



### **SPANIARD'S SEDUCTION (Harlequin comics)**

By Tessa Radley



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Caitlyn's nickname in school was Bookworm. She never did anything girly. Instead, all she did was study. She was too tall and had a flat chest and was far from being considered a cute girl. That's why she always thought that love wasn't for her. That is, until Rafaelo, a handsome Spanishmarquis,appears in front of her!

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#### **Editorial Review**

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Rafaelo, Marques de Las Carreras, was seething with hot Spanish rage. And when Rafaelo seethed, wise people gave him a wide berth until he cooled down to his normal impeccable courtesy.

Rafaelo told himself he had reason to be furious. He'd flown from Spain via London to Los Angeles and on to his final destination of Auckland, New Zealand. A security furore in Heathrow had caused a six-hour delay, resulting in a missed transatlantic connection to the United States.

There had been no first-class seats available on the flight he'd finally caught and the carrier had been packed as full as a tin of *sardinas*. He'd been wedged between a sweating overweight car dealership owner and a fraught-looking woman with a screaming baby. It had not improved his mood.

By the time Rafaelo landed in Auckland eighteen hours later than scheduled, it was to discover that his monogrammed Louis Vuitton luggage had vanished, and to top it all, the Porsche reserved for him had been hired out when he'd failed to turn up earlier.

Not even flashing traveller's checks, his platinum bank card or large-denomination American dollars could commandeer him a vehicle. Sorry, no cars available. There was an international sporting event on in the area, explained one car-hire company after another.

The Marques de Las Carreras wasn't accustomed to apologies, certainly not from an indifferent middle-aged woman filing her nails—who didn't respond to either his most charming smile or, when that failed to get results, to his dangerously lowered tone.

It was unheard of for him to be treated like *a peon*—usually his name was enough to secure him the best. The best seats at the bullfight, the best table in the restaurant, the best-looking woman in the room. And to come back to his present situation, the best car for hire.

He blinked, told himself this couldn't be happening. Finally he managed to rent a vehicle—if the battered and dented yellow-and-black apparition plastered with neon-coloured *Make Waves* and *Shoot the Tube* stickers could be called that—from an operator most appropriately named Wreck Rentals. It had cost him plenty.

Not only had he been royally ripped off, but he also hadn't slept in two days and a night. Nor had he showered. His clothes were creased. He was driving an abomination.

Twenty minutes later, teeth gritting as the thing—he couldn't truthfully label it a vehicle—shuddered, Rafaelo slowed at a large hand-carved sign welcoming visitors to Saxon's Folly Winery, home of the Saxon family.

The lane into which he turned was lined with established trees. Farther along the lane, a modern winery complex appeared. Through the trees Rafaelo glimpsed a large stately residence.

The car rolled to a stop.

He stopped breathing. The house was exactly as his mother had described it. Tall. White. Lacy wrought iron trimmed the balconies. The elegant triple-storey Victorian homestead was drenched in history.

Cold purpose settled in the pit of his stomach.

Letting out the breath he'd been holding, he edged forward and parked the abomination in the shade of a giant oak. It was then that he discovered that the hand brake didn't hold. To Rafaelo's immense displeasure, he had to climb through a triple-strand wire fence to find a suitably large rock to place under the back tire, and by this stage his hands were dusty and his immaculate suit had a smudge of mud down the front.

"Madre de Dios," he cursed with quiet ferocity, then set off to find Phillip Saxon. And his destiny.

Caitlyn Ross noticed the stranger the moment he arrived at the memorial service being held for Roland Saxon in the winery's courtyard. Behind her the vineyards stretched to the hills in the distance, to the hills that formed The Divide. But for once she didn't spare a glance at the vines.

Her attention was riveted on the stranger. It wasn't his height, the dark, overlong hair or his black eyes that caught her attention. With Heath and Joshua Saxon in the vicinity, there was no shortage of tall, dark, black-eyed men.

Rather, it was the fire that lit those black eyes and made them snap with energy, the way he stood holding himself with stiff formality at the back of the crowd that had gathered to remember Roland Saxon.

She had no idea who he could be. Or what his association to the Saxons was. And that was unusual. Having worked here since she left university, Caitlyn was part of the inner circle of the family. But this man was definitely a stranger.

Beside her, someone sniffed and pulled out a handkerchief. Phillip Saxon had finished his speech.

Remembering the occasion, Caitlyn forced her attention away from the mystery man. Alyssa Blake was speaking now, a short, moving address. Roland had been her brother. No one had known that he'd been adopted by the Saxons as a baby until very recently. Caitlyn knew it had to be a huge adjustment for Heath, Joshua and Megan, the Saxon siblings, who had believed that Roland was bonded to them by blood.

Her gaze sneaked back to the stranger. Even sandwiched between Jim and Taine, two of her cellar hands, he stood apart. She watched as he scanned the gathering, those snapping eyes assessing...making a judgement... then moving on to the next person.

Who was he?

Yet another journalist come to dig up dirt on the family? They didn't need that. Not now.

She examined the tall, suit-clad body. Despite the dusty patches on his suit, he didn't look like a journalist. He couldn't be paparazzi because there was no giveaway bulge of an oversized camera lens anywhere to be seen. She supposed he could be a school—or university—friend of Roland.

Caitlyn slipped through the throng, murmuring apologies as she went. It took her only a minute to skirt the edges of the gathering. She paused beside Jim, who made way for her with a sideways smile. Caitlyn nodded in acknowledgement and edged into the space created beside the stranger.

Yes, he was tall all right. At least three inches taller than her own five feet eleven inches.

Softly she murmured, "We haven't met."

He raked her with those hellfire eyes. A bolt of sensation shot through her. An awareness that she hadn't felt

in a long, long time.

"I am Rafaelo Carreras." His voice was mesmerizing, the accent deliciously foreign. Within Caitlyn, in a deep-down sealed-off place, warmth uncurled. She tamped down the unwelcome sensation. No hint of New Zealand in that voice.

Perhaps not a school friend after all.

Curious, and wanting to hear him speak again, she asked, "Did you know Roland?"

It was possible. As marketing director of Saxon's Folly Estate & Wines, Roland had travelled all over the world.

"No."

One word, abruptly spoken. And clearly he wasn't volunteering any further information. Again the suspicion that he might be a news journalist, carrion descending to feast on the family's sorrow, stirred. The Saxons had been through enough. All her protective urges aroused, Caitlyn said in a low, fierce voice, "Then what are you doing here?"

He inspected her. His narrowed gaze started at her shoes—the serviceable black leather pumps that she'd had for ten years and only wore for wine shows. He considered her unstockinged legs, pale from a longer-than-normal winter spent under worn jeans. His gaze lingered on the hemline of her skirt, an unfashionable length this season. But then, she never wore anything other than jeans and trousers, so what did it matter? Then he studied the jacket that she wore. It had cost her a fortune and she'd only bought it because Megan, whose sense of style was fabulous, had insisted. The peach-coloured linen did wonderful things for her Celtic skin and ginger-blond hair—she knew that because Megan had told her—but it probably wasn't suitable for today's sombre occasion.

Finally he lifted his eyes to her face. As his gaze met hers, the impact jarred through her. There was nothing in the black depths to suggest that he'd liked anything he'd seen. To the contrary, she could find only a disdain that made her flinch.

"You are a member of the Saxon family?" He raised a haughty brow.

"No, but—"

"Then why I am here does not concern you."

Caitlyn blinked. She was not used to such blatant rudeness. How to deal with him? Her gaze flickered to Pita, the security guard who patrolled the winery every night. Since an incident three weeks ago when a pair of youths had caused mischief down at the stables, security at Saxon's Folly had been stepped up. Pita was big and burly. He would have plenty of men here to help evict this man if need be.

She eyed the dark-haired stranger covertly. It would take quite a few men to restrain him. Under the dark suit his body appeared lean and his shoulders broad. The man was built like a fighter— an impression strengthened by the harsh features, the ridged nose and fiery eyes. He wouldn't back away from a fight.

She held his gaze. "Well, I am concerned."

"Don't be."

His mouth clamped into a hard line causing apprehension to weigh heavily in Caitlyn's stomach. Another quick glance showed that Pita was still within earshot. She wavered. Should she summon him... have the stranger escorted away?

Did the Saxons need the commotion? She glanced around the gathering. Alyssa was speaking in a breaking voice about how she'd grown to know Roland through the memories of his mother and his siblings—Joshua, Heath and Megan. No, commotion was the last thing the Saxons needed right now.

What if this man turned out to be a valuable business connection? And she'd tried to have him thrown out? Caitlyn shuddered just thinking about it. No, she'd leave him alone. For now.

A rustle and the soft murmurs of the crowd caught her attention. Alyssa had finished speaking and was stepping down from the paved stage, wiping her eyes. Joshua Saxon moved forward and put his arm around her, his head close to Alyssa's as he led her away. Joshua and Alyssa were engaged now. Despite the upheavals in the past month, they had managed to find each other...and love.

A pang of some unfamiliar emotion shot through Caitlyn. Not jealousy&#15...

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