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The Enemy's Kiss

By Zandria Munson

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Upon capturing the intoxicating cat burglar, he discovered she was desperate to save her own sister's life. The unexpected pull he felt for the lovely Daniela had Nicholas rethinking his next move. Family honor was at the core of his very being. But to turn his back on Daniela's predicament could mean losing the heart he'd just rediscovered.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Zandria Munson was born in the Bahamas on a beautiful island called New Providence. Her early education was enhanced with history and folklore lessons on pirates, mermaids, the Lost City of Atlantis and other fanciful topics. Zandria attended the College of the Bahamas, where she obtained her degree in nursing. Along with her passion for storytelling, she harbors a driving need to help others. She presently lives in Texas with her husband, Christopher, and kitties Munchkin and Chloe.

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This was going to be easier than taking candy from a baby.

Daniela Ferreira adjusted the focus on her high-powered night-vision binoculars. She stood on the roof of the five-story building opposite the Langara gallery. From her vantage point, she could see directly into the wide glass windows that lined the front of the establishment. It was nearing 10:00 p.m and the owners were still busy unpacking crates of antiques. She had intended to hit a jewelry store tonight as well, but this was more important. Just within the walls of the gallery lay the item called the Rune of Moloch. It was said to be hundreds of years old and worth a hefty sum. From the illustrations she'd been given, it looked like nothing more than a flat rock. But then she never questioned a buyer's interest in a particular item. She was hired to steal and deliver, and as long as she got paid for the task, she couldn't care less about motives.

Stealing was a way of life for Daniela. It was her profession; a necessity for survival after her mother had walked out on her and her younger sister. Dan-iel-a had only been seventeen at the time. Ever since then she'd made a living robbing others. Her missions had gotten bigger and her equipment more advanced, but one thing hadn't changed: she was still a thief.

Turning the knob on the top of the binoculars, she zoomed in on the two men who were still busy inside the gallery. They had removed their blazers and rolled up their shirtsleeves, and she could see the distinct outline of thick, corded muscles flexing beneath their shirts.

She'd heard of this pair; the Drakon brothers. They were renowned for their great business success and their incredible good looks. It seemed that the rumors served them justice. Tall and swarthy, they resembled the heroes of ancient Rome. Even from this distance their dark, chiseled features were unmistakable.

Lowering the device, she unsnapped the collar of her black leather catsuit—it was getting quite warm in the skintight attire. To distract herself, she reset the timer on her wristwatch. She'd done her research and knew full well that an advanced security system had been installed. Once inside the building, she'd have approximately five minutes to locate the Rune of Moloch, steal it and get the hell out of there before the police arrived.

When Daniela looked through the binoculars again, she noticed that a black Rolls Royce had pulled in front of the establishment. The driver held the door open as a woman exited. The woman moved carefully up the stone stairs in front of the building, no doubt hindered by the weight of her protruding abdomen.

Daniela's mouth contorted with a wavering hint of jealousy. She briefly wondered if she'd ever find herself in such a state—pregnant and in a dress. At this rate, such a possibility seemed nonexistent. She was twenty-five and still a virgin.

Between conducting burglaries, evading the authorities and raising her sister, she simply had no time for men and their very expectant personalities. At least that's what she told herself. Deep down inside she knew that she craved companionship.

She forced the thoughts from her mind and focused on the scene playing before her. The woman had entered the building and was immediately pulled into the embrace of one of the Drakon brothers. He placed an affectionate kiss on her lips before checking his watch.

Daniela couldn't suppress the smile that crawled to her lips when he retrieved his blazer from the top of an unpacked crate and slipped it on.

She twisted her long, curly hair into a bun at her nape and pulled her black latex mask on. "Showtime."

Nicholas Drakon pressed down on the crowbar until the lid of the small wooden crate creaked open. This was the last of them. The entire shipment had come from Romania and had arrived on schedule. The delivery consisted of twenty pieces from England, China and Spain, all dating back to the early 1500s.

He and his brother Marius had started the auction gallery a year and a half ago and had quickly obtained success. Some of the items had come from their family's estate, which was presently being renovated, and the others were antiques that they acquired from various corners of the world.

Nicholas loved New York. His life in Romania had dwindled to routine boredom. This city had much to offer. He enjoyed the nightlife, the mixing of cultures and the many beautiful women who were willing to do anything to affiliate themselves with the wealthy. All of which he took complete advantage of.

The lid of the crate lifted and he eased it to the floor. He rummaged through the packing grass until he felt the smooth edges of the artifact that lay within. Carefully, he pulled it out and inspected it. The Rune of Moloch fit perfectly within the palm of his hand. For centuries it had been hidden within a secret chamber in his family's castle while its twin, the Rune of Cythe, had been secured by his father. By Lord Victor's orders the stones had always been kept apart, and if they were transported it was also done individually. As the castle was presently under renovations, Nicholas had decided to move the stone to a vault within the gallery to assure its security.

He turned to watch his brother standing next to his wife, who was busy admiring a collection of medieval jewelry. Marius was two years younger than him and about to be a father. Marius's young and beautiful wife, Alexandra, looked radiant despite being eight months pregnant.

Nicholas picked up his blazer, not bothering to slip it back on. He had to admit that he often found himself battling the green tentacles of envy when he compared his life to his brother's. Marius was married and in love. Nicholas habitually tried to convince himself that love and marriage weren't for him. He was a self-proclaimed rogue and enjoyed every moment of it. There were just too many delectable women out there in need of his attention.

Alexandra turned her bright eyes to Marius as he pulled a set of keys from his pocket. "Oh, no, I can't accept it," she protested as he leaned over to open the showcase.

Nicholas shook his head and turned away to assess the work they'd done setting up the gallery. His brother was forever showering his wife with diamonds and emeralds, many of which were a part of their display and worth a hefty sum. If she saw something and took a fancy to it, then it was hers.

Nicholas snorted. He'd never doted on a woman so relentlessly. Then again, he and Marius were quite the

opposite in most things. On the surface their relation was undeniable as they were tall, dark and striking—true to the Drakon bloodline. But Marius catered to their mother's disposition and was patient, gentle and thoughtful. Whereas Nicholas was intolerant, demanding and forceful. Yet, somehow they managed to work together and maintain a lucrative business.

Nicholas stalked out of the showroom toward the large vault at the rear of the gallery. He had no intention of keeping the rune stone in New York permanently, only holding it in the vault until the renovations in Romania were completed. When that time came he would return it to his brother Simion, who'd chosen to remain in their homeland.

He quickly punched in the security code at the vault's exterior door. He entered and did the same for the interior door. A small antique wooden box sat on one of the shelves to the right. He opened it carefully and set the rune inside. He left the room, securing the doors behind him.

When he returned to the showroom, Alexandra was lifting up her long black hair as Marius secured an elegant ninety-eight-carat sapphire necklace about her neck. Many years ago it had belonged to a countess. Now it would serve to accessorize the blue maternity dress Alexandra wore.

"Shall we be leaving soon?" he asked with a suppressed smirk.

"Yes," Marius replied. He turned Alexandra to face him and smiled with satisfaction. "You look lovely."

Her hazel eyes flashed with joy as she assessed her reflection in a small gilded mirror that sat on the top of the showcase. "It's beautiful!" She sent Nicholas a wary yet friendly look. "What do you think?"

Nicholas nodded his approval and experienced a pang of guilt when she quickly looked away. She had every reason to fear him. He only hoped that one day she'd be able to overlook the great wrong he'd done her and learn to trust him. His brother offered him a very wan but encouraging smile. Only time and patience would procure those results.

Nicholas flinched as an ache shot along his right hand. Of late, on nights like this when his emotions took precedence in his mind, he often experienced the same crippling ache in his joints and tasted the putrid bile that had always accompanied his transformation.

Whether he wanted to admit it or not, this unnerved him; a year and a half had passed since his family's curse should've been broken. However, there were many nights that he missed the liberties he'd enjoyed as a gargoyle. Nothing could compare to soaring through a star-strewn sky and surveying the quiet lands below. But he'd had his fill of becoming stone. The short thirty days he'd enjoyed as a man each year during the spring equinox—a pagan season that was marked by the sun's crossing over the celestial equator—hadn't prepared him for the freedom associated with humanity.

Marius shot him a curious look. "I see old age has finally taken a toll on you," he stated with a hint of amusement. "Perhaps you should consider a reprieve from all this." He turned and guided Alexandra toward the doorway.

Nicholas flexed his right hand, trying to subdue the cramping that was fast moving up his arm. "I am no more an old man than you," Nicholas returned with budding mirth.

His humor was short-lived as another ache shot up his arm and along his shoulders. He flexed his hand again. There was a chance that after so many years of enduring such a vicious cycle of being stone by day and garg...

Users Review

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