

Her Sexy Chef

By

Michele Sayre

Copyright 2020, All Rights Reserved.

## Chapter One

Kate Turner walked along the beach and savored the warmth of the sun on her skin and the fine-grain sand beneath her feet. She loved Miami Beach despite the crowds and overall trendiness because of mornings like this when there weren't a lot of people wanting to just be seen.

She lifted her camera to the water and focused on getting both the water and the beautiful blue sky in her pictures here. Sunlight danced upon the small waves and she took a couple of photos, then her finger froze on the shutter-button as a man emerged from the water like a god of sea. He threw his head back to the sun and with both hands slicked his black hair off his face, a move she found incredibly sexy.

She lifted her finger off the button and lowered her camera as she watched the

mystery man walk out of the water. His modest black swim trunks were plastered to his lower body, and Kate felt her cheeks grow warm as she looked up from his mid-section. The dark hair on his chest and belly was wet and arched down, and she looked up again and admired his strong shoulders and arms. She could see his body didn't come from a sleek gym, but from hard exercise like swimming in the ocean.

As he began to walk right towards her, she shifted slightly in the sand then jumped as she felt something against the side of her foot. She looked down and saw a towel, and as she looked up he was now close enough for her to recognize him.

He was Miguel Sandoval, the man she was here to write about. And as he smiled brightly at her, she realized the pictures she'd seen hadn't prepared her for how incredibly handsome he was in person, especially soaking wet and wearing just a pair of swim trunks.

"Hello." He said as he stopped in front of her.

"Oh, hi." She stepped aside and he reached down beside her for the towel she'd been standing next to.

Her chest tightened and her heart began to pound as she watched him rub the towel over his body, making the dark hair on his chest curl around his pectoral muscles. Up close, she could see the gray hairs in his beard, and how dark brown

his eyes were.

“I’m Miguel.” He said as he held out his hand to her.

She took his hand and he just held it. And though she didn’t want to let go, she did as she decided to be honest with him. “I’m Kate Turner, the writer from ‘Wanderlust’ magazine here to interview you.”

“Ah,” He smiled again, a smile that made her heart skip a few beats. “The tiny photo in your magazine doesn’t do you justice as you are so much more beautiful in person.”

And there went some of her attraction to him because she wasn’t here to be charmed, even if she secretly found him so damn attractive. “Thanks. But there’s no need to flirt with me, Mr. Sandoval.”

“Call me Miguel, please.” He draped his towel around his shoulders. “Why do you have trouble with a man saying you’re beautiful?”

“Because men don’t say that to me at all.”

“Really?” He looked genuinely puzzled at her response. “What do they say about you?”

“They say I’m nice and sweet, sometimes even cute. But not beautiful.”

“Nice, sweet, and cute are fine to describe delicate pastries. But not beautiful

women like you.”

“Mr. Sandoval...Miguel. There’s no need to flirt with me.”

“Is that what you think I’m doing?”

“Well, you do have a reputation for being charming and attractive to women.”

“Which isn’t always how the press has written about me, especially the tabloids.”

“I only read the tabloids to know what questions not to ask you.”

He slipped on his shoes and picked up his cellphone and keys. “They never asked me any questions so yours will be all-new to me. But Miss Turner-.”

“You can call me Kate.”

“Is that short for Katherine?”

“Kathleen, actually.”

“Like the actress?”

For some crazy reason, that made her laugh because no one ever said anything like that to her before. “Uh, no. But you’re the first person who’s ever said that to me about my name.”

“My ex-wife envied the actress Kathleen Turner for her voice.”

“Which I don’t have.” And Kate felt her laughter die as she realized yet again that she was no real beauty like his ex-wife, an insanely gorgeous and talented

French actress.

In reality, she had nothing to compete with either famous actress as she was just a bland, midwestern farm-girl and not a sexy vixen like he seemed to be attracted to.

Not that she would ever share that with him or anyone else-

“You have a very nice voice, Kate.”

“Miguel,” She held up a hand to him now. “You don’t have to flatter me or try to deflect me away from things you don’t want to talk about.”

“That’s not what I’m doing.” He went completely serious now, his mouth thinning into a hard line. “Look, I don’t do a lot of press because of some bad experiences with reporters who were only out to sell papers. I’ve read your stories in your magazine and I don’t think you’re like that at all. But I am curious about you, and I’d like to get know you because of that.”

“Then prepare to be bored.”

“I can decide for myself what I think and feel. And I think you can do the same about me, and yourself.” He took a step back from her and smiled again, all charm now. “Now, why don’t you come up and have breakfast with me.”

“And tell you about myself?”

“Yes.”

Kate thought about what he was asking her to do, and decided it wouldn’t be

out of bounds ethically to chat with him off the record. She didn't have to tell him all the details of her life because she wasn't asking him to do that either. Maybe if he knew the basic details of her life, he'd back off a little with the flirting.

“Sure. I'd like to get started on sampling your cooking.”

“Which I know you will enjoy.”

“Now,” She said as she fell into step with him as they walked up the beach.

“That sounds like a typical chef.”

“It's my pleasure when someone, especially a beautiful woman, enjoys what I do for them.”

Miguel had seen her lower her camera that had been aimed right at him when he'd come up out of the water. His first thought was to pour on the charm to see if she was a paparazzi photographer but as he reached her, he recognized her as the reporter come to interview him. And he meant what he said about her little picture in the magazine not doing her justice.

As they reached the sidewalk and he saw other women walking along, he knew why he was instantly attracted to her.

Kate was different from the glamorous women of south Miami Beach. Up close, he could see she wasn't wearing any makeup and her clothes, a simple white

t-shirt and light-blue walking shorts, showcased her petite, yet very shapely frame with her soft breasts and curvy hips. Her hair shone like gold even though she had it pulled back from her face, and he wondered how long her hair was and what it would feel like in his hands.

But it was her eyes that drew him in the most. They were a dark shade of green that he found beautiful and a bit mysterious.

“Here.” He came to the cross-walk across from the building housing his restaurant, and the flat he lived in above it. “Where are you staying?”

“In the same building we’re walking to. I’m renting one of the two apartments upstairs.” She replied as they crossed the street and came up to the front of the restaurant, and it’s very colorful sign. “La Sirena. I think that’s one of best restaurant names I’ve ever seen.”

“It’s unique and sexy, according to the first review I got for this place, which was an excellent review considering we’d only been open about three weeks.”

“Wow. That is impressive. Most restaurants in their early weeks either get hammered by critics or just get notes of improvement.”

He led her around the side of the building and he followed her up the outside staircase. “I think unique and sexy helped a lot there.”

“I guess that’s better than being known as bland and dull like I am.”

He came to the door to his flat and turned to face her. “I wouldn’t say that

about you at all. You have the most beautiful green eyes and a lovely smile. And that is unique and sexy to me.”

Before she could say anything to that, he turned and unlocked the door then stood aside and ushered her into his flat. He watched as she looked around the room then she walked over to the guitar he had in a stand next to the wall by the kitchen.

“It’s beautiful.” She said as she crouched down to look at it more closely.

“I just had some restoration and repair work done on it. My grandparents gave it to me when I turned eighteen and it’s been with me ever since.”

She looked up over her shoulder at him. “Can I take some pictures of it?”

“Sure. I’m going to go take a quick shower then I’ll make breakfast.”

Kate turned her back to his bedroom because that’s obviously where his bathroom and shower were at, and she certainly didn’t need to think about him in the shower, naked.

She almost groaned as she closed her eyes and heard the water in the bathroom come in. She’d seen come out of the water wet but...

No, she told herself sternly as she opened her eyes and lifted her camera to frame the guitar in the viewfinder. She would not think about being with him in any intimate way. Incredibly good-looking guys did not flirt with her except Miguel, and with him it was just probably reflex. Or worse, maybe a way of trying

to throw off and not have her probe too deeply into his life.

She held her camera up to her eye and adjusted the focus manually. The body of the guitar shined softly in the morning light of his apartment, and she wondered what the instrument sounded like when it was played.

Moving around the guitar, she took a few pictures then she went into the kitchen. She found a bag of high-quality coffee beans in his refrigerator and then ground them up and was turning on the coffeemaker when walked into the kitchen.

“Ah, perfect timing.”

She turned around and was able to keep her mouth closed despite the fact he was wearing a white muscle shirt that had a little bit of chest hair peeking out of the top and a pair of well-worn blue jeans. His dark hair was wet and curled a little, and it looked very thick and silky.

“I can make coffee and do some basic stuff.” Kate said as she moved around the table away from him.

“Do you cook at all? Do you like to?”

“I’m not really home enough to cook very much.”

“Well, then.” Miguel said as he pulled out a well-seasoned black cast-iron skillet and set it on the stove. “I’ll have to give you some lessons while you’re here with me.”

She looked down at the table and hoped she wasn’t blushing too badly because

he'd made that pledge with a very sexy smile. But then everything about him was sexy.

“So,” He got out a carton of eggs and some vegetables out of the refrigerator.

“In your magazine, it said you grew up in Wisconsin?”

“Yes.” She smiled at his accent because although his English was flawless, his pronunciation of ‘Wisconsin’ was unique. “I’m the middle child with a brother five years older than me, and a sister ten years younger than me. We were raised on a dairy farm outside of a town of less than five thousand people.”

“What was that like?”

“Not too bad. Except in the winter when I had to get up at four a.m. to help with the milking when it was twenty-below zero and there was a foot of snow on the ground. I hate cold climates because of that.”

“Which I completely agree with you. It was one of the reasons I settled here.”

Kate watched as Miguel chopped vegetables as the pan on the stove heated. He poured in the beaten eggs and vegetable and stirred them quickly then flipped the omelet perfectly. He quickly made up a second one as she got up and poured their

coffee into two separate mugs.

“How do you take your coffee?” She asked.

“*Con crema y azúcar*-. Sorry, I meant-.”

“Cream and sugar.”

Miguel turned from the stove with two plates in his hands, “You speak Spanish?”

“Fluently. I minored in languages in college and when I graduated I was fluent in Spanish, French, and Italian. And I’ve picked up bits and pieces of other languages in my travels.”

Miguel set the plates on the table as she set down their coffee mugs. Then she sat down as he did. She picked up her fork and it went smoothly through the omelet, which smelled heavenly. Glancing up, she saw him watching her with a look that might be described as a tiny bit nervous.

She took a bite, the warm eggs and cheese blending beautifully with the vegetables and hints of spices he’d put in. She savored every flavor before she looked back at him with a smile. “It’s wonderful. Absolute perfection.”

“Thank you.”

Miguel was very glad he wasn’t jaded or egotistical about his cooking. He knew he was good, yes, but more than anything he wanted people to enjoy his cooking. He could see Kate was really enjoying the omelet he’d made for her, and

he held back a smile at how much pleasure he would get in teaching her how to cook, and what it might possibly lead to..

They ate in silence then he picked up his coffee and sipped it. “*Perfecto.*” He took another sip before asking her, “So, how did you get into writing?”

She took a sip of her coffee. “My grandfather gave me his old camera when I was thirteen and taught me how to use it and also develop my own pictures. When I was fifteen, one of my pictures got published in the local newspaper. The editor of my high-school paper invited me on staff as a photographer. Next year, I got into journalism class and learned how to write articles. One day, I got sent out to take pictures and do the interviews because the reporter didn’t show up. I did the story and it made the front page, and I became a writer and a photographer.”

Miguel wondered what she’d been like as a young student. Probably very shy and earnest, and a girl he might have asked out when he was that age.

“I became editor of my high school paper in my senior year and that got me a full scholarship to Northwestern University. I majored in journalism and was editor of my college paper junior and senior year.”

She may not have confidence in attractiveness as a woman, Miguel thought to himself. But she was confident of her abilities as a writer and leader or she wouldn’t have been an editor. “How did you come to write for ‘Wanderlust’

magazine?”

“After I graduated from college, I got a job at a newspaper in Milwaukee in the news section but drifted over into Features. Three years later, I got a job offer for a weekly paper in New York City writing small features for them. About six months after I got to New York, I sold a small piece to ‘Wanderlust’ then four more in the next year. Then they offered me the Staff Writer position if I would agree to the heavy travel schedule, which I didn’t mind at all as I’d never been out of the country before.”

“And now?”

He waited for her answer, wondering if he was being too intrusive. It was one thing to open up to her as he had agreed to that, but she wasn’t a part of his story.

“I don’t know.” She said. “Two and a half years ago, I got a promotion to Associate Editor but I haven’t been in the office long enough to officially edit anything.”

“Officially?”

She took a sip of her coffee then set her mug down. “People have been sending me their articles and pictures for editing and layout ideas while I’ve been abroad. At first, I heard Caroline, the magazine’s Editor-in-Chief, didn’t mind me doing that as it meant less work for her. Now I hear she’s getting really resentful and

that's why she's kept me on the road as much as she has."

"Do you want her job?"

Her eyes widened in shock but Miguel looked right at her. "I know women who show ambition aren't treated well. My ex-wife has had horrible things said to her whenever she's voiced her ambitions. But anything you say to me here now won't leave this room."

Kate got up from the table with her plate and put it in the sink. She had read about Miguel's ex-wife Giselle, including some of the less-than-flattering articles written about her, and how she'd been hounded by the tabloid press for years. She had never let herself think about ambition too much but as she turned back to face Miguel, she sensed she could trust him with this now.

"My answer is yes. But only because I enjoy being an editor and helping people become better at their jobs, and I also like putting something together to share with the world."

She stood with her back to the sink as Miguel got up from the table with his plate. He put it beside hers in the sink then stayed close in front of her, so close she had to tilt her head up to look at his eyes.

"I think a woman has every right to be as ambitious as a man. But you're ambitious not for ego, but because you want to do something worthwhile. It took me a long time to let go of my own ego thinking I could do everything on my own,

but not before it cost me a restaurant and my marriage.”

“And now?” She asked, her voice low and husky as she realized how close they stood to each other. “What do you want?”

“I want to get to know you, like you want to get to know me.”

“That’s my job-.”

“And when that’s over? What about then?”

She stepped aside and went over to the table and picked up her empty coffee mug. “I don’t know. I’ll probably have another assignment.”

“Can you turn it down?”

She went back over to the sink and put her cup beside her plate. But she didn’t look up at him. “I don’t know.”

He moved in front of her, and she looked up at his handsome face, his warm brown eyes and soft smile. “Then maybe I can help you find your answers.”

She thought about what he seemed to be offering. A flirtation with a handsome man that could lead to a passionate affair. But she’d never been one for that kind of thing, and wouldn’t know how to keep her emotions out of it like he probably could.

A buzz came from outside the kitchen and he said, “Excuse me. I left my phone in my bedroom.”

He left the kitchen and she turned and rinsed off their dishes then put them in

the dishwasher. She picked up her camera then left the kitchen just as he came out of his bedroom.

“That was my accountant.” Miguel said. “He’s downstairs waiting impatiently for me.”

“Then I better get going. Thank you for breakfast. It was wonderful.”

He followed her out of his flat to the one next to his. “Come by before dinner service about four-thirty so I can introduce you to my staff.”

“Alright. I’ll be there and see if I can schedule interviews for those who want to talk to me.”

Then he leaned over and whispered in her ear, “Why don’t you enjoy the photos you took of me earlier till we see each other again?”

That made her blush to the roots of her hair, something he saw as he leaned back and smiled at her before he turned and headed out to the stairs.

Then she went into her apartment and closed the door behind her. She took her camera over to her laptop and plugged it in and let the photos upload. As they appeared on her laptop screen one by one, she let herself think of him as her sexy chef.

## Chapter Two

Later that afternoon just before dinner service, Miguel introduced her to all his staff one by one and told them she would be observing them and taking pictures, and that if they wanted to talk to her all they had to do was arrange a time to do so.

Kate set herself up at the end of the short bar that opened into the kitchen where she could sit with her back to the wall and either watch what was going on in the kitchen or in the restaurant itself. She started with the kitchen and watched as Miguel worked the setup with his line chefs and sous chef David to finish their prep. Then as the doors opened and customers came in, many of whom seemed to be regulars as they greeted the staff by name, Within an hour, the restaurant was almost full including the tables outside and the kitchen was a steaming symphony of flaming pans, clanking plates, and a mix of English and Spanish.

Through it all, Miguel led with a firm command while working right alongside his staff.

He served her a specialty dish of his, a grilled fish and vegetable plate with a

blend of spices that was an interesting mix of both Spanish and French influences.

“How is it?” Miguel asked as he came up to the bar.

“Excellent. Very innovative mix of influences.”

He took her empty plate from her. “Thank you. I’m still working on it though it’s done well so far.”

“I think it’s ready to add to the menu.”

“That’s what David says, too.” She wanted to interview him and his pastry chef Lana to get a feel for how Miguel was perceived in the kitchen.

Lana came out a little later with a light and airy desert that was perfection, then Lana asked as Kate finished it. “Can I talk to you now?”

“Sure.” Kate got out her tablet computer and booted up the audio recording program she used. She then got out her notepad and noted the time, place, and who she was interviewing. She asked Lana some basic questions like how she came to work for Miguel and about her pastries.

“Miguel said to me if my pastries made me people smile with joy or pleasure they were perfect.” Lana said with a warm smile. “So when that happens I know I’ve done something good.”

“I like that saying of Miguel’s, I’ll have to use that.”

David came up beside Lana wiping his hands on a towel as the restaurant began to wind down and the last customers left. “Miguel always says that food is

about memories, so try to make them good ones if you can. That's why food has to go beyond taste and appearance as he says, which sometimes food critics don't always understand."

"And how do you feel about that?" Kate asked David.

"I agree with that completely. If you'll excuse me." David said before he went back into the kitchen to help with the clean-up.

She marked her files and notes as Miguel had told her to stay because he wanted to talk to her in the restaurant. As he sat down in front of her, she lifted her camera and took a close-up picture of him as his smile was warm and kind. He also looked delectable with his chef's coat unbuttoned to reveal he wore only a white muscle shirt underneath.

Previous articles on him had talked about his sex appeal but she decided she'd let her pictures take care of that instead. Besides, based on what David and Lana had told her, she had a feeling he'd give her some more good material to use in her article. She turned to a fresh page in her notebook and opened a new audio file on her tablet.

"Where did you learn how to cook fish? It's some of the best I've ever had and what you're primarily known for."

"Thanks. I learned most of it from a very old lady who ran a small restaurant in Marseille. She could swear like any of the fishmongers and men on the docks but

she knew how to cook a fish to perfection.”

“Is that where you got started cooking?”

“I actually learned a lot from my grandmother. I spent every summer growing up on my grandparents’ *rancho* in Cordoba province. She taught me a lot of recipes with beef and chicken, and even lamb and goat.” He took a sip from the glass of wine he’d brought with him. “My parents divorced when I was seven and I barely saw them after that because they shipped me off to boarding school. So when I finished school I didn’t know what I wanted to do. But my grandparents gave me a new guitar and my grandmother told me a man who could play music, sing, and cook would never go hungry.”

“And did you sing for your supper?”

He grinned at her. “Many times as I traveled in those early years. I liked the freedom of seeing where the road took me. But when I ended up in that restaurant in Marseille, I realized I wanted to be a chef and make a go of it. So I started working there and eventually made my way to Paris and three years after I got there I was working under a Michelin-starred chef when I met Giselle.”

Kate had seen pictures of her and Miguel together and they made a stunningly-handsome couple. So what in the world he saw in her, other than she was the opposite of his ex...

Kate reminded herself she was a journalist here, not a woman crushing hard on

a man she had just met earlier today.

“If you don’t want to talk about your relationship with her...”

“No, I don’t mind talking about her. In fact, she texted me earlier and said she’ll be flying here to meet with you. She says she wants to set the record straight about me once and for all.”

Miguel watched as Kate’s eyes widened in surprise, and nervousness. He knew Giselle’s reputation preceded her but he sought to reassure Kate instead.

“She’s a fan of yours actually. And also not as fierce as the press has portrayed her. So try not to be afraid.”

“As long as she doesn’t throw a knife at me, I’ll be fine.”

“What?”

Kate laughed and explained to him, “I walked into a kitchen in Berlin just as the chef I was there to interview threw a knife across the kitchen to the corkboard-target beside the door. Turns out his father had been a knife-thrower in a Russian circus so he threw knives whenever he needed to let off steam.”

“Then it’s good I play my guitar to relax after a long night in the kitchen.”

Miguel laughed and was delighted that Kate was laughing, too. She’d been focused on him as he talked, so calm and reassuring. He could see why people felt

comfortable talking to her as he wanted to tell her his whole life story.

So he decided to open up about Giselle, and set the record straight about their relationship. “We fell in love very quickly and got married three months after we met. I tried to open a restaurant in Paris but couldn’t find a space. One weekend we went to Madrid and I found a space I liked, and Giselle put me in touch with a friend of her family who agreed to be my financial partner. And for a few years, it worked quite well because Giselle liked Madrid since the press didn’t follow her around there nearly as much as they did in Paris.”

“I know the recession was difficult for a lot of restaurants in Spain, but what happened to yours?” Kate’s voice was as soft and gentle as her eyes, but even that didn’t make the rest of the story easier to tell.

“The recession first, which made me watch every euro that went in and out. But when I asked for more money my partner said he’d get it but never did. I had a feeling something was wrong and I asked Giselle to help me, but she said I needed to trust him. I kept pressing for answers and eventually I told Giselle that if she wouldn’t help me then I didn’t know what kind of future we had together. Two days later, she filed for divorce.”

“I’m sorry, Miguel. That must have been terrible.”

Her words touched him even as he continued with the rest of the still-painful story. “I closed the restaurant and went back to my grandparents *rancho* and

helped take care of them in the two years that followed before they died. In that time, Giselle's accounts discovered this bastard had been stealing from her family and others for years and that because of the recession, he lost a lot of the money in bad investments. She was devastated and I offered to call off the divorce and work things out with her, but she wouldn't do that."

"Why?"

Miguel finished the last of his wine, the warmth of the smooth vintage not easing the painful chill of his past with Giselle. "She said she'd destroyed my trust in her and that she would do everything she could to make things right with me. She found this place and said she'd be my financial partner with her own money. I told her I'd pay her back, which was quite an argument though I won it."

"And now?"

He thought about that question, thought about the last five years here in Miami. "I found my joy and pleasure in cooking again."

"Yet what are your ambitions?"

"I don't have any now other than what I have here now."

"Really?"

He reached over and tapped the 'Record' button on her tablet off. "I would like to have a relationship with a woman that doesn't end. Someone I can support in her

own ambitions but have a life with, too.”

“Could you handle a long-distance relationship? Because frankly I’ve never met anyone who couldn’t.”

“Giselle and I spent a lot of time apart but that wasn’t the main cause of our divorce. But do you want a long-distance relationship?”

He hated feeling like he was pinning her down but he sensed a deep unhappiness in Kate.

She swept up her tablet and put it in her bag then stood up. “This isn’t about me so I’m going to call it a night here.”

He let that go for now as he told himself she wasn’t here for herself, but for him. “Let me lock up and I’ll walk you to your flat.”

She followed him into the kitchen where he checked everything one last time then turned out the lights and set the security system. He led her up the stairs to the second floor and to the door of her flat. She turned to face him.

“Thank you again for dinner. It was wonderful.”

“I have a question.”

“Yes?”

Miguel moved just a little closer to her, to where she had to tilt her head back a little to look up at his face. “If you could have just one kiss with me, would you

take it?"

Her eyes widened and he heard her faint catch of breath. "Are you offering me just one kiss?"

He smiled down at her question. "Yes. Though if you want more..."

Kate looked up into Miguel's eyes, eyes that were almost as black as the night sky, and just as mysterious and enticing. She looked at his mouth, his full lips framed by his beard. He was so handsome, and he made her think just for a moment that he truly saw her as beautiful, and desirable.

He reached out and cupped her chin between his thumb and forefinger, his touch soft and gentle.

"You're so beautiful." He said softly.

"Are you trying to convince me of that?"

"How am I doing?" He said with a smile that was all sexy desire now.

She wanted to believe he was as attracted to her as she was to him, which was crazy since they'd just met today. But then they had shared a lot today with each other, too.

"Just one kiss." She said, telling herself in her head only she would know this

happened, and it would be her special memory for the rest of her life.

She closed her eyes as he lowered his lips to hers, then he kissed her softly. His kiss was like a whisper, then another whisper, then a little more than that. As she began to move her lips with his, she reached up and wrapped her hand around his head, his hair like silk between her fingers. His body pressed hers against the door as their mouths opened to each other. Yet he didn't plunge right in, but savored her taste as she did the same with him.

She didn't want the kiss to end but eventually they broke and breathed deeply, still holding on to each other. He pressed his forehead against hers as she kept her eyes closed.

“Kate...”

She tried to speak but her throat was dry and she was breathing fast and hard. Then he let go of her and as she felt him move back from her, she opened her eyes.

“Miguel...”

“Did you like that?”

She leaned back against the door, her whole body still humming from the pleasure a simple kiss had ignited inside her. “Yes.”

He moved over to the door of his apartment. “Good night, Kate. Sleep well.”

She turned and unlocked the door to her apartment and went inside. She went over to the sofa and put her bag down on the coffee table next to her laptop

computer. She knew she should probably try to work but he'd given her something more to think about.

Joy, pleasure, and ambition.

The first two might be found in his arms, but the third could end anything before it began with him. And she'd never had a fling with a man, or even a one-night stand.

And she wouldn't start now, she told herself as she left her work on the table and went into the bedroom. As she climbed into bed and turned out the light, she heard the faint sounds of a guitar. The music was soft and gentle, and soon she was fast asleep and deep in her dreams, she was with Miguel.

The knock on her door startled her so much her computer mouse slipped right off the coffee table, but not before greatly magnifying the image of Miguel coming out of the water. Kate reached over and picked up the mouse then got up from the sofa and went to her door. Through the peephole she saw Miguel standing outside her door with a tray of food.

She opened her door to him, "Hi."

"Good morning. I wasn't sure if you had eaten breakfast so I decided to bring

you some.”

“Thank you, I haven’t eaten yet.” Kate stepped aside as Miguel walked in to her apartment. He wore a white muscle shirt and jeans like he did yesterday so that must be his off-work clothes. They sure looked good on him, she admitted to herself as she took a peek at his shapely backside in the faded and worn jeans he had on.

“Where do want me to set this?” He asked.

She moved past him and around the sofa. “On the table here. I’ve set up a little office space because I like the view.”

She cleared off a space then he set the tray down. “Did you want anything? I make some coffee, if you like.”

“No, thank you. I’ve already eaten. I had breakfast meeting with David and the kitchen staff.”

Kate sat down in front of her tray as Miguel sat in the chair next to her right side. She picked up a fork and the plate with an omelet on it. Her fork sank smoothly through the soft omelet and she took a bite, and closed her eyes as new flavors danced across her taste buds. She savored the bite of omelet then smiled at Miguel.

“This is amazing. What’s in the meat mixture?”

“It’s a mix of beef and pork I have flown in from my grandparents’ *rancho* that

my cousins now run.”

Miguel watched as Kate ate his omelet like she hadn't eaten in days, her pleasure in his cooking almost as enticing as her pleasure in his kiss.

“Thank you.” She said as she finished the omelet and the glass of orange juice he'd brought for her.

“You're welcome.”

“Oh, and speaking of David, he texted me and asked if we could meet downstairs before dinner prep, around three. Would that be okay?”

“Sure. Just be done by four because that's when Giselle said she should be here this afternoon.”

Kate didn't say anything to that and he let it go. He'd told Giselle to go easy on Kate, and in return Giselle had laughed and told him to dial back his charm.

So he decided to do that and not take up more of Kate's time as he got up then picked up the tray he'd brought. “I'll let you get back to work.”

She followed him to the door where she opened it. “Thank you for breakfast again. It was amazing. Have you thought about doing a weekend brunch? These omelets would have people lining up around the block.”

“David's talked about that but it would mean a shorter prep time for dinner service.”

“Which you can streamline if you configure both of your menus into the prep

as a couple of chefs have told me.”

“I hadn’t thought of that.” He said without any sarcasm or derision in his voice. He looked at her thoughtfully for a moment before he smiled at her again. “Did you sleep well last night?”

“After I heard your guitar playing. You’re very good.”

“Thank you.”

“And did you sleep well?” She asked him.

“Only in my dreams, with you.”

His eyes had gone dark with an intense stare that had her body tightening up a little in arousal. She remembered what it felt to be kissed by him as she looked at his lips, felt the heat in her body as she remembered being held in his strong arms. He hadn’t rushed her, or pushed her into anything. But in his stare, he was making his desire clear to her.

“I’ll see you later.” He said softly then he left her apartment and went back to his.

She closed the door behind her and leaned back against it.

Now she knew he could not only cook as well as his reputation said, that he could kiss her like he had all the time in the world just for her, now she knew he could stare her into silent arousal that would only be harder to resist the more she

was around him.

Which was insane, she told herself as she went over to the sofa and sat down in front of her laptop computer. They'd only known each other for a day now, and were learning about each other like they were both being interviewed.

But she wasn't a part of the story, she told herself as she turned her attention back to it. She couldn't be if she was writing about him.

## Chapter Three

Miguel watched Kate in between the afternoon prep as she sat and interviewed several of his staff. She listened to them in that wonderful way she had, using her tablet to record the interviews and a notepad to make notes. Then as he went to the back of the kitchen, he was surprised to see Giselle there. They greeted each other with air-kisses on both cheeks.

“I don’t want her to see me yet.” Giselle said as she made her way towards the front of the kitchen but out of Kate’s line of sight.

He stood next to Giselle as they watched Kate finish up an interview with his hostess then tap out a few things on her tablet.

“She’s very pretty.” Giselle said softly. “Much prettier than the picture of her in the magazine.”

“I think she’s beautiful.” Miguel said as he watched her ponytail bob slightly as she typed on her tablet. “But she doesn’t think she is.”

“Really?” Giselle sounded genuinely puzzled by that.

Miguel looked away from Kate to his ex-wife. “Any man can tell a woman she’s beautiful but for some women, making them believe that is where the real

genius lies.”

“And I know you can do that with any woman you set your sights on.” Giselle said then before he could say anything to that, “Can I have the my favorite shrimp appetizer and, are you doing your fish-and-saffron dish tonight?”

“I can do it for you.”

“Do it for me and your lady over there.” Then she left the kitchen and went out into the dining area right over to Kate.

With a tired sigh at the hurricane Giselle was, Miguel turned his attention to the kitchen, the one place he seemed to have complete confidence in.

“Hi!”

Kate looked up and was so startled she dropped her pen on the table as she saw Giselle Didier, Miguel’s ex-wife standing in front of her with a big smile on her face.

“I’m Giselle.” She held out her hand.

Kate stood up and shook Giselle’s hand. “I’m Kate. It’s nice to meet you.”

“I’m very happy to meet you, too.” Giselle said as she sat down right across from Kate. “I’m a huge fan of your work. I think I’ve read every article you’ve

done for your magazine.”

“Thank you.” Kate smiled in genuine pleasure and without her usual shyness because she knew Giselle wasn’t someone who handed out compliments if she didn’t mean them. “I’m a fan of your work, too. I think I’ve seen most of your films. ‘Love and War’ made me cry though the locations were spectacular.”

“That made me cry, too. I made that right after my divorce from Miguel was final so I didn’t mind being all alone in the dead of winter in Russia where we filmed that.”

A server came and set down a plate of shrimp and a plate of bread. “I ordered this for us and also Miguel’s special fish-and-saffron dish, too. I hope you don’t mind.”

“Not at all. His cooking is amazing.”

“Must be a really nice part of this assignment, yes?”

Kate nodded as she ate one of the perfectly-sautéed shrimp, the garlic and onion flavors blending with the hint of spices Miguel was known for making his dishes unique and special.

They ate in silence till they’d both mopped up every bit of juice from the plate, smiling at each other as the server came and took the empty plates from them.

“Now, Miguel said he told you why I wanted to talk to you.”

“Yes.” Kate’s smile faded into a bit of nerves now as she felt the intensity of

Giselle's ice-blue eyes on her. With her jet-black hair falling in expertly-cut waves around her smooth shoulders and her dark-blue dress fitting like silk perfection over her body, Kate suddenly felt like she should brace herself for Giselle's famed intensity being turned on her now.

“He said you came here to set the record straight. What do you mean by that?”

Giselle pointed to the tablet computer between them on the table. “Turn that on. I want this on the record.”

Kate tapped open a new audio file and labeled it. “Alright. Go ahead.”

“I've known Miguel for ten years now, and when we first got together he was called a vagabond chef who wouldn't make it because he couldn't seem to settle down. Then when he got his restaurant in Madrid and it took off, the critics said he might be too ambitious for his own good, and when that failed they said they were right. Then when he settled down here and kept this place going as is, now he's not ambitious enough. What do you think about that?”

Kate took a sip of her water, thinking about her reply to Giselle's question.

“There are three words that come to mind when I think of Miguel: joy, pleasure, and ambition.”

Giselle smiled warmly at that reply. “Those are the three words I would use, too. He takes joy in his cooking, pleasure in seeing people enjoy it, and his

ambition is to be happy. With someone.”

Kate glanced down at her tablet for a few seconds, hoping she wasn't giving away her growing feelings for Miguel.

Giselle continued on, her voice soft and low now. “When he first came here to Miami, I worried about him. I worried that he might not find joy and pleasure in his cooking again. But he found that joy and pleasure again, and he's found a lot of healing and peace here, too. But he's never had a relationship last, and ours wouldn't have even if what happened hadn't happened. I have no intention of settling down, which is another story for another time and place. But Miguel... he's wanted to for a long time though he's never said that out loud to anyone.”

Was that really true about Miguel, Kate asked herself. This was the longest he'd been anywhere in his professional career, but was he really ready to settle down?

And did she really want to settle down with someone, Kate asked herself. And in her mind her reply was always, with the right person.

Was Miguel that person?

Luckily before she could think about that any further, their plates of food came courtesy of Miguel himself. “Ladies, I hope you enjoy this.”

“You know we will, Miguel.” Giselle said as she looked up at her ex-husband. “Though your modesty about your cooking is very attractive even after all this

time.”

“Kate, did you get that recorded?” Miguel asked her.

She laughed softly at their easy banter, something she had never known with any of her ex-boyfriends. “Yes, though I can’t guarantee it will be in the final article.”

“I understand.” Miguel said. “Enjoy.”

Kate tapped her recording app off then she and Giselle ate and talked about things other than Miguel. Then after their plates were cleared away, Kate decided to ask Giselle a question.

“Giselle, do you think a woman can truly have a career and a family, and not have to make too many sacrifices?”

Giselle took a sip of her wine then set her glass down. “I think so, with the right partner. Someone who has no ego when it comes to a woman’s own ambitions, like Miguel.”

Miguel had told her as much but to hear it from Giselle made her think that might be true about him. Then another thought came to her mind, one she’d been dancing around for some time.

“Have you ever felt like you can’t be happy? That people don’t want you to be happy about certain things, and will make your life miserable if they find out? I

know that probably sounds stupid but...”

“It’s not.” Giselle’s eyes were as soft and kind as her voice now. “When I was a child I always wanted to run and play and yell, and was told not to. But I did anyway and was called spoiled and rebellious. That gave me an attitude as a lot of people have called it. But it made me pursue my dream of acting when everyone said I couldn’t do it though I had discovered how much I loved it. Is that how you feel about your writing?”

Kate nodded. “I felt like I’d discovered something special. But I also love editing and want to do that more than write now. But I also want to be happy, to feel happiness and joy, and not be torn down over it.”

“And not meaning to make Miguel sound perfect because he’s not, but he would never tear you down, as you say.”

“Thanks, Giselle.” Miguel said as he came up behind her.

Kate looked up at Miguel and wondered how much he had heard, though the expression on his face was his usual smiling good humor. “How was everything?”

“Lovely, as always.” Giselle said.

“Can you stay for the dancing tonight?”

“Dancing?” Kate asked.

“Yes.” Miguel said. “We have a band coming in a little later to play. We’ll

need to clear out the space here shortly for them. Do you dance, Kate?”

She thought about her response, and went with something that wasn't so self-depreciating like she would have said before. “Not very often. But with the right partner, I can follow along pretty well.”

“Well then,” He looked right straight at her with an intense stare that made her feel very warm and energized. “I hope I'll be the right partner for you then. Giselle, are you staying?”

“No.” She stood up from the table. “In fact, I need to leave soon to make my flight to Los Angeles. I have a meeting in the morning I can't miss.”

“Giselle,” Kate stood up and held out her hand to her. “Thank you so much for talking with me.”

“It was a pleasure for me, and I hope I get the opportunity to talk to you again sometime soon. Now if you'll excuse me,” Giselle picked up her handbag. “I want to get my box of pastries from Lana before I leave.”

“Send me a text when you get to L.A.” Miguel said then to Kate. “I'll be in the kitchen till the band gets here.”

He followed Giselle to the kitchen as he wanted to speak with her before she left. They went into a corner where there wasn't any work going on.

“Thank you for singing my praises.” Miguel said with his voice low.

“I meant every word. But Miguel, be patient with her. She's trying to figure out

whether or not she has the right to be happy.”

“I can be patient.”

Giselle snorted a little at that. “That’s a challenge for you and you know it. But remember, she’s still working on her story about you, so it make it good for her.”

After Giselle left, Kate took her tablet and notebook upstairs and for a minute or so, thought about just staying in and working on her story. Her deadline wasn’t until next week but she wanted it out of the way much sooner than that if possible. She had a strong instinct Caroline already had an assignment ready for her though she always held off until she turned a story in.

But for once in her life, Kate really wanted to be happy. And she was happy when she was with Miguel. He was incredibly-handsome yes, but smart, kind, funny, and genuinely caring. He hadn’t blown off her suggestion about brunch and what he could do about it.

So maybe she could take time to be with him. Because if she knew what being with him was truly like, then that might help her with the decisions she knew had to make sooner or later.

She went back downstairs and took a seat at the end of the bar just as the band,

a small quintet playing traditional Spanish music set up and began to play. Couples whirled around the small space, moving in intimate circles, bringing a smile to her face as she watched them.

Miguel came out of the kitchen just before nine o'clock as the dinner service was winding down. He'd been trying to keep his distance from Kate and yet, keeping an eye on the dining area to see if she'd dance with anyone.

She hadn't.

He unbuttoned the top buttons on his chef's coat and ran a hand through his hair as he walked over to where she sat at the bar.

Then the leader of the little group called out, "And now, a tango."

Miguel looked right at Kate, "Can I have this dance?"

The whole place went silent though he kept his attention totally focused on Kate. She stood up and held out her hand, "Yes."

Everyone cheered as he led her to the cleared section of the restaurant. He pulled her close and she lifted her head and looked right into his eyes. Then the music started, and she moved with him in perfect rhythm.

In Miguel's arms, Kate felt as beautiful, wild and decadent as the tango made her feel. They stepped together, forwards and backwards, and she smiled when he dipped her low. Their bodies moved together so well she began to feel arousal

inside her, a slow-burn like their kiss had been last night.

Then the music ended and everyone cheered, but for her time seemed to stop as she and Miguel just stood there together.

“What the-?” She heard from the bar, and looked over and saw Harvey, the tall, black bartender come out from behind his bar and out the front door.

Miguel let go of her, “Stay here.”

She watched as Miguel went outside and with Harvey spoke with a man just outside the front window in the outdoor seating area. Then she saw the camera the man held, then handed to Harvey who removed the memory card and handed it to Miguel. No one else in the restaurant seemed to notice what was going on outside as she moved off the dance floor to the door just as Miguel and Harvey came back inside as the camera-man left in a bit of hurry.

“We’re lucky he was in our seating area outside, which is our property he was trespassing on.” Harvey said as he moved up beside Miguel.

“We’re lucky you scared him into giving up the memory card.”

“Well,” Harvey’s smile was a flash of white in his smooth face. “I might have exaggerated some stuff a little, but I can still toss off legal crap with the best of them.”

“Thank you. I don’t need to deal with the paparazzi even though he said he was

just looking for Giselle.”

Kate walked up to both men. “What happened out there?”

“A photographer said he was looking for Giselle but took pictures of you and Miguel instead.” Harvey replied. “Said he hadn’t seen Miguel with a woman before and had the gall to ask me who you were.”

“Which we didn’t say.” Miguel put in then he looked at Harvey. “Thanks for your help.”

“My pleasure, boss.” Harvey moved back behind the bar. “Kate.”

She gave Harvey a quick smile then followed Miguel back to the kitchen. She watched as he took down a small mallet and used it to smash the memory card then sweep the bits into the trash.

It was a display of temper she’d never seen before, but she knew it wasn’t directed at her. He moved off to a corner of the kitchen and she came over to him. He looked at with a heated stare that made her feel hot now, a slow burn that was now in flame.

“I’m sorry, Kate.” Miguel’s voice was low and a bit rough as he moved closer to her, to where only she could hear him. “Our dance was like a moment out of time. And right now, I want you so much.”

And she wanted him, too. She wanted to lose herself in pleasure, to not think

about anything but him.

“I know I’m not a part of the story here right now.” Kate said softly.

“I want you to be a part of mine.”

She closed her eyes for a few seconds as those simple words touched her so deeply inside she almost couldn’t breathe. She couldn’t tell him being with him would change her life, and had already done so actually.

“Kate...”

She opened her eyes and knew what she had to do now. “I need to finish what I came here to write. I’ll be working through the night so please don’t come by in the morning as I’ll probably be sleeping.”

“Alright. If you need anything, please let me know.”

Miguel watched her as she left the kitchen, and hoped she would come back to him no matter what happened after she was done with her story.

## Chapter Four

Kate worked through the rest of the evening, words and quotes flowing together like building blocks on her computer screen. She heard Miguel's guitar playing around midnight and it spurred her on to keep working. After about twenty minutes, the music stopped and she hoped he got some sleep even as she forced herself not to think about him lying in bed alone, thinking about her.

Finally just after seven a.m., she sent her story off to her editor and in a separate email, she told Caroline she was requesting time off. Then Kate shut her laptop down and took her empty coffee cup and plate to the kitchen before she went out outside onto the small balcony of her apartment. Looking down, she saw Miguel walking back up the street wearing his black swim trunks with his hair slicked back and his towel around his neck.

It seemed like weeks instead of just three days ago that she'd met him like that, wet and devastatingly-handsome. But in those three days she'd put words to feelings she'd had for a long time, feelings she knew she was now free to decide

what to do with.

She went inside and laid down on the bed and as soon as she closed her eyes, she was fast asleep.

The next time she woke up the clock on the bedside table said three p.m. She got up and took a shower and then she blow-dried her hair and brushed it till it fell in golden waves to her shoulders. Then she picked up her purse and decided to take a walk to a shop she had seen on her first day here. Whenever she finished a story sometimes she treated herself and she now decided maybe she didn't need to blend into the background so much anymore, especially since she was planning to stay here a while if she could.

She came to the window of the small boutique just a couple of blocks away from Miguel's restaurant. In the big window of the boutique was a short, thin-strap dress in a bright blue-and-green tropical print. She had never really worn anything like it before but now she wanted to try it on at least.

As soon as she walked into the shop, a lovely young woman with a cascade of soft red hair came right up to her with a warm smile.

"Hi, I'm Rose. How can I help you today?"

"I'm Kate. I'd like to try on that dress in the window, the blue-and-green print

one.”

“Sure. What size do you wear?”

Kate told her then she followed Rose to the rack where the dress was quickly found in her size. Rose led her to the changing rooms as she said, “This is going to look great on you, especially with your eyes.”

Kate took the dress into a changing room and slipped it on. It fit perfectly, accentuating her hips and coming to mid-thigh, and cupping her breasts with a lower cut than she had ever worn before. She stepped out of the dressing room to look in the large mirrors of the dressing area.

“Oh my. You look so beautiful.”

“Thank you.” Kate began to believe it now as she looked at herself like she’d never had before.

“I have the perfect lingerie set for it, too.”

“Do you mind if I look around some more?”

“Sure. Do you have anyone special to wear this for?”

Kate thought about Miguel and smiled. “Yes. He might be surprised...”

“But it will be a good surprise. If you see anything else you like, please let me know.”

“Thank you.” Kate walked around the shop, looking at styles she had told herself she couldn’t wear because she wasn’t built for them. She wasn’t as skinny

as some of the women she'd seen, nor as busty either. But she kept in shape by walking as much as she could, swimming sometimes and her hair was always complimented by stylists even though she had never colored it or done any other enhancements to her face and body.

Rose was lovely, too, suggesting styles and then finding lingerie and shoes to go with the other three dresses she'd bought along with a couple of skirts and tops. Kate walked out with a garment bag and one big shopping bag, happy with her purchases. She went up the back stairs to make sure she wasn't seen by the kitchen staff, or Miguel

She put on the first dress she'd tried on, brushed her hair out again, then went down the back stairs so she could come in through the front.

"Wow, Kate." Harvey said with a low whistle as she walked by the bar. "You are a breath of fresh, gorgeous air now, honey."

She laughed softly, "Thank you, Harvey."

As she walked back to the kitchen, several of the servers complimented her as did a few customers. She came to the kitchen entrance just as Lana came out carrying a tray of her wonderful pastries.

"You look gorgeous, Kate." Lana said as she set her tray down.

"Wow, Kate." David said as he came out from the back area of the kitchen.

“You look great.”

She said her thanks just as David called out for Miguel.

As Miguel walked up from the prep area, he saw Kate... and slowly walked towards her, his heart pounding in his chest as his throat grew dry.

She looked like a vision in a dress that made his hands ache to touch her, and made desire burn through his body. Her hair fell in soft waves around her bare shoulders, her skin so smooth and creamy he wanted to taste her more than he ever had before.

“I finished my story.” She said softly. “And I also asked for some time off.”

“Oh.” Those words hit him with another wave of arousal.

“Boss?” David said from beside him.

“Yes?” Miguel didn’t take his eyes off Kate.

“Lana and I can handle tonight.”

He glanced at the two of them, both holding back smiles. “Are you sure?”

“Unless the place is burning down, we won’t call you.” Lana said.

Miguel looked back at Kate and saw a soft smile on her lips. He closed the distance between them and took her hand. Then with one last look at David and Lana. “I know you’re ready and will do just fine.”

Miguel led Kate out of the kitchen and as they came to the stairs. “Your place,

or mine?”

She moved closer to his side. “Yours. Because I’d like a cooking lesson, too.”

Miguel dropped his key on the floor and as he picked it up, he got a good look at Kate’s smooth, bare legs. He gripped his key firmly and put it into the lock. He followed her into his apartment and closed the door behind them. Then he stepped in front of her, close enough to where their bodies almost touched.

“I want you in my arms, in my bed, with nothing between us.”

She wound her arms around his neck and brought her body against his, an electric contact that had him pulling her even tighter against him.

“And I ask that you don’t rip this dress, or what’s underneath it. I paid a lot of money for both.”

“Well then,” He leaned down a little then swept an arm under legs and lifted her off the floor. She gasped as he cradled her against him. “I better savor you like the fine delicacy you are.”

She laughed and buried her face against the side of his neck as he carried her to his bedroom then set her on her feet.

“Tell me what you want.” He had to hear to hear the words from her, had to know this is what she truly wanted.

She reached up and wound her arms around his neck, her hands sinking into his

hair as she brought her lips to his.

“I want you.”

Kate had never felt so sure of anything like she did now as she kissed Miguel, and felt her heart soar as he held her tightly against him and kissed her deeply. He nipped and licked at her lips as he found the zipper at the back of her dress and pulled it down. Her dress fell to the floor and she stepped free of it as he looked down at the sea-green lingerie set she wore. He brushed his lips over the bare skin of her shoulders as he removed her bra and panties.

“So beautiful.” He murmured against her skin as he bent down to remove her sandals then picked her up and placed her on the bed.

Kate watched as Miguel bent down and pulled off his socks and shoes then stood up and removed his white chef’s coat. When he pulled off his white muscle shirt, she shifted on the bed as he unbuttoned then removed his jeans and underwear. He stood before her, his body all perfection with his strong shoulders, muscled arms and legs, and rapidly-hardening cock.

He came down on the bed beside her and she reached for him. They kissed slowly, savoring every taste, every touch, every movement. She felt the hairs on his chest tease her nipples into tight points as he kissed her neck, collarbone, and

shoulders softly followed by little licks. Then she felt his hands cup her breasts and she opened her eyes to see her breast filling his hand, his thumb caressing her nipple into a hard little bud.

“Perfect.” He whispered before he lowered his mouth and suckled her nipple.

She gasped as he seemed to read her perfectly, making her feel decadent and beautiful, like she was floating on water. He kissed and licked the skin of her belly then he slid his hands over her thighs, opening her to him.

“Let me in.”

She looked down as he settled between her legs, giving the insides of her thighs soft licks and kisses as he got closer and closer to her sex. Then her head fell back and she cried out as she felt his mouth upon her, his tongue caressing her so intimately. She grabbed a hold of his head, his silky hair sliding through her fingers as he gave her the most of intimate of kisses, and made her cry out in orgasm.

When she felt the bed shift, she opened her eyes and saw him standing over her with a condom in his hand.

“Are you sure?” He asked.

Kate was so deeply touched she felt tears prick her eyes at Miguel was asking her. He wanted her yes, but he was giving her the choice. She reached up for him,

“Yes. Please.”

He grinned then rolled the condom on before he laid down next to her again. He started with deep kisses as his hand slid between her thighs, his fingers caressing her to full arousal, one, then two fingers entering her gently.

“Miguel... please. I want you.”

“I’m yours.” He murmured as he settled between her legs and slowly began to enter her body. He breathed deeply as he eased into her slowly, letting her body adjust around him till he was fully inside her.

Miguel held himself still, breathing so deeply his lungs almost burned as Kate’s body clenched around his in a soft, wet grip. He wanted to make her come apart in his arms again so he stayed still until he could catch his breath. Then he angled his body to where the top of his penis rubbed against her clit, a movement that made her gasp softly.

As he began to move, their bodies grew slick with sweat and he opened his eyes to watch her.

“Kate.”

She opened her eyes to his, her eyes like shining green gems as their bodies began to move together, as she rose up to meet his thrusts into her. Her nails dug into his shoulders, her smooth thighs clenching around his.

Every movement of Miguel inside her drove her higher and higher, so much all

Kate could do was cry out each time he moved deeply inside her. She had never felt like this before, so much a part of someone. But this was Miguel, a man who made her believe she was beautiful, and that anything was possible.

They moved together now in waves of pleasure, and her cries grew louder until he angled deeply inside her and she screamed out in orgasm. A few seconds later, she felt his hot breath against her neck as his body shuddered hard against hers. Then he collapsed against her, pressing soft kisses against the bare skin above her breasts. She opened her eyes to look at him, his face gorgeous in his bliss.

He opened his eyes and lifted his head to where he could look right into her eyes. “My beautiful Kate.”

After they got up and washed, they went back to bed and she fell asleep in his arms. Miguel smiled and just watched her sleep before drifting off with her. When he woke again, the sky was a blaze of light from the setting sun. Kate stretched beside him and yawned.

“What time is it?” She asked.

He picked up his cellphone from the bedside table. “About eight o’clock. Time

for dinner.”

“And my first cooking lesson?”

“Of course. What would you like to learn?”

She looked thoughtful for a moment then, “How to cook fish that doesn’t fall apart in a pan?”

“Let me show you.”

He got out of bed and pulled on just his jeans and muscle shirt then went downstairs to the kitchen to grab some things because he said he only ate breakfast in his flat most of the time. While he did that, she put on her dress and went into the living room and saw his guitar. She wondered if he would play for her tonight.

He came back a couple of minutes later with two wrapped fish fillets and other fixings in a brown paper bag. She followed him into the kitchen where he got out a black cast-iron skillet.

“How long have you had that?” She asked as she looked at the well-used pan.

“It was the only thing I kept from my restaurant in Madrid. I told myself I had to remember I had good times there.”

She stepped aside and he showed her how he seasoned and prepared his fish while the pan heated up. Then when the butter began to bubble up, he placed the

fillets in the pan and stood behind her.

“How do you know when to turn them?” She asked as she held the spatula.

“Look at how the butter is bubbling around the filets. When it’s like a foam, and the top of the filet is firm, that’s when you turn them.” He flipped one and she flipped the other.

“You’re wrist action is amazing. I bet you’re really good at playing dice games.”

He plated the fish while she finished sautéing the vegetables. “I played once at a casino in Monte Carlo.”

She spooned the vegetables onto the plates next to the fish and rice. “How did you do?”

“I won a thousand euro.”

“Wow.”

He set their plates down then poured them both a glass of white wine. “I was given a hundred euro to gamble with by the group hosting us chefs. And I decided to quit at a thousand euro so I didn’t lose it all.”

“Very wise.” She took a bite of the fish. “Perfect.”

“Like you.”

She just smiled at his compliments now, confident in the truth of them. “Were

you wearing a tuxedo that night in the casino?”

“Yes. Made me feel like I was playing James Bond.”

“Or a sexy billionaire with all the world at his feet.”

That made him laugh. “I like that.”

And for Kate, the thought of how sexy he would look in a tuxedo made her so crazy for him that she had to concentrate on finishing her meal.

After they finished eating and cleaning up, he led her into the living area. “So, uh, what would you like to do now?”

“I’d like to watch you play your guitar.”

He sat down on the chair next to where his guitar was then he picked it up.

“Any requests?”

“How about that song you played the first night I was here? It was very pretty.”

“It was one of the first songs I ever learned to play on my own.” Miguel said he strummed the strings, checking the tune of the guitar.

Then he started playing, his fingers looking like they were dancing across the strings, then caressing the instrument itself. She remembered how she felt when he touched her, and it made her want to touch him.

He finished his song then looked up at her. “I played it for you now, the most beautiful woman I have ever met.” And as he saw her smile, “And now you don’t

shy away when I say you're beautiful.”

She stood up and went over to him as he stood up and put his guitar aside.

“Because I believe you, and now I want to show you how you make me feel.”

Miguel let her take him by the hand and lead him to the bedroom. There she turned on the light beside the bed then faced him and slipped off her dress. She stood before him naked and beautiful, and Miguel let her take the lead, eager to see what she would do next.

She reached up and touched his shoulders, her fingers dancing across his skin as they kissed softly. Then she placed kisses down his neck, across his chest, her fingers playing with the hair across his chest, teasing his nipples before she licked and suckled each one. She placed kisses down the center of his belly as her hands went to the waistband of his jeans, unzipped them, then slid them down to the floor. He stepped free of them and stood before her naked.

Kate knelt down in front of him and took a hold of his hard cock. The foreskin had rolled back and his shaft was almost smooth to her touch. She heard his breathing getting deeper as she caressed him with her hand, then she heard a slight groan when she kissed the tip, then licked his hard cock.

He sank his hands into her hair as she gave him the most of intimate of kisses

and caresses, feeling her own body respond to his.

“Kate...”

She let go of him and stood up. “Lay down.”

He did as she asked, laying down completely open to her, his eyes dark and intense as he watched her put a condom on his penis. Then she lifted herself up, and he helped steady her as she sank down on him. She closed her eyes and tossed her head back as she struggled to breathe from all the sensations she was feeling.

He moved slightly beneath her, and she opened her eyes and looked down at him. He smiled up at her then leaned up to where they could be face to face, kiss and touch as they began to move together. It was amazing, and beautiful, and Kate didn't want it to end.

But it did, with both of them shuddering in pleasure together, and after, as she laid in his arms, she realized she never wanted to leave him.

## Chapter Five

“What are you doing?” Kate asked as Miguel got out of bed the next morning.

“Going for a swim. Do you have a swimsuit with you?”

“Yes.” Kate muttered into her pillow. She was still tired from last night and the marathon writing from the night before but it seemed Miguel wasn’t tired at all.

She lifted her head from the pillow and watched as he pulled on his black swim trunks and asked, “Would you like to join me?”

Since it seemed he wasn’t coming to back to bed, she tossed the sheet back and got out of bed. “Sure. Why not?”

So she started off her day with a swim in the ocean with Miguel. They played in the waves with lots of laughter and joy, more than she ever thought possible. Then they came back and took a shower together, and made love for the first time this day. After that, he showed her how to flip an omelet to perfection.

Then he showed her a few things on his guitar, guiding her hands on the instrument to show her some basic chords and stuff. In return, she went and got her

camera and laptop and showed him how she uploaded and edited photos and talked about how her writing process. Then they ate lunch and took a nap before they went down to the restaurant to see how things were coming along.

And it wasn't good as David came right up to Miguel.

"Miguel, Rico didn't make it in so we're short on the line tonight."

"I understand. I'll work tonight. Kate,"

Then the hostess, Lisa, walked over to them, "Miguel, I just wanted to let you know we're short a server tonight. Sonya had to take her daughter to the doctor this afternoon and her mom is sick and can't watch her."

Kate stepped in, "I can wait tables." Everyone looked at her in surprise, "I waited tables in college, and after. I'll just need to change my clothes."

"Thank you, Kate." Miguel said as he smiled over at her. "That would be a big help for us. Lisa, can you get Kate an apron?"

"I won't be long." Kate said then she went back upstairs. She found a pair of black cropped pants and a white t-shirt, which was close to the uniform Miguel's servers wore. She put on her running shoes then as she went back into the living area, she saw her phone was blinking.

She picked it up and saw there were email messages. Curious, she sat down in front of her laptop and booted it up. Caroline's email was at the top, the subject

line in all capital letters: SEX IT UP!

Kate opened the email and saw Caroline demanding a complete rewrite of her article on Miguel along with several very pointed criticisms of her photos. In addition, she wrote that the magazine's publisher, and their boss Grayson Kane, was having a party for the staff tomorrow night at his place in New York City and that she should be there.

But instead of wanting to crumple into a heap of tears, or quiver and shake in fear, Kate typed out one simple response:

We'll talk tomorrow night at the party.

Then she sent the email and shut down her computer and put that all out of her mind. She was through being afraid, and she was stronger than she ever realized, worthy of being happy, and fighting for it.

Miguel enjoyed his work even when it was crazy-busy. But he enjoyed it even more working with the woman he loved.

Kate was a very good server with her bright smiles, multi-lingual skills, and good memory. She was a delight and a joy, and Miguel would miss her terribly when she left. He just hoped that she was able to come back to him.

After all the customers had left and he finished with the kitchen clean-up, he

wiped his hands on a towel as he came out of the kitchen to where Kate sat at the end of the bar. “How did it go?”

“It was great. Your customers tip well, though I set the money aside for Sonya.”

“That’s very generous of you.”

Kate stood up, suddenly all serious now. “Can we go upstairs and talk?”

He nodded and followed her out of the restaurant and up the stairs to her flat.

As she closed the door behind them, his chest felt tight and he took a deep breath, knowing this moment was going to come.

She was leaving.

“I, uh, checked my email before I came downstairs earlier.” Kate clenched her hands in front of her as walked around the sofa to the open doors of her balcony. She turned to face him as he walked over to her. “There was an email from my editor. She wants a total rewrite of my article on you, which I’m not going to do. She also said there’s a party tomorrow night in New York with our boss, our publisher, and that I should be there. I simply replied to her that we would talk tomorrow.”

“That’s good. I’m glad you stood up for yourself.” He took her into his arms.

“Personally, I can’t wait to read your article.”

Kate felt herself wanting to cry now and she didn’t know why. “I thought we’d

have more time together.”

“We will. And I’ll be here whenever you get back.”

That made her smile even as she blinked back her tears. “I just hope that I can stay strong and make my case.”

“You can.” Miguel said as he kissed her softly.

She wound her arms around his neck and kissed him back, sliding her tongue against his in an invitation. One that he accepted when he picked her up and carried her to her bedroom, where they spent the night in each other’s arms. And as she fell asleep, she knew exactly how she felt about Miguel.

She loved him.

Miguel slipped out of Kate’s bed before dawn as he’d woken up with a big thought in his mind. He gave Kate a soft kiss on the shoulder then dressed and went back to his flat. Half an hour later, he came back to Kate’s flat and found her up and packing her bags.

“Hi,” She looked up as he walked into her flat.

“I hope you don’t mind, but I’d like to come with you.” Miguel said as he placed his bag by her front door. “Not to fight your battle for you, but just so that

you know you're not alone in that fight.”

Kate couldn't believe what she was seeing, and hearing from Miguel. He had a bag packed and he was asking to come with her.

She walked around the sofa and gave him a hug. “Thank you. I've never had anyone want to be with me like you do.”

He hugged her back, holding her tightly against him. “You've made so happy, but you've also made me realize I can trust people who are good to me, and that I don't have to go at it alone anymore.”

She let go of him. “If this doesn't work...”

“Then if you need a job I've got one for you. You were very good last night waiting tables and I can always use a good server.”

That made her laugh and eased the weight of anticipation inside her. “I'll keep that in mind.”

She finished packing while he fixed them a quick breakfast then they were on their way to the airport. Luckily, they got a non-stop flight and were in an Uber on their way into New York City by mid-afternoon.

As they emerged from the tunnel into Manhattan, Miguel looked out the window and said, “Too many buildings. You can't see the sky like you should be able to.”

“I have to agree with that. I've never been fond of this city even though I've

used it as a sort of base for the last ten years.”

Kate looked out at the busy streets and gray and concrete and wanted to be back in Miami so badly, and not just because of Miguel.

Their Uber pulled up to the converted warehouse apartments that her publisher owned and she showed Miguel to the one she stayed in when she was in the city. It was too much space for her but Grayson, her publisher, rented it to her below market value so she couldn't pass it up.

They stopped in the little bodega on the corner and picked up some basic fixings then went up to the big open loft apartment. They ate a quick lunch then took a shower together and made love there. Then she booted Miguel out of her bedroom before she finished dressing because she really wanted to surprise him with one of her new purchases.

She took one last look in the mirror and almost didn't recognize herself. She'd brushed her hair out till it shined in waves and she wore a minimum amount of makeup. And her dress... Well she wanted to see what Miguel thought of it as she walked out of the bedroom.

Her breath caught as she looked at him as he stood at the window looking o down onto the street. He was casually dressed in a pair of black slacks and white button-down shirt with no tie, and he looked so damn handsome she knew he'd get

more than his share of attention.

He turned and went still as his mouth fell open as she slowly walked over to him.

“Kate...”

“I’ve never worn a red dress before.”

Miguel felt his mouth go dry as he looked closely at Kate and the cherry-red dress she wore. It fit her slim body perfectly, cupping her breasts and fitting over her lovely hips to the middle of her thighs. The thin straps made him want to slide them down her smooth, bare arms but he held himself still.

“It looks wonderful on you. And you look so beautiful...”

She smiled warmly at him, her eyes shining like jewels. “And you look devastatingly-handsome.”

“I’m sorry I didn’t bring a tie.”

“Don’t ever wear one, and don’t ever button your shirts.”

“Oh?”

She stepped closer to him, close enough to where he could smell her sexy floral perfume. “I get really turned on when you unbutton your chef’s coat when you’re done cooking for the night.”

“Hmmm....” He took her hand and brushed a kiss along the backs of her

fingers, and her soft intake of breath at that.

“Come on.” She slipped her hand out of his. “Let’s go eat some overpriced and poorly catered food.”

“Now you sound like a food critic.” He said as they left the flat and went downstairs.

“Most parties in New York have really mediocre food at best, which is sad since there are so many good places to eat and get catering from.”

He made a mental note to himself to fix her something much better when they got back from the party.

They made their way through the city’s terrible traffic to a high-rise building and rode an elevator up to the top. The party was on the rooftop terrace that was landscaped to look tropical but didn’t have the sultry heat like Miami. But the people standing around the food tables immediately came over to Kate with warm smiles and compliments on her dress and most of all, how happy they were to see her at the party.

She introduced him to everyone and they all spoke highly of Kate and how she worked so well with them though mostly through email and online communication. She in turn praised their work and talent and he could see how she would be such a great editor, and why she wanted to be one so badly. She was perfect leader, kind

and generous, yet insightful and inspiring, too.

Kate was right about the food but it didn't matter as she was in her element, and Miguel couldn't be happier for her.

Then she looked up and went, "What the hell?"

He looked over and saw a tall and very thin woman in a bright purple dress walk in with a man in a suit that didn't look like it was fitted as well as it could be, and who also had a slightly-receding hairline.

"Ah, here's the Wicked Witch of New York." One of the staffers said as the rest of them went silent and turned their attention to the food tables and drinks.

"Who's that with her?" A female staffer asked.

"My ex-boyfriend Ben." Kate replied then he took Miguel's hand, "If you'll excuse me everyone, I'd like to introduce Miguel to our esteemed Editor-in-Chief."

Kate had told Miguel about some of her run-ins with Caroline though she hadn't told him about Ben. But her ex-boyfriend was the least of her worries as Caroline tossed back her platinum-blond dyed hair and gave Kate a surprised look.

"Kate, good to see you."

"Caroline. This is Miguel Sandoval, owner and head chef of La Sirena."

"Ah," Caroline held out her hand and gave Miguel a smile that was supposed

to be sultry. “The sexy chef of South Beach.”

“Something I would never say, or write.” Kate put in.

“I know.” Miguel said as he let go of Caroline’s hand. “Kate’s much too good of a writer for such a headline.”

“But she’s not too good to come here dressed like she is.” Her ex-boyfriend said as he leered at Kate.

“She’s with me, and she can dress, and do whatever she chooses to do.” Miguel said as he seriously thought about using his fists against the bastard’s face, something he hadn’t done in a very long time.

“Did you bring Ben here to intimidate me or cower me into submission, Caroline?” Kate felt all her old inhibitions go up in smoke as she faced Caroline head-on for the first time since she’d known her.

“I…” Caroline was clearly surprised by her question.

“Answer my question.” Kate refused to back down now as she felt a huge surge of emotion inside her. She felt Miguel close beside her and had heard the edge in his voice when he’d spoken to Ben.

“Well, you do need to know your place here.” Caroline said, reverting back to her snide way of talking.

“Like hell.” Kate almost spat back at her. “You want me to rewrite my article

on Miguel like it's for a two-bit sleazy tabloid and I won't do that."

"Then you might want to rethink your employment with this magazine."

"You don't have that power over me." Kate said as she saw their boss Grayson Adams walk up to them, and she wondered how much he had heard.

"But I have that power over you, Caroline." Grayson said as he came up to face the four of them. "And since you admitted to intimidation and harassment, your employment with Graystar Publications has been terminated effective immediately. Leave now, both of you. And don't come to the office to get your things. I'll have them sent to you."

Caroline stormed away from them with Ben following meekly at her heels. Grayson could be intimidating as befitting the billionaire he was but right now, Kate didn't feel intimidated by anybody anymore.

"Kate, I'm sorry about that."

She held out her hand to Miguel, "Grayson, this is Miguel Sandoval, owner and head chef of La Sirena. Miguel, this Grayson Adams, publisher and CEO of Greystar Publications."

Both men shook hands then when Grayson looked back at her, she said to him what she'd come here to say.

"I want her job, Grayson. I want to be Editor-in-Chief of 'Wanderlust'. I have the knowledge, the experience, and most of all, the respect of the staff like she

never had.”

“That’s very bold of you.” He said.

“And if I were a man, you wouldn’t be saying that at all.”

His gray eyes widened at that then he said, “My apologies. But if you were Editor-in-Chief, what would you do with the magazine?”

“I’d make it the best damn travel publication in the world. I also want to start a Spanish-language edition, and move the office to Miami. I want to be closer to Latin America and Latinx talent, and I’ve never been happy in New York like I have been in Miami.” Then she followed through on her ambition. “So hire me, or fire me right here and now.”

She didn’t dare look away from him, and he didn’t look away from her.

“Alright. You’re hired, effective immediately.”

“Thank you, Grayson. Now I need to talk to Miguel for a minute before I address my staff.”

He gave her a nod, then he gave Miguel a nod before leaving them alone in the corner of the terrace.

She turned to Miguel but before she could speak, he moved close to her and took her hands in his.

“You were magnificent.” He told her as he brought her hands up and kissed

them.

“I couldn’t have done without you.... Because I want to be with you more than anything I’ve ever wanted in my life.” Then she took a deep breath, and gave voice to the strongest feeling she’d ever felt. “I love you. And I want to make a life with you and be happy.”

He smiled at her, so warm and bright she felt like her heart and soul were soaring now. “And I love you, Kate. And I want to spend the rest of my life with you, too.”

She threw her arms around his neck and he swung her off her feet, spinning her around as she threw back her head and laughed in happiness.

Then he set her on her feet and said to her as he began to lower his mouth to hers, “And I’ll always be your sexy chef.”

THE END