

“Please let him be alone,” Lena whispered, leaning her forehead against the heavy door. “Please, please let him be alone!”

She whispered the chant into the air, her eyes closed and hands clenching tightly around the leather notebook she carried with her at all times. The subtle energy in the air reminded her that she wasn't alone. Too late, she remembered the bodyguards which always stood sentry right outside of this door. Since she was also outside the door, the guards were amused witnesses to her desperate pleas. Lena's eyes suddenly popped open and she found herself staring into the assuredly amused eyes of not one, not two, but three big, tall, burly body guards. Quickly, she jerked away from the door, glaring at the men, silently telling them that they'd better not laugh.

Darn it! They were always so silent! It was sometimes hard to remember their presence.

Well, to be perfectly honest, it was hard to remember anything when she was facing the task ahead of her. She might love her job as personal assistant to Sheik Droon El-Hashim, but there were aspects of it that she hated. Waking him up, with the possibility of another woman in his bed, was at the top of the list.

With another glance at the still-silent but obviously amused guards, she knew that this had to be done.

Darn it! What she wouldn't give to be anywhere but here at this particular moment.

“Right,” she sighed, leaning her head against the heavy wood to hide her embarrassment at being caught talking to herself. Pushing away from the door, she straightened her shoulders, took another deep, bracing breath, then spun around and pushed her way into the room, pretending like nothing had happened. This was just another ordinary meeting and she wasn't entering the most gorgeous man's bedroom where he was most likely naked. And most likely with a naked, beautiful female.

Thankfully, the suite was large enough that she could sneak inside the darkened interior a few more steps without being noticed, but still make sure that the man in question wasn't with a...companion.

From her position in the middle of the elegant living room floor, she peered around the bedroom doorway, trying to see if the man was alone or if there were two shapes underneath the silk sheets. She sighed with relief when she saw only one person in the bed and counted herself lucky once again. She'd had to wake him several times the first few months she'd worked here. Thankfully, the past few occasions, he'd been alone.

Straightening again, using her professionalism like a shield, she stepped into the bedroom and knocked on the wall to her right side, not daring to walk fully into the room. “Your Highness,” she called out to him softly.

Nothing.

Clearing her throat, she took several more steps closer to the bed and the sleeping man. “Excuse me, Your Highness, but the Minister of Defense needs to speak to you urgently.”

Still nothing. Not even a twitch.

She took several steps closer and gasped when she saw the man himself. He was laying on his stomach with the silk sheets covering just the bottom half of his body. But the upper half was....incredible! Muscles along his back and shoulders created dimples and lines on the broad expanse of his back and his arms, which were splayed out on the mattress, bulging with muscles on the biceps and forearms. There wasn't a place on the man's body that wasn't covered in hard, fascinating muscle and Lina's mouth went dry as she contemplated all those muscles revealed in glorious detail for her visual absorption.

It wasn't like she'd never seen a man without a shirt on. She'd even seen this particular man before. But every time she saw Droon, she was still shocked by all those hard, amazing muscles. No man could ever compare to Droon El-Hashim, Sheik of Gibain. It wasn't enough that the man was leader of one of the wealthiest oil producing countries in the world. Why did he have to be stunningly gorgeous, tall and...damn it...he was even nice and charming! Okay, so he could be harsh when the circumstances warranted it, but in the twelve months she'd been working for the man, she'd never seen him be unfair about any issue that came across his desk. He worked long, difficult hours running the country, physically he trained harder than his military generals and bodyguards to set the standard for what he expected of his military personnel and when the night fell, he could charm diplomats and dictators alike.

It had been a difficult path for him as well. She admired that he had been born into his role, but hadn't grown up in the palace. She only knew the rumors, but Lina had heard that this magnificent man had grown up in Montana, running away from his life and his family at a very early age. He'd survived, he'd thrived and he'd come back to fix his country. He wasn't just an incredibly gorgeous man, he was a leader who had earned his right to rule. The people of Gibain loved him and he'd brought the economy of this country back from financial ruin and poverty to a thriving economy that was now a powerhouse in the world.

It was one of the reasons she'd been so keen to take this position. She wanted to learn from the best. She'd finished college and applied to be the man's personal assistant, not believing she could ever qualify for such an exalted position. Applying had been a fluke, a sort of joke as her dream job while she applied for other, more practical and achievable roles within the American government. Why he'd chosen her, over all the other people that had applied, others who were obviously more experienced and better trained, she had no idea. The interview process had been brutal but when she'd received the job offer, she hadn't been able to believe her good fortune.

Now, standing several feet away from the enormous bed of one of the most powerful men in the world, she was shivering with fear and....she couldn't deny it....desire.

Her eyes looked at the bed one more time and she braced herself.

Couldn't he wear pajamas to bed? Good grief, the man was naked! How was she supposed to wake him up? She had no clue how to wake up men, never having needed to do it until she took this job. Thankfully, she hadn't had to do it very often. The first few months had been horrible because there would always be a woman in his bed with him, also naked. The hurt and

jealousy that had hit her during those times had been painful, but in the last six months, Droon hadn't really been seeing women very much. He'd been painfully busy with all of the new infrastructure projects starting all over the country. And he wanted to inspect them all, ensuring that they were being carried out properly.

She bit her lip and stared down at the man in question. She had to hurry because she knew that the Minister of Defense truly needed to talk to Droon and the problem wasn't a small issue. The minister needed guidance about a critical issue and she'd been assigned the task of waking the man. Lina wasn't sure what that issue was, but she also knew that the minister wasn't one of those frantic people who worried about everything. If the man was concerned, there was a big problem. If the minister wanted Lina to wake up Droon, it was really bad.

"Your Highness, please wake up," she begged, taking another step closer. "You're needed urgently," she said, her voice rising from a whisper to a more vocal tone.

She watched in hopeful fascination as he moved but then settled back to sleep, pulling his pillow closer.

More noise was needed. Stepping closer to the bed, she knocked carefully on his bedside table, but again, nothing happened.

Dire circumstances called for dire action, she told herself. She stepped closer to the bed again and reached out, her finger poking him on the shoulder. She gasped when her finger touched his bare skin, surprised at how hot he felt. "Are you okay, Your Highness?" she asked, stepping backwards quickly when he rolled again.

He slowly opened his eyes and Lina thought she was finally going to be able to escape.

Unfortunately, she hadn't stepped back far enough. One long, muscular arm reached out and circled her wrist like a manacle, pulling her closer to the bed. Lina gripped her leather portfolio with her free hand, gasping with surprise as Droon pulled her even closer. She was almost bending down over him when the most shocking thing happened. "Come here," he growled and a fraction of a second later, he was kissing her.

But this kiss wasn't anything like what she'd experienced on her dates in the past. Those had merely been a tender caress. This was...a possession. Droon's mouth covered hers, absorbing her gasp of horror as his other arm wrapped around her waist and pulled her into that huge, amazingly comfortable bed.

Of course, she wasn't very comfortable with him kissing her like this. In fact, she was feeling decidedly uncomfortable. A powerful spiral of desire circled up from her stomach, infiltrating every cell in her body. Without conscious direction, her hands dropped her leather portfolio so she could wrap her arms around his neck, her fingers diving into that soft, black hair, enjoying the way it curled around her fingers. Almost like the way her body curled around his hard body. And it was hard! Everywhere! She couldn't believe how shockingly erotic it felt to have this man's body against hers, feeling so hard against her softness like this. It wasn't enough

that his arm was pulling her closer. Her legs shifted, wanting to feel that...that part of him...down there!

But then she couldn't think about that part of him any longer because his rough, gentle hand moved up her waist, underneath her suit jacket and silk blouse to cup her breast, his thumb expertly seeking and finding her already pebbled nipple and flicking it, causing her to cry out, the sound captured by his mouth as he deepened the kiss.

"Your Highness!" she gasped out loud, grabbing his wrist to stop him but his thumb once again flicked her nipple and her head fell back against the soft pillow, her grip lost strength. When his mouth found her neck, she wasn't sure what to do, or even if she wanted to stop him.

That thought stiffened her body and she scrambled away from the man, her eyes wide, not with the fear of what he was doing, but because she didn't want him to stop!

"Your Highness," she cried out when he reached out for her again and she moved even further away on his bed.

"Call me Droon," he growled, about to reach for her again.

The command, paired with his first name, snapped her senses back to the present and she struggled to remember why she was here. When the reason came back to her, he was already reaching for her, his intent obvious in his dark eyes.

"Minister Sufayed needs you!" she cried out, tucking her now-bare feet underneath her as she held her hands up, palms out, in an effort to hold him off. "I'm not who you think I am!" she gasped when his eyes narrowed. His arms loosened with those words and she almost cried out with her relief. Lina wasn't sure how much more she could have taken from this man before she'd given in.

She scrambled to the other side of the bed as quickly as she could, re-buttoning her silk blouse and her suit jacket and clearing her throat. She had to blink several times before she could focus enough through the desire that was still hot and almost painful in her belly.

"I'm sorry, Your Highness. I shouldn't have woken you in that manner." She pushed her hair back, smoothing the loose strands behind her ears. "That was completely my fault. I..." she looked around, found her leather binder on the floor and stepped closer carefully to pick it up. She found her shoes and was grateful for the darkness so the man shifting in the bed couldn't see her cheeks flame up with color.

With a sigh of resignation, Droon leaned back against the pillows, frustration eating at him as the black haired beauty pulled back once again. Always business, Lina hid her desires behind a façade of professionalism and he was sick of it. His body was throbbing, needing to continue making love to the woman who obviously felt exactly the same way he felt.

She was such a delicate, vibrant woman, he thought. And he just couldn't hurt her, couldn't push her. Not if their mutual desire for each other still made her nervous.

“What’s going on with Minister Sufayed?” Droon asked, looking at the black haired beauty with irritation. He wished she’d just come right back here and let him finish what they’d started. He rubbed a hand over his face, trying to get control of himself again. She was off-limits, he knew but that didn’t stop the ache in his body, the need to ignore her exclamations and convince her to come back to his bed. Damn, he’d wanted her for so long! And she’d been so close, so warm and soft and willing! But now she was all stiffness and protocol once again.

She looked at the picture across the room, the elaborate light fixture or even the drapes that were closed, blocking out the watery light as the morning sun started to rise over the horizon. She kept her eyes anywhere but on the man. “I’m sorry, Your Highness. I didn’t get the details. I simply hurried here to wake you so the minister could explain the situation. He seemed quite upset about whatever issue he needed to discuss with you.”

Droon realized that he wasn’t going to get what he wanted this morning. Work, he thought with irritation. She was always about the work. “Fine,” he said and flung the sheet off of himself. He had to chuckle when she spun around but not before he caught the fire that bloomed in her pale cheeks. “I’ll shower. Tell the minister I’ll be with him in a few minutes.”

“Yes, Your Highness,” Lina said and almost ran out of the bedroom, closing the doors behind her in the process.

She stepped out of the bedroom and pressed her lips together, trying to get the taste of him out of her mind. Her hands were shaking too badly and her knees could barely hold her up. But she forced her feet to carry her across the rest of the suite. She had to get out of here. Fast! The man was already in the shower and he would be exiting that bathroom any moment.

As soon as the doors to the man’s suite were firmly closed, she leaned against them for support, her head falling back to thud against the thick wood. She dropped her pen as she leaned against the doors, trying to get herself back under control. At the moment, she couldn’t even bend down to pick up her pen, needing the support of the door or she’d fall on her face.

Covering her face with her free hand, Lina gave herself a pep talk, forcing her mind to put the man’s drugging kiss out of her mind. “It didn’t happen,” she whispered to herself with her eyes closed. “Nothing happened, everything is completely normal.” She took several deep breaths, forcing a calm to come over herself.

A very slight sound to her right caught her attention and she froze one more time, her heart stopping for a fraction of a second and she quickly slapped a hand over her mouth. Glancing to the right and left, she groaned as she saw the two bulky men looking down at her as if she’d done something crazy.

Which, of course, she had and was.

And then things got worse! The doors opened behind her and she started to tumble backwards, her notebook fell out of her hands and she grabbed onto air, not very efficiently though.

She wasn't sure if she was thankful when two strong hands caught her bottom to steady her, or if she would have preferred that Droon just let her fall. Either way, the indignity of the moment caused her face to flame up into high color. Again!

"Your Highness!" she gasped and spun around, trying desperately to grab onto any vestige of dignity that could be salvaged after her latest debacle while regaining her balance. "I'm sorry."

"What's going on?" he asked in that deep, sexy voice that never failed to cause her stomach to tighten with anticipation. She no longer needed to do crunches during her exercise routine because of this man's voice.

"Nothing!" she said quickly and grabbed her notebook and pen that were still on the floor. It took her several tries, but she finally got hold of both and pressed them against her chest, standing up and trying to fix her appearance one more time. She had no idea if she looked professional any longer. She'd left her apartment this morning feeling confident and professional, but after the last half hour, her standards were much lower. Her goal at the moment was to not look like a flustered idiot.

Droon smiled down into her soft, blue eyes, amused and curious about this woman and the frazzled look about her. "If nothing is going on, why were you leaning against my door?"

She bowed her head even while she was shaking it. "I didn't think you would be coming out so quickly."

Droon could tell that was only part of the story and he looked to his bodyguards for more information.

Lina instantly knew what was going to be revealed and she sprinted forward, reaching up on her tip toes to cover the first man's mouth with her hand. "Not a word and I'll make you banana bread!" she bribed right in front of their boss. She didn't care at this point. She was already humiliated, it was just a matter of how much humiliation she'd have to endure. And if one of Droon's bodyguards told him what she'd been whispering after leaving his room, it would be complete. If Droon was ever told what she'd been muttering or how flustered she'd been several moments ago, she'd just have to hide under a rock somewhere until the universe stopped being so cruel.

The bodyguard's eyebrows went up but she could feel his smile and her eyes narrowed. He reached up and lifted her hand away. "Put icing on it," he commanded.

Lina instantly agreed, unconcerned about the blackmail if it kept her secret from her boss. "Fine." With that, she turned around, tugged her jacket back in place, pushed her hair back behind her ears and nodded as if that were the end of the conversation. When she felt adequately pulled together, she lifted her gaze up to Droon's dark eyes, her chin jutting out as if the world was back in order once again. "Okay. Are we ready to go chit-chat with the minister?" she asked Droon.

Droon stood there watching the whole interaction and was fascinated. “So you’re going to bake banana bread as a bribe so that Yusef won’t tell me what you were doing leaning against my door.”

Lina blinked, the only indication that she was even slightly off-kilter. “Never happened,” she said with an overly bright smile and waved her hand so that Droon could precede her down the long, elegant hallway. “The minister said it was urgent, Your Highness.”