterested, or maybe he was still sleepy. "In a nutshell, flying's like driving, demands your attention even in the best of conditions. I hope we're through the turbulence now."

He flashed a smile. "More turbulence? Now there's a tough call: flying in bad weather or grounded with my fans."

"You were out cold. I doubt anyone could sleep through the siege of fans I saw. We're about thirty miles west of the squall line. Didn't Susan brief you about the possibility of bad weather? I called her with an update a few hours ago. She said it was important we leave tonight." Kate knew some people were wary of flying, particularly if the weather looked remotely threatening.

"I have to grab this chance for a little time off since it's hard to predict when the next break will come. But I should've kept sharp and been observant. I'm looking at playing a pilot next. Thought I might take a few notes on the flight." The plane rocked hard as they hit turbulence. He chuckled quietly, "Then relaxation to follow when we land." The plane lurched to



the left. “Well, well, well,” he said, bracing himself against the ceiling. “Maybe I should’ve stayed another night on the ground with my fans after all. Kind of scary stuff just now.” His lopsided grin assured her that he wasn’t too concerned with the weather.

“Not here, the scary stuff was back there on the ground. Thunderstorms don’t compare.”

“Aw, come on, Kate,” he said, resuming his relaxed posture. “You seem like a well-adjusted person.”

“I’m sure I am as well-adjusted as any Hollywood types I’ve ever met, and I’ve met quite a few,” she shot back at him.

He laughed. “Don’t go measuring your mental health against Hollywood. We don’t exactly set the gold standard in that department. It’s too easy to look normal compared to those of us aspiring to see our names in lights. So, you have an aversion to fans?”

“No, not really fans, more like crowds. I want some space between me and hoards of people most of the time.” She hesitated, but surprised herself by being comfortable enough to ask, “Don’t you ever resent the intrusion on your privacy?”

“Sure sometimes, but I try to keep it in perspective. My fans, public exposure, it’s all part of the job, and it’s a job that’s been very good to me. I do draw the line about my private life, and that line gets a little blurry sometimes when dealing with overzealous fans and paparazzi.”

His attention was drawn to a brilliant flash of lightning in the distance. A gust of wind belted the plane. Kate turned the radio to the nearest FSS. A deep and clear voice filled the

cockpit. Emotionless and precise, it listed the current conditions from the closest reporting station.

“Typical summer weather,” she said. “I can maintain my distance.” The plane pulled to the left again. “We’re fine.”

“I trust you, Kate. Besides I’ve been in much worse.”

“Really?”

“In the movies, naturally.”

She laughed. “Of course, do tell.”

“One of my earlier movies, *The Final Deal*. I’m undercover DEA, out to rescue an informant’s daughter. I fall in love with her. I’m trying to get her to a safe house while the weather gets worse and worse.”

“And you crash.”

“Seen the movie?”

Kate smiled. “Well, no. Seems like a predictable turn of events,” she said.

“Predictable, huh? Hear me out. The pilot dies, but not before a fiery and undignified landing, the best pyrotechnics that special effects can produce. So—”

“I don’t do fiery and undignified landings,” she said, straightening up in her seat and jutting her chin.

“Good to know,” he smiled that smile. “Where were you when I needed you? Now, shall I continue my obviously riveting account?”

Kate was finding it easier and easier to laugh. Her eyes were drawn to that little tuft of hair standing up on his head. It made him seem approachable. “Oh, yes, I’m breathless with anticipation. What happens next?”

“The informant’s daughter dies despite my best efforts. The rest of the film is a study in one man’s desperate loneliness having waited a lifetime and finally finding love, only to have it suddenly and violently taken from him.” Tyler’s voice had grown low and raspy. He seemed to be speaking from personal experience rather than about a script.

“Intense,” Kate said solemnly. “Not quite what I expected.”

“So, the age-old dilemma: better to experience true love and ultimately lose it, or better to never know love? Which is the more tragic, which loss the greater?”

“Was it difficult to act in such a heavy duty plot early in your career?”

“Immensely so. Very trying. I drew on my deep, deep well of pain and—” He broke off, laughing, and shook his head. “I’m lying, Kate. I rescue her and she makes a full recovery. Sorry, I couldn’t resist.”

“You are a good actor.” Kate hoped he didn’t see the fleeting blush staining her cheeks as she realized her words sounded more like an exclamation of surprise rather than a statement of fact.

“I’m good at what I do.” He arched one dark brow and asked, “Not to sound unduly vain, but haven’t you seen any of my movies? I know a few have made it to cable. I think there’s even a gift set floating around too.”

“Of course I have. And I enjoyed the ones I watched. I’m not exactly current or cutting edge when it comes to movies and I’m bad at remembering titles. Mostly I am a fan of movies from the forties and fifties.”

“Hmm, I see, but you have of course seen some of my work. So, which one of my movies is your favorite?”

Now Kate was having to hedge. “Maybe when I know you better, I’ll tell you.”

When he grinned, she knew she’d been had again. “You don’t remember any of my films, do you?” It wasn’t surprising that an actor had found her out in a fib. “Now I’m a little hurt but intrigued. Kate Grayson obviously not a Tyler Matthews fan.”

Was there a kind of heat between them, suddenly and inexplicably? No way...not a possibility. “Finish telling me about this movie. I promise no more second-guessing from me.”

He shrugged and grinned. “Alright, I’ll continue only because I have your word. I pull her from the burning wreckage in a scene complete with close-ups, ripped clothes, stirring music—the stuff of high drama. In the line of duty, I undress her to take care of her wounds. Lots of chest shots—only mine, not hers. She gets her big moment during the usual O.S.S.”

“An O.S.S, what’s that?” she asked.

“Industry definition is obligatory sex scenes. My definition, oh so stock.”

The words conjured vivid images of him carefully removing a woman’s clothing, his fingers tenderly ministering to her. It was easy to imagine, too easy. The plane seemed uncomfortably warmer as Kate fiddled with the climate control. The minor rocking of the airplane was nothing compared to the unsettling thoughts provoked by his answer. Sex. She

forced herself to face forward, her hand tight on the control stick. “I suppose all that’s left is for you to conquer the elements and win the undying love of the heroine?”

“I do win her over but not without a hell of a lot of resistance on her part. You know these modern women; they’re tough. And I do handle with other annoying things like murderous hit men and confoundedly bad weather. Are you positive you haven’t seen the movie?”

“Positive. Isn’t it sort of the formula you hear about?” she asked.

“Formula?”

She realized he was watching her intently. She kept her eyes forward as she navigated.

“Bigger-than-life undying passion, star-crossed destinies.”

“Don’t put much stock in star-crossed destinies, do you?”

“No, not me, and I suspect you don’t either. Am I wrong?”

“No, you’re right. Maybe once a long time ago but no more.” He nodded in agreement.

“It’s not such a bad thing, to have your feet firmly planted on the ground,” she said.

“Star-crossed lovers are driven by a passion that leaves most mere mortals like me in awe.

Pumping the dream machine is good business, keeps Hollywood in the money.” Hearing her

words, she was taken aback by the sound of them and the alarmed expression on his face. There

it was out in the open. A revelation of some import, she no longer believed in love as she once

had. For an instant she wondered when she had stopped hoping that she could have it all. When

had this happened? After all she was a woman whose favorite movie was *Adam’s Rib* and she’d

memorized entire passages of *Romeo and Juliet* when she was a sophomore in high school. And

in a moment, in a conversation... so much for believing. A little girl in a bride dress playing

dress-up, from a time long ago...gone... long missing and her loss only now discovered. Kate flinched.

“I think I would describe it differently, maybe not as cynically. It’s easy to trivialize emotionality.”

“Oops and ouch. Have I offended you? I sincerely hope not. It’s against the rules to offend clients.”

“Good rule. You haven’t offended me, not yet.” He pulled out his old-fashioned pocket watch and carefully flipped it open. “But then it’s only Sunday evening, so that still gives you several days,” he said.

Kate found herself backtracking, even though he was smiling. “I’m open to other interpretations. Cynical as that may have sounded; I love comedies and old romantic movies and poetry. I’m not sure why, I just do. But other than that, I’m basically a realist.” Why was she telling him this? Did she feel the need to soften her words? Any chance I’m a closet romantic, she wondered.

He thumbed his chin in thought. “Hmm.., a pilot whose feet are firmly on planet Earth. A realist except for old movies, oh and the erotic poetry.” At her startled glance, he explained. “Susan gave me your book of poetry to return to you a few days ago. She didn’t realize we’d be holding a convention with you tonight.” He paused, his eyes scanning her face, her body as if seeking a physical confirmation to his assessment. Kate willed herself to stay focused, forward looking. She did not want any eye contact. “I didn’t have a chance to do much besides skim it,

but I thought I'd read it if you let me keep it for a few more days. It's not the reading material I'd expect from someone one who is grounded in reality."

Kate cringed slightly while he turned the little knob on his watch, adjusting the second hand. The thought of him making any assumptions about her and the work of the outrageous poet raced through her like a wild fire. Again, Kate felt the temperature in the cabin rise. She felt flushed and her mouth was dry. She licked her lips and took a long drink of her bottled water. Suddenly she wanted to be anywhere but above the ground in a small plane with him. She needed terra firma soon. She scrambled to change the subject and congratulated herself when she managed a fairly breezy tone, parched lips and all. "Don't read too much into it. The book was a gift, not something I bought. Although, I admit I admire Johansen's work. It's not all that sensational; it has depth and tenderness. On a less provocative note, we're a few minutes from landing. Obviously, you disagree with my characterization of Hollywood. What do you think movies offer?"

"The same thing those old movies and probably the poetry have, a carte blanche ticket to travel anywhere, be anyone. We can all be heroic or less alone — through imagination come possibilities and maybe understanding." Tyler stared through the windshield into the darkness. "And I think it gives people hope."

Instantly she stopped feeling smug about her success at steering the conversation. Her arms rippled with gooseflesh beneath her long sleeves. Though the storm outside had subsided, the air inside the cockpit seemed electrified with the intensity of his words. "Nice, even if only in the movies," she said quietly.

“Sorry for the rant.” He ran his hand across his face as if tearing off a mask, becoming himself again. “Early in my career, I dealt with several holier-than-thou critics. It was a mean-spirited debate that focused on whether cinema had value. It’s not hard to criticize or point to less than stellar efforts. I’ve always thought opening doors is more challenging than slamming them shut.”

An actor. Didn’t it figure? Still Kate was intrigued. Every man she’d known who fit the handsome and successful stereotype shared a common disdain for emotionality. Passion, intensity, were not topics of conversation except to deny their importance. Several men went so far as to insist that these concepts were afflictions peculiar to women. “No apologies necessary,” she said, “but I need to concentrate on the getting us back down to earth safe and sound.” Even though she wasn’t lying, she was glad for the distraction that landing the plane was about to provide.

With the Fort Walton Airport in clear sight, Kate radioed the tower. “Fort Walton Tower, this is Cessna Three-Two-Zero-Three Zulu, east at 6,500, landing Fort Walton.” Checking her altimeter and wind readings, she reported back in at the three-mile approach. “Cleared to land One Three Left.” Tyler was straining against the harness, leaning forward in his seat to better take in the view. Kate smiled. “Coming into airports at night, even small airports like Fort Walton, is always spectacular. No matter how many times I land this bird, it’s a thrill, always like the first time.”

She brought the plane down easily, back in her element. The deepening darkness streaked across the windows, slowing down and sharpening into detail as the plane rolled to a



stop. Her good friend Willie could tell a story about a near-miss or two when Kate had been a fledging pilot first out of the nest; even then Kate's calm had prevailed where her expertise left off. She took pride in each and every landing.

Tyler looked at her and smiled, "You are good."

She stretched her arms overhead. "Lots of practice. I guess it's easy to master something you truly love, and I love flying."

"Must be hard on the men you date."

Kate stopped fumbling with the buckles of her harness and stared at him, frowning in confusion. "Oh?"

"No easy thing finding yourself jealous of a damn airplane."

She shot him a sideways glance and then at length returned his smile. Silence filled the cabin, bringing with it a kind of heat. The man was getting to her, and what was worse she liked it.

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The short drive to the property seemed to last an eternity—not the heavenly kind either but the road trip kind of eternity. It made Kate think of her last vacation to the Gulf Coast to visit Willie, only to end up getting caught up in a hurricane evacuation. In other words: a little bit of Hell. Not that I'm being melodramatic or anything. Save that for the actors, Kate.

Silence had followed them from the cabin of the Cessna to the confines of the Jeep. "Aren't you exhausted?" Tyler had asked. "I'll drive if you point me in the right direction."

But Kate found herself retreating into the familiar roles. He was the client, and she was on the job. She drove and tried not to think about what else they were: a man and a woman traveling through the darkness to an isolated destination, a beautiful home, complete with every luxury money afforded and an intimate ambience. More like a movie star and a nobody. It surprised Kate how awkward and self-conscious that thought was, silly feelings that she'd not felt in years.

She'd been to the property plenty of times. It was Jill and Gary's private home on the Gulf coast, the place they came to decompress—a long way from Los Angeles in miles and in lifestyle. Gary and Jill had snatched up the beachfront property in 2006 when the real estate market went bust in the area. Almost three miles of prime ocean frontage sold by a conglomerate facing ruin, the location backed Camp Helen, one of the lesser-visited state parks in the area. To ensure maximum privacy, the home was built with the east side facing Camp Helen's evergreen forest.

Tyler whistled in appreciation as they made their way up the long driveway. Palm trees swayed and whispered secrets in the sea breeze, and the citrusy scent of dates hung heavy around them. The house was steel and glass melded into a modern work of art. A modern castle but a castle, no doubt. Kate fumbled with her many keys before finding the right one.

Tyler held the door. "Ladies first," he said.

"After you," she insisted. "You're the guest?"

She followed him inside. The foyer opened into the richly appointed lobby with white-leather sofas flush to the wall on either side. Their footsteps echoed under the vaulted ceiling.

“Very nice,” Tyler said. She gave him the mandatory tour, feeling slightly out of sync and putting it off to weariness. As they emerged out of the formal dining room into the living room, Tyler did a double take when he saw the plaid sofa.

Kate shook her head. “I know; it doesn’t fit in with any of the other décor. It’s Gary’s.”

“Gary,” Tyler said.

“My brother-in-law. He owned it when he met my sister, Jill. He likes red and green, actually he likes all things plaid. He swears it’s the most comfortable sofa on God’s green earth. I think Jill was so thrilled to finally get it out of her living room in L.A. she gladly agreed to have it here. This is where they stay when they come to Florida.”

Tyler seemed charmed. “This house could be sitting in Beverly Hills, but that couch is straight out of the dumpster behind Santa’s workshop.”

“It’s Christmastime all the time in Gary Land,” she said.

“I didn’t realize it was their home away from home. I’m flattered. Most comfortable couch, eh? I’ll have to give it a try tomorrow. Right now, I’m ready to see the rest of the place.” Leading Tyler Matthews down the hall to the bedrooms, Kate felt like she walking down the aisle of an airliner, yet to adjust to being on the ground. That awareness was still there, and seemed to be growing. It wasn’t altitude-induced vertigo but the dream-like surrealism of it all that had her off-kilter. She practically sprinted through the master bedroom and bath. Setting the coffeemaker in the kitchen, Kate realized she was answering his questions in clipped monosyllables. It was coming on midnight. By the time they made it onto the deck that

overlooked the ocean, with the pool and the hot tub inset in a shaded nook, Tyler asked her if she was feeling all right.

“Just tired. Night flying’s particularly demanding in weather.”

“Do I need to tuck you in?”

Kate opened her mouth to say something. There was no sound.

“Only kidding,” he shot her that million dollar smile. “Goodnight, Kate.”

“Night, Tyler. See you tomorrow.” She left him standing at the French doors leading to the outside. Her voice sounded fine and she told herself she was fine, even if she walked a little too fast toward the security of her bedroom. It seemed odd to be saying goodnight to him and even stranger knowing when she awakened he would be there. They were alone together, Tyler Matthews and Kate Grayson. Somebody and nobody.

She fluffed the pillows on the bed, turned back the covers, and dived in. Thirty minutes later she was watching the darkness through the skylight, her mind racing as she repeated a mantra to herself: This job is no different than a hundred others. Tyler Matthews is just another client. Other movie stars, rock stars, and politicians had hired her. This was her job, so what was the problem? The problem was her. No... it was him. No... it was them. No, there wasn’t a problem; she was over tired.

No problem. Nothing more to it, she insisted. One week and I’m on my way.

Thirty minutes later, she grabbed the remote control and flipped through the channels, exasperated with herself; she never had trouble falling asleep. She found could talk herself into a lot of things, but sleeping wasn’t one of them. Satellite TV was made for nights like these.

But the powers that be were conspiring against her.

“Be sure and join us tonight when the Monday Night Late Movie is proud to present *The Fury*, starring Tyler Matthews.” Kate groaned at the announcer and clicked off the TV. Tyler thought he had caught her in a fib earlier, when she hadn’t been able to name her favorite of his films. But the truth was that the names of his films didn’t matter. It was his face that she recalled, his face and his form and the things he could do with both, the tangle of emotions he could evoke—on screen as well as in life, she’d learned. The names of his films might as well be *La Dee Da* for all they stuck with her, but his face, his body were the stuff of dreams. The brief clip of *The Fury* reminded her she had seen this movie before. As dismal as it was from what she could recall, the movie had been her first introduction to Tyler Matthews. She wouldn’t soon forget the way the camera doted on him, panned up his toned body, and then sharpened into an extreme close-up. She was familiar with the criteria for Hollywood superstars; she knew what it took, in terms of presence and looks. In his scene, she saw that magical, indefinable quality, a man destined for fame if he so chose.

And so he’d chosen.

“All right, Tyler. It’s a date. Tonight, it’s you and me and *The Fury*.”

### CHAPTER THREE

God, it was Monday and it felt like it too. Kate stumbled toward the kitchen in a silk robe, her hair a mess, her eyes half-lidded. Coffee, she needed coffee. Automatic coffeemakers were an invention she considered an absolute necessity. It was a little before eight and the house was quiet. She poured some coffee and headed into the living room where the ocean view was breathtaking from the panoramic window. She'd set her alarm to go off early and hated herself for it, but she and Tyler were supposed to get started on researching this next role of his. Now she stretched and sank back into the very comfortable and very plaid sofa, wondering how he'd slept.

About three more cups of coffee and her motor would finally engage. She'd shower, make herself presentable, and find out what he wanted to do. She was curled up clutching her mug and breathing in steam when she spotted him running up the beach. He was a runner. Jeez, she hated runners. Despite the difficulty of running on the sand, he was coming toward the house in long, easy strides.

He bounded through the leaded-glass French doors that led from the deck into the living room and stopped in front of her. "Morning, sunshine," he said. "Didn't expect to see you up so soon. How'd you sleep?"

"Not too well. I had a little trouble falling asleep," she said. He was standing before her in a running shorts and no shirt. Her eyes were exactly level with his waist. Okay, officially

awake now. Broad shoulders, some kind of bicep wonders, flat belly, ripped thighs. This guy clearly had it over coffee in the wake-up department. Definitely awake—oh, yes—and appreciative of the view. But no thanks. She lifted her eyes. “I take you’ve been up since the crack of dawn?”

“Don’t worry about me,” he said. “I’m used to coping with crazy hours and not much sleep.”

“Or maybe ten at night is Tyler Matthews’ regular bedtime.”

He grinned. “Yeah, you got me. Part of staying out of the tabloids means foregoing clubbing for the comforts of home. When I’m working, I’m on the set before six, meaning I’ve got to get up around four-thirty to give myself a little space. It’s become a habit, I guess. If I’m between pictures long enough, I’ll sleep in till around seven or so.”

She cleared her throat and stood. There was only a few inches of space between them, a fact to which he seemed oblivious while she was uncomfortably aware of it. “Excuse me. I think need more coffee.”

“How about some breakfast after I shower?” He was gone before she could answer.

Four-thirty? The man got up at four-thirty? Sometimes he slept in until seven. Now he wanted to eat breakfast. Early morning run or not, it was usually almost noon before Kate would eat anything. She was working on her second cup of coffee when he emerged from the shower, whistling happily as he headed for the kitchen. Clad in pair of blue jeans and a white t-shirt, he looked unreasonably good.

She padded after him in disbelief. Did Tyler Matthews lead a charmed life? The kitchen was not one of her favorite places and he had specifically said he did not require a chef. She pulled a bag of grapes and a cantaloupe from the refrigerator. “Croissants and fruit sound okay? Susan e-mailed me a grocery list.” He was staring at her again, and she felt as flushed as if she’d stepped from the shower. “I had Willie, a friend of mine, do the shopping.”

“Think I’ll go with this.” He was busy spooning yogurt into the blender. “Willie, eh?” he asked passing off his curiosity as nonchalance and doing a pretty good job of it.

But Kate recalled that he’d asked after Gary, too. I see what’s going on here. Competitive by nature, alpha male thing probably. He thinks Willie’s a man’s name. In fact it was short for Wilhelmina. Kate smirked, deciding to be unhelpful. “Yeah, Willie took care of it for me as a favor. Grocery shopping isn’t usually something most clients want to do.”

“Would you like to try some of this when it’s finished?”

“Thanks, but no thanks. I don’t like yogurt. Besides, I don’t eat in the morning. Like cooking, eating breakfast is not part of the job.”

He gave her a through once over from head to foot. “I see. Didn’t your mother tell you breakfast is the most important meal of the day? Gives you an energy boost. Makes your body happy. Everybody knows happy bodies feel better in more ways than one.”

Kate watched as he added a banana, wheat germ, a splash of honey, some strawberries and blended the concoction. “In my family no one spoke in the morning, least of all about happy bodies. Probably why I never heard about the importance of breakfast. Not that it would’ve made any difference, of course.”



He poured the pink smoothie into two glasses and offered one to her. “Have some, just a taste.”

She hesitated before taking a sip. “Not too bad. What do you call it?”

A wicked little grin danced across his face and his eyes sparkled. “It’s an aphrodisiac, very powerful. In a few moments you’ll be tearing my clothes off. And we’ll still be making love by this time tomorrow.” He pulled out his pocket watch from his jeans pocket and smiled. “Any moment now.”

Kate didn’t appear fazed, though inwardly her heart skipped a beat or two. “Not likely. I’m not what you call a morning person. It takes me a little while to regain consciousness. I’m basically immune to everything in the morning, aphrodisiacs, insults, everything but coffee.”

“Damn. Well, if you give your body something besides coffee it might respond differently.”

She laughed in spite of herself. ““I knew it. Don’t know how, but I knew it. You’re one of *them*.”

“One of them? Doesn’t sound like they’re your favorites. Who are these people?”

“You, sir, belong to a miserable lot. As I see it, the world is basically divided into two camps, morning people and night people. Morning people are, shall we say, more than a little hard to take. It’s a fundamental character flaw; they can’t help it.”

“Given this a lot of thought, haven’t you?” He leaned against the kitchen counter. Kate noted that he seemed completely relaxed and his mood was contagious.

“Absolutely. Morning people are cheerful and energetic. Case in point, they can even think about making love in the morning. They try to force feed people bran muffins and other crunchy, lumpy, healthy stuff. They eat vitamins and drink liquefied fruit and yogurt. Yuck.” She twisted her face into a silly grimace her mother called her mug. She hadn’t meant to do it. It was too early in the day to monitor her behavior. Her defenses were on automatic pilot.

And she wasn’t used to sharing her mornings with anyone.

Tyler’s laughter was deep and engaging. Kate found herself laughing too.

“What a face,” he said as a pout replaced her mug. “Sorry, it’s that’s face –.”

“For your information, it’s straight out of the Marx Brothers movie, *Monkey Business*. That face belongs to Harpo, my favorite. Much to my mother’s chagrin, I practiced until I perfected it. It drove her wild.” Kate refilled her coffee cup and gave him a last look over her shoulder. “Looks like I haven’t lost my touch.” She strutted back into the living room, leaving him chuckling.

He followed her, glanced at his watch, and reached for the remote. “Mind if I catch the morning shows?” he asked. He settled on the couch next to her. The cushions sank beneath his weight. He smelled good and looked even better. She nodded once, feeling as if she was lost in a dream, and he clicked on the TV and punched in a channel. “Show time,” Tyler said.

Derek Sloan’s perfect television voice caressed the airways. “We conclude our Monday morning with the story everyone will be talking about all week. As promised, when we return: Olivia Matthews and her book, *After the Honeymoon*. About her tumultuous and short marriage,

even by Hollywood standards, to the already legendary actor Tyler Matthews, the book has just hit the streets. It's already making quite a stir—and that's putting it mildly."

Tyler muted the commercials and checked Kate with a sidelong look.

Kate looked back. Either Tyler's work or gossip about him was on TV every minute of the day, or this was no coincidence. "Did you know she was going to be on?"

"Yes, Susan makes sure I know about possible public-relations issues, and this has the potential to be a problem." His voice was low, a bit rough. "Call me a skeptic, but somehow I don't expect my ex-wife's book will be very flattering. You may not want to hear this."

"If you would rather I not be here, I'll leave you to it and hit the shower."

He turned toward her, his gray eyes revealing a sorrow that was at odds with his upbeat persona. "Truthfully? I'd like you to stay if that's not asking too much. You're probably about as impartial witness as I could find. I'd like to hear what you think when she's through. The truth, no matter what."

Kate sank back into the sofa. There was scarcely any space between them. Droplets of water from his shower still clung to his dark hair, sparkling like tiny prisms. She took a deep breath to steady herself and was filled with the scent of him. Impartial about Tyler? She told herself she could manage that; after all, she hardly knew him.

Coming out of a commercial break, the camera zoomed back in on Derek and then cut to Tyler's ex-wife, Olivia. Tyler let out a pent-up breath and spoke quietly. "How does she strike you? It's been a while since I've even seen her."

Kate looked at the golden-haired, blue-eyed beauty and felt her mouth go dry. What would anyone think? She was glowing, long in limb and voluptuous. “She’s beautiful,” Kate said. The former Mrs. Matthews, like so many in Hollywood, looked like a starlet.

Tyler seemed privy to her thoughts. “You wouldn’t know what she’s like on the inside by looking at her, would you? In Hollywood it’s all about looks, first and foremost, then talent. At least as far as having the edge and opened doors. Both are essentials if you want to be a star but also if you plan to marry one. Big bucks are spent for the look. Too bad there’s no psychic surgery.” His tone was even despite the acrimony of his words. “Now then, let’s hear what the lovely ex-Mrs. Tyler Matthews has to say.”

He hit the remote, and her voice flooded the room. “No,” she was saying, “I don’t consider this just another kiss-and-tell book. Kiss-and-tell books are a dime a dozen and common. There’s nothing common about Tyler. This is a book about our private lives. And nothing in our lives was predictable or typical. Nothing.” Her voice was breathy, interrupted with slight pauses that seemed to lick the words for the maximum effect. Kate disliked it. Forced and practiced, the delivery was deadly

“Has Tyler or his agent read the book yet? Do you know how he feels about it?” Derek asked.

Olivia smiled sweetly and gushed, “Goodness, no. If Tyler had any say-so over the book, it never would’ve been published. I haven’t a clue as to whether he’ll even bother to read it. But his agent, Susan Anderson, will. She doesn’t miss a trick if it’s about Tyler. He’s her life.”

“Do you think your portrayal of the man is objective? I think some might say that you paint an unflattering portrait?”

“Unflattering?” she paused and seemed vexed. “The book is nonfiction. I was there and this is how I saw it. It’s my story about a relationship that meant the world to me and ultimately caused me great pain. I think most people, women in particular, will relate to this experience. You don’t have to be married to a movie star to understand. But unflattering, maybe sometimes, after all Tyler is powerful, dynamic, all man. He’s no angel.”

Kate blinked in disbelief. Olivia had actually batted her eyelashes at Derek.

Derek’s journalistic integrity seemed to be wavering. A beat passed before he seemed to prevail over Olivia and remember himself. “But being married to a movie star certainly makes it a lot more saleable than if you’d been married to a car salesman or someone less famous.”

“Absolutely, Derek.” She beamed. “If you and I had been married and this book was about you, suffice it to say the interest wouldn’t be nearly as great.”

“Olivia the sweet,” Tyler muttered.

Derek was quicker to recover from the insult. “Has Tyler ever threatened you about this book?”

Olivia seemed amused. “No, of course not. You really don’t know him. Tyler doesn’t make threats; he takes action. He did ask me not to write it, but only once. I don’t know what to expect in terms of his reaction. I’m sure it will be intense. He only has one speed and that’s intense.”

“Well, that leads to my next question. Why did you write it? Was it for the money? I imagine you stand to make quite a bit. Tyler Matthews was recently voted sexiest man alive, for a record-breaking fourth year. Like I said money in the bank.”

Olivia didn't hesitate. “That's a fair question, Derek. The answer is no. Tyler was more than generous in the prenuptial agreement. Of course, I don't deny I will make money. But I wrote the book for another reason. Before I married Tyler, I was a journalist. I worked for the *Times* covering the Hollywood beat; that's how we met. As you know, there's been relentless coverage of our very short marriage. I had to write this book. It's a necessary part of putting my house in order and setting the record straight. I'm moving on and it's also a way to deal with the pain. But again, I do want to stress that I believe it will help other women.”

“Unbelievable,” Tyler said. For a moment he seemed poised to turn off the TV, or maybe even fling the remote. Instead he sat ram-rod straight against the back of the sofa. “Olivia wouldn't help another woman in trouble even if it was her mother.” He didn't look at Kate, but she could hear the anger in his voice.

“What about Tyler? Will he be hurt by this book?” asked Derek.

“I don't know, probably not. He's pretty hardhearted. Really, you have to understand Tyler is not like ordinary men.” *And you're so very ordinary, you know*, her smile seemed to say. Her voice slithered around her carefully chosen words. “Any woman who's been in his arms will tell you that. Of course, fidelity isn't one of his strong points. There've been plenty of women.”

“Plenty?” asked Derek, echoing Kate's thoughts.

“Trust me on this, Derek. The man is legendary in Hollywood bedrooms as well as on the screen.”

Derek almost seemed to blush. “Ah, yes. You spend some time detailing the, uh, sexual aspect of your relationship.” He laughed nervously. “I’m sure those pages will be dog-eared.”

Olivia kept at her coquettish smile. “He’s an incredible lover, maybe a tad insatiable. That’s what comes across on the big screen. Why do you think woman adore him? They sense his power. I could’ve written an entire book on that aspect alone. So if anyone wants to know what he’s like, they’ll have to read the book. I promise they won’t be disappointed. I never was.”

Kate shifted uncomfortably as she glanced at Tyler. His focus was directed at the screen, his profile stern. Millions of people had just heard him described as an insatiable womanizer by his beautiful ex-wife. A small terror ripped through Kate. What if it was true, and why should she even care?

“We’ll be right back with Olivia Matthews,” Derek said.

Tyler’s body tensed like a tightly wound coil. Kate reached out and lightly touched his arm. “Are you all right?”

“It’s as bad as I thought it would be. Hell, it’s worse. How are you doing with this?” He unwound a bit, and his eyes searched her face.

He’d been married to the woman, no matter how briefly. Married. Kate wondered what Olivia had seemed like, what he’d expected from her. “Me, I’m great. I’m not the one who’s

being publicly drawn and quartered. If I was, I'd be a lot more vocal than you are. I believe it's called ranting and raving."

He grinned, a sad, funny little grin that wrapped easily around her heart, and then returned his attention to the screen where the interview was picking up again after a round of commercials.

"Back with the beautiful Olivia Matthews, the ex-wife of the already legendary actor Tyler Matthews. If you're a fan of his—and who isn't?—you'll want to read her book, *After the Honeymoon*. We've got a few more minutes, Olivia," Derek said, turning back to her, "and I'm compelled to ask a tough question. I know it's a painful topic." As if on cue, Olivia's demeanor changed. She averted her eyes from the cameras. Derek continued. "You drop a real bombshell, maybe one of the best kept secrets in Hollywood. You want to tell us about it?"

Kate looked at Tyler, who was rooted to the spot like a witness to a coming car crash. Dread. She rose to take her leave and made it single step before he grabbed her hand and pulled her back down to the sofa.

"Stay," he said. "Please."

His hand was warm and easily covered hers. Wordless, she sat beside him. His grip on her hand did not relax.

"I'll stay," Kate said, "but it sounds like it's going to be worse, if that's possible. Private, I mean. Rough." She thought instantly of the often misquoted, Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. William Congreve's actual lines were much more applicable to Tyler and his ex. *Heav'n has no rage like love to hatred turn'd. Nor Hell a fury, like a woman scorn'd.*



“You’re right,” he said flatly. “It is.” She had wanted him to let up; now she found herself squeezing his hand to reassure him. He turned and smiled, his gray eyes unfathomably sad. She couldn’t read his thoughts, she didn’t know him well enough, but his sadness touched her.

Kate watched as Olivia put on airs. *She’s fake. Everything about her. What did you ever see in her, Tyler? Were you even looking?* Olivia’s eyes brightened with unshed tears, and her voice became a detached monotone. “A moment, please. Just a moment. That’s all I need.” The effect was devastating. Here sat a woman fighting for the words while she struggled to put up a brave front.

Derek Sloan was as rapt as his audience, but a certain amount of propriety had to be observed. “Olivia?” He reached across the way to touch her hand, keen to coax the secret from her. The gesture mirrored Tyler and Kate’s, made a parody of it.

Kate shuddered as Tyler uttered a low curse. “Missed your calling, Olivia. Should’ve been an actress. What’s she care about the truth? She would’ve made a hell of a lot better actress than she was a journalist.”

Olivia squared her shoulders and, as if drawing strength from Derek, she spoke. “Undoubtedly it was one of the best kept secrets in Hollywood. You see, Tyler and I were expecting a child. But there was an accident, a terrible accident. I was almost four months pregnant when I lost the baby.” Kate felt Tyler’s hand twitch. “The extent of my injuries left me unable to have children. Tyler wanted a child badly. He’s an extremely determined man and once he decides something, well, he almost becomes obsessive. With no hope of children, it

became clear that I was expendable. Looking back, I should've realized my marriage was doomed from that day on. I guess I just I wanted it to work too much to see the truth. So my message to all the other women out there is this: sometimes wanting it to work isn't enough."

Derek nodded sadly, playing perfectly to Olivia's cues. "I think that answers the question about the short marriage. Sounds pretty heartless. Care to speculate on what his love life will hold after you?"

Olivia tossed her head, and her golden hair whisked about her shoulders. "Women, women, and more women." She shrugged as if realizing that her laughter was a little too callous, the only misstep in her practiced performance. "Eventually there may even be a child, but I predict the child will stay and the wife we will be sent packing." The bitterness of those closing words seeped from the screen and into the living room with its silly plaid sofa, changing everything.

Tyler withdrew his hand. Kate forced herself not to look at him. Olivia's words seemed like career-killers. All Kate could think of was lawsuit. Would he sue her to shut her up? It took every ounce of her resolve to remain in the room with him. She felt like a voyeur. It seemed perverse to have listened so long to Olivia.

Derek Sloan was well pleased by the looks of him. No doubt this was a ratings coup. "Wow, that's all I can say. *After the Honeymoon* is a must read. Olivia has agreed to visit us again as soon as we can work out the details. Olivia thanks so much. Best of luck to you."

Kate reached over and pushed the red button on the remote. The shrill ringing of the landline startled her. She jumped and laughed nervously. "I'll get it. Hello. Hi, Susan. Yes,

we were watching. I guess he has his phone off. I don't know how he's doing. You'd better ask him. He's right here; I'll get him." Kate palmed the receiver and watched as Tyler crossed the room. "Susan's worried. I'll see you in a few minutes and we'll talk if you want. I'm going to shower."

She left him hunched on a stool at the wet bar, answering Susan's questions in a firm, quiet voice.

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Kate surrendered willingly to the relaxing flow of water. Susan sounded furious but controlled her concern for Tyler obvious. Now Kate had to wonder if Susan and Tyler had been or were lovers. Was Susan one of the many to whom Olivia had alluded?

The thought made Kate uneasy, not because of Susan but because of Olivia. Until the interview the thought of Susan and Tyler as lovers hadn't occurred to her. It hadn't been an issue. Kate felt like Olivia had somehow contaminated her, as if she was shouting across thousands of miles of distance with her bitter accusations.

Olivia and Tyler. He married her, impregnated her—maybe not in that order but nonetheless willingly, knowingly. That realization sent a biting chill through Kate. Tyler and Olivia, it almost didn't make sense, not in the real world.

But Tyler and Olivia didn't come from her world. They came from a land of make-believe and enormous egos, a place of dreams and nightmares. Their rules were different, their

morals as alien to Kate as if she was from another planet or time. Now the woman was on television talking about the most intimate aspects of their personal lives, and Tyler would only feed the beast if he rose to his own defense. How could you win at such a game without losing something far more precious?

Kate washed her hair furiously before stepping from the shower. She had always felt indifference about the Hollywood scene and never understood how Jill and Gary could live in Beverly Hills. After what she'd witnessed this morning, her indifference had turned to outright disdain. She couldn't read Tyler. She hardly knew him. But with the revelation about the child, she suddenly knew more than she felt she had a right to know. He had asked her to stay, to watch and to give him an honest reaction. She wondered what he thought. How did he feel? How could anyone stand for such a profound disregard for their privacy?

She unhooked her phone from the charger and punched in the security code. There was a text message from Jill. She wasn't in the mood to be clever and decided to text her later. The only other message was from Dot Hampton. Kate pushed five on the keypad and listened as the phone rang.

"Hello dear. How are you?" Dot's familiar voice brought an instant smile to Kate.

"I'm good and what about you and Nathan?"

"We are fine. Where are you calling from?" Dot asked.

"I'm in Florida, Phillips Inlet. Have a guest and we are staying at Gary and Jill's," she answered.

"Nathan wants to know-,"

Kate interrupted her. “Tell Nathan, no. I do not have a boyfriend and it’s still none of his business.” Kate was grinning as she imagined Nathan’s exaggerated expression.

“He knows that but he has to ask. Anyway, I’m calling because Nathan was thinking that he would like to do something little different. Maybe not the Yosemite trip after all.”

“I’m surprised it being such an important anniversary,” Kate answered trying to disguise the shock in her voice.

“Well, I know Kate, I was too, But he’s thinking we need to something else, be a little unpredictable. You know mix it up a bit.” Dot spoke evenly but Kate thought she sounded a little strained when she added, “And I was thinking rather than roughing it we might take it easy.”

“You mean no camping? Dot you know whatever you and Nathan want, we can do. Do you have anything in mind?”

“Maybe the beach, who knows maybe Phillips Inlet. Or maybe Ashville, North Carolina. I’m sure I will get back to you soon. Call me if you think of something. Must run now. Goodbye dear. Nathan sends his love and of course me too.”

“I love you both too. Talk to you soon,” Kate answered before Dot ended the call. Kate flipped the phone shut and dropped it into the little case attached to her waistband. The shower hadn’t helped her mood enough, a wave of distress washed over her. Something didn’t feel right; she hoped it was nothing but an overload from Tyler’s ex-wife morning performance. A wave of sadness washed over her. *Olivia Matthews certainly has a long reach.*



Into the Night is a Belgian apocalyptic sci-fi drama thriller streaming television series created by Jason George, inspired by the 2015 Polish science fiction novel *The Old Axolotl* by Jacek Dukaj. The series premiered on Netflix on May 1, 2020. It is Netflix's first Belgian original series. On July 1, 2020, the series was renewed by Netflix for a second season. *Into the Night*. Season 1. Release year: 2020. Passengers and crew aboard a hijacked overnight flight scramble to outrace the sun as a mysterious cosmic event wreaks havoc on the world below.

1. Sylvie. 41m. When an armed man storms her late-night flight to Moscow, former military pilot Sylvie finds herself pulled into the cockpit to help.
2. Jakub. 38m. Mechanic Jakub clashes with the others about what to do next. A Wi-Fi signal brings troubling new intel on the disaster and on some of the passengers.
3. Mathieu. 36m. This structure ensures that *Into the Night* moves at a brisk clip; in fact, the directors introduce the main characters and get the show on the runway within the first 10 minutes. Each episode is named after a character and begins with a flashback, save one. So we have Sylvie, a former helicopter pilot in the Air Force who is grieving the death of her

*Into The Night* by L'Avenue, released 17 October 2020

1. Crystal Waves (Intro)
2. Kaleefornya
3. Into the Night
4. Osaka Drift
5. Prom
6. Feel Time Fade
7. Her (Interlude)
8. Closer
9. Dance
10. Corporation
11. Malibu Haze
12. David Rotenburger

*Into the Night* is a whole new world, a new level of synthwave we never saw before! So amazing is this album in its sheer brilliance and wonderment! A fantasy became reality, a dream came true, and L'Avenue released the most epic and charismatic retrowave album of all time!!!

Bottomline: Watch *Into the Night* for cheap thrills. As they say, "Don't expect too much, and you won't be disappointed too much." The first season of *Into the Night* consists of six episodes. The series is streaming on Netflix.

£ The Indian Express is now on Telegram.

Into the Night. Season 1. Release year: 2020. Passengers and crew aboard a hijacked overnight flight scramble to outrace the sun as a mysterious cosmic event wreaks havoc on the world below. 1. Sylvie. 41m. When an armed man storms her late-night flight to Moscow, former military pilot Sylvie finds herself pulled into the cockpit to help. 2. Jakub. 38m. Mechanic Jakub clashes with the others about what to do next. A Wi-Fi signal brings troubling new intel on the disaster and on some of the passengers. 3. Mathieu. 36m. Into the Night. 5,974 likes · 9 talking about this. "Into the Night: Portraits of Life and Death" a feature documentary by Writer/Director/Producer... What is our story and will it sustain us at the end of our lives? "Into the Night: Portraits of Life See More. CommunitySee All. "Those who gathered to watch portions of the film...were as rapt as though they'd been watching a documentary about Woodstock." Leah Garchik, SF Chronicle, KQED sneak preview screening. "A miraculous and courageous film that is so true, and so deep that it should be required viewing for all mortal beings." Irvin D. Yalom, existential psychiatrist and author of Staring at the Sun. "Whitney's ability to wrestle with our most immense uncertainties is astonishing. This is a transformative film for the ages." Into the Night. 88%. Average Tomatometer Avg Tomatometer. Into the Night: Season 2. No Tomatometer score yet 2020, Netflix, 0 episodes. Into the Night: Season 1. 88%. Critics Consensus: No consensus yet.