

# The Russian's Furious Fiancée

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## *Chapter 1*

“We have the most eligible candidates ready for your review, sir,” Joan Bezzel said to the tall, handsome man striding into the luxurious office. She sat up straighter, letting the hem of her skirt ride up just a little bit higher as the gorgeous man glanced in her direction. If she were twenty years younger, she might have put herself into the list of candidates, she thought. Of all the clients who had sought out her services, this one was definitely the dishiest.

Well, maybe not, she corrected as the man sat down across from her. She might want a man who had a few more emotions. Damon Kelopatos was tall, handsome and sinfully wealthy, but he was one of the coldest men she’d ever met. His Russian heritage was definitely apparent in his directness and cold, emotionless determination. He was going about this whole business with a bit too much logic, in her opinion. And she’d seen a lot! Most of her clients wanted to at least meet the eligible women before making a decision on which candidate would be their wife. Mr. Kelopatos was coolly logical, coldly calculating and hadn’t met a single candidate. And this was their final meeting.

“What do you have for me?” Damon Kelopatos barely glanced at the team sitting at the polished conference room table. This was a business meeting and he didn’t have time for niceties. As far as he was concerned, he was paying Ms. Bezzel a large fee in order to find him the perfect wife and he wanted the business concluded as soon as possible so he could move on to his next acquisition.

Joan efficiently pushed the files forward, head shots of each candidate pinned on top of each folder since appearance was always what people noticed first. And most candidates were eliminated on that aspect as well so she had learned over the years to just get that out of the way first. “We have five candidates for your inspection. All of them have been researched by my team and all are single, with no significant prior relationships or children from other relationships, all have impeccable backgrounds and have been raised in families that understand your business needs.”

Damon nodded, laying out the five files so that he could view the pictures together. Joan had done an excellent job of sticking to his personal preferences he noted. All were physically acceptable candidates with well styled hair and good skin. He quickly read through their education and current employment positions. “Not this one,” he said,

dismissing one woman with a medical degree, "and not this one," he replied, pushing away another who was a certified public accountant. "I want a woman who is going to help me with my career, Joan. These two will be more focused on their careers than mine."

Joan quickly tucked the two files away into her briefcase, then calmly settled her hands back in her lap, waiting for other comments. While he surveyed the files, she took a moment to examine the great, forbidding man himself. He certainly was handsome with his black hair cut very short and that dark shadow already forming on his strong jaw. She wondered how much of his terrifying reputation was due to his height which she guessed was around six feet, four inches, maybe even closer to six-five. The man looked down at everyone! Not to mention his yummy physique. She'd seen him still in his exercise clothes one day when she'd come to his house for an early morning meeting and this man was drool worthy with thick muscles everywhere on his tall frame.

His eyes were probably his most interesting characteristic. Well, besides his obscenely large bank balance, she thought with secret relish. Those eyes were almost golden but deeper. Not quite brown, but she couldn't really come up with an accurate description. Amber perhaps? Not really. They seemed to change depending on his mood. When he'd first walked in, she would have sworn that his eyes were golden but as he looked at the picture of Ms. Fontini, those remarkable eyes seemed to darken to that odd, indefinable color. Fascinating!

Damon took the next three files and read through the biographies but his eyes kept straying to one picture. It wasn't that this one was more beautiful, he thought, although she was definitely lovely. There was just something that repeatedly drew his eye. She was exquisite with long, brown hair that was cut into layers that framed her face then her shoulders. In the picture, her grey eyes were laughing at something outside of the picture frame, but her smile struck something inside of him. Her smile made him want to grin, something he rarely did. It was good that she was Greek, living right here in Athens where a great deal of his current business was headquartered. That would make things more convenient he thought.

"This one," he said and tossed the file of the grey eyed woman into the middle of the table. "You'll arrange it?" he asked as he stood up, but it wasn't really a question since he was sure the woman he had hired to find him an acceptable wife would follow

his instructions regardless if they were presented as a question. She understood the implied command.

By the time he reached his next meeting, the thought of his upcoming nuptials was already out of his mind. Although he was perfectly agreeable to pay for the wedding, he expected his soon to be fiancée to plan the event without his involvement. He would introduce her to his extremely efficient secretary with instructions to work the date of ceremony in between his already scheduled business meetings.

As he sat down and opened the report on his next discussion, it occurred to him that he probably should have gotten the name of the woman he was going to marry.

Regardless, he had confidence that Joan would deliver a copy of the entire file to his secretary so that he could review the details at a more convenient time.

## *Chapter 2*

Eva Fontini slipped into the satin dress, zipping up the side, then efficiently pulled her hair into an elegant twist at the back of her head, smoothing out the stray curls that defied her fingers. The sapphire blue dress skimmed along her figure, not being too obvious but giving a hint of what might be beneath.

She put on a bit of lipstick, a touch of mascara and then, just because she'd had a busy week, she dabbed some concealer under her eyes to hide the dark circles.

She glanced at her watch and sighed. "Only three hours," she told herself. In three hours, she'd be free to escape her parents' party and she could be alone once again. Alone to work on her novel in peace and solitude. And secrecy. She also had some lesson plans to develop, her apartment to clean and several loads of laundry to wash. A party tonight was really the last place she wanted to be, but her parents had requested her presence here tonight so she'd come. Hopefully the evening wouldn't be too terrible.

As she heard the doorbell ring, indicating the first guests were starting to arrive, she quickly went down the stairs, stepping into place beside her parents just as the servant opened the heavy front door. In another twenty minutes, the dinner party was in full swing with only one person missing. Eva looked around, wondering why she needed to be here tonight. This wasn't normally her type of party, and her parents had long since stopped requesting her presence at these functions.

Her father had been firm about her attending though, so she'd acquiesced and donned her party shoes. Shoes that were already hurting her feet and she was wishing she could slip on her sneakers before heading to her own apartment tonight.

"Thank you so much for coming," she replied after her mother's greeting, feeling like her face was going to crack from the pressure of her false smile.

"Why am I here, Mother?" she asked during a relatively calm moment between arriving guests.

Her mother looked at her, blinking in confusion. "Why wouldn't you be here, dear?" she asked as if that were the silliest question ever asked.

As the arriving guests dwindled, Eva was free to move about the room. She smiled and greeted each of the guests as she passed, but she wasn't really interested in talking with any of them. They were friends of her parents and she didn't feel as if she had anything in common with them.

"You look lovely," her mother said as she walked through the living room, patting Eva's shoulder. "Why don't you have a drink?"

Eva glanced down at her glass filled with seltzer water and lime. "I already have a drink," she said, biting her tongue with impatience. Her mother lived in a different world. One that alternated between valium and alcohol with intermittent cups of coffee to remain awake. That was not a state in which Eva wanted to exist. As she glanced at her mother's eyes, she noted the slightly glazed look and knew that her mother had already taken something to ease the tension of the evening. Something in addition to the glass of wine in her hands that was now half empty.

"Nonsense dear. A glass of seltzer water isn't a drink, it's a waste of a glass," she argued, waving her hand in the air as if to dismiss seltzer water as superfluous. "Go get a glass of wine at least," she said, but didn't wait for a response before moving off to greet another group of guests with a gregarious, alcohol or valium induced smile.

Eva shook her head at her mother's chemical dependence and turned away, heading in the opposite direction of the bartender who was mixing drinks in one corner of the formal living room. She'd tried to pull her mother away from that method of coping, even going so far as to ask her father for help, but to no avail. Until her mother wanted out of that kind of cycle, there was nothing Eva could do. Except avoid that same fate herself, she thought with determination. Being the wife of a wealthy man wasn't all it was cracked up to be. It came with a great deal of stress and problems. The competition was fierce among her mother's peers to be the best hostess, have the most acclaimed house and the highest earning husband. It was a superficial existence. Eva wanted more substance to her life.

She took a seat on one of the ivory brocade sofas and smiled politely to the group around her. She was grateful when they accepted her into their conversation, but discussing the latest art craze wasn't the most exciting topic.

Trying to look as if she were enjoying the conversation, she smiled politely towards the speaker, but inside, she was completely unaware of what the person was saying. In

her mind, she was working out the details of her latest scene in the book she was writing, trying to figure out where she was going to put the next clue or if the murderer was going to escape.

Damon entered the living room and glanced around, his eyes taking it all in with a swift look. The house was acceptable, indicating that Joan's firm had done their research accurately. This family was wealthy without being ostentatious. Old money, he thought. Good. His own investigation was accurate as well and he found himself congratulating himself on another step towards his ultimate goal. He hadn't relied simply on Joan's firm. Never accept only one point of reference, he'd learned over the years.

He didn't engage with the other guests immediately, wanting to hold back and understand the party's dynamics. He also wanted to observe the one woman he was interested in, the only reason he was attending this dinner party tonight.

He spotted his quarry across the room and stood back, observing her carefully. She was very attentive, sitting up straight with a lovely profile. She was slender without being too thin which was also good. He didn't want a wife with an eating disorder, but nor did he want one who took no pride in her appearance.

His noticed with admiration that his future wife smiled in what seemed like the correct places of the conversation and encouraged others to talk instead of dominating the discussion. He liked that and respected her social skills. His needed a woman who would be a social asset and she would have to understand how to make other people feel important and welcome.

With a nod of approval, he moved off to find the woman's father, ready to be introduced to his future wife.

"Good evening, George," Damon said to the tall, refined looking gentleman standing in a group of other men sipping scotch.

George turned and looked pleased to see Damon standing beside him. "Good evening," the older man replied with deference. "It's certainly a pleasure that you could join us for dinner tonight," he said and turned to make introductions to the others in the group. Damon knew most of them, having done business with them at one time or another. Several of them gave him veiled angry looks which he ignored. They

hadn't been as vigilant about their business assets and he'd taken advantage of that weakness. He couldn't fault them for being upset about it but he wasn't going to lose any sleep over the issue either. Besides, none would dare become blatant about their animosity, at least in his presence. The repercussions of disrespecting Damon Kelopatos meant complete financial and social destruction to anyone who openly defied or disrespected him and they all knew it.

George looked at the taller man by his side and immediately waved to a passing waiter. "Let me get you a drink, and then I'll introduce you to my daughter. I believe she's around here somewhere."

Eva smiled politely, wondering how many times a person could discuss the weather at a party without doing something odd, like breaking out in a crazy singing stunt or jumping from sofa to chair and seeing how many heads she could turn. Eva almost laughed out loud at that last thought, knowing she'd never do anything so insane, but it kept the smile on her face.

She was on her fourth weather conversation and yes, the weather was abnormally warm for this time of the year and no, rain wasn't expected this week, and so on and so on. She reached for her glass of seltzer water and took a long sip, relishing the cold as it slid down her throat. The bubbles at least gave her mind something to focus on, something that was more stimulating than the conversation.

She was circumspectly glancing around when she saw her father out of the corner of her eye. He had broken away from the group of men he'd been talking with a moment ago and was now slowly approaching their group and pulling along a tall, intimidating man beside him. As circumspectly as possible, she watched the other man carefully, wondering who he was. He was extremely tall with broad, muscular shoulders but not like a bull dog. He was more lithe than bulky. Sensuous. Dangerous!

As he moved, his tuxedo jacket slid open slightly and she could see that he had a flat stomach and very long legs. He was at least a head taller than most of the people in the room so he was easy to watch. His eyes were dark, formidable almost and his strong, square jaw had a slight five o'clock shadow, even though she suspected he'd just shaved prior to arriving at the party.

His tuxedo fit him perfectly, she thought, but what did she care about something like that? She knew how easily a well designed dress could hide many flaws, she

thought as she unconsciously ran a hand down her left hip. She'd always wanted to lose those last ten pounds but they stubbornly kept to her like glue on a school kid's fingers.

When her father continued to approach, Eva became nervous. The almost possessive look in the man's eyes made her very wary and her heart started pounding. She looked away, trying to concentrate on the conversation around her but her eyes strayed once again to the taller man, surprised to find that they'd made so much progress crossing the room.

For some reason she couldn't understand, she didn't want to meet this man. He was still halfway across the room and already her heart was pounding and her palms felt damp. How juvenile, she thought with exasperation at her own body's reaction to a man who was still too far away to be a threat in any kind of way.

Regardless, she didn't like the look about him, and she could tell that her father was bringing him over to introduce to her. She had to escape, considering that action an urgent mission she suddenly had to make happen.

Someone in another cluster of guests put a hand on her father's arm, slowing him down slightly. When her father looked away, she smiled to the rest of the group around her and patted the elderly woman's arm next to her. "Excuse me. I think my mother needs me." She gracefully stood up and quickly moved in the opposite direction, not bothering to glance back towards her father just in case that man was still watching her.

She efficiently worked her way around the perimeter of the room, smiling and waving to her parents' friends and guests, weaving in and out of groups but making sure to look like she was on a mission, which deterred people from stopping her. She made it all the way into the kitchen and was grateful for the reprieve, feeling trapped and frightened simply because her father wanted to introduce her to another man. He did this all the time so what was different about this one man? Okay, so he was much more handsome than the others, and definitely taller, more muscular. But that only indicated that he was probably gay, which should have relieved her mind.

But she knew he wasn't. The man with the intent gaze and amusement lurking on his firm lips was definitely heterosexual. There was too much male interest in his gaze for her to dismiss the man as innocuous. He was dangerous and she was determined to avoid him for the rest of the evening.

Standing by the kitchen door and out of the way of the catering staff, she fanned herself for a few moments and let the sounds from the waiters and waitresses create a bubble around her while she calmed her shaking hands. This was ridiculous, she told herself. The guy was probably married, and her father just was being polite by trying to provide an introduction.

But her father wouldn't have gone to so much effort to introduce her to a married man. Her father was quite determined to get her married off as soon as he could, frustrated that his single daughter had thwarted all his efforts to rectify this situation prior to now. He wanted her married and stated the intention often enough that Eva knew when the diatribe was coming. Preferably to a nice, reliable Greek man who would help him in business. Eva's father was old fashioned, believing in arranged marriages and mutually beneficial relationships.

Ugh! Why couldn't she get that man's heated gaze out of her mind? The look he gave her that last time had really shaken her. It was what those silly romance novels would describe as "bedroom" eyes. Or knowing, powerful eyes. Eyes that took possession of anything they wanted.

"There you are!" her mother said as she passed through from the opposite door. "Why are you hiding here in the kitchen? We're about to sit down to dinner and your father has been looking for you for the past ten minutes. He wants to introduce you to someone. Come along, dear," her mother said and looped her arm through Eva's, pretending to be the ultimate, loving mother who had a fabulous, close relationship with her daughter. In reality, her mother only needed Eva's arm to hold her up and walk straight. Her mother wasn't just tipsy, she was flat out drunk, she realized.

Thankfully, only Eva noticed. And probably her father who tossed out his obligatory disapproving look and then completely ignored his wife for the remainder of the evening. At least her mother knew how to hide her inebriation well enough.

Maybe the start of dinner was a good thing, Eva thought. It would get some food into her mother and dilute some of the alcohol, slow down the inebriation process.

Eva walked her mother to the dining room where the guests were already taking their seats. She escorted her mother to the end of the table, then noted she was seated midway down among the guests.

Thankfully, that arrogant man she'd been trying to avoid was on the end nearest her father, so Eva was saved from needing to be polite to him during the meal. As the other guests moved into the dining room, she was careful to glance only at those who would be near her during the meal, meticulously keeping her gaze away from "him".

When everyone was finally settled, the wait staff came through with the first course and Eva relaxed, sipping her wine and smiling through the conversations. She'd learned early on in life that one really only needed to ask a few pointed questions to dinner guests and they would fill in the silence. The best question to ask was, "How are your children doing?" and that would fill in the next thirty minutes while the person regaled the people closest about their children's foibles or accomplishments.

Damon surreptitiously watched Eva from his end of the table, impressed once again with her social skills while his target worked the people around her. She encouraged them to talk and had most of them laughing although he couldn't hear what they were saying since he was farther away.

He turned to the people next to him and asked the elderly woman to his right how her grandchildren were doing in school. While the white haired woman talked about her youngest grandchild's attempts to learn to walk, Damon glanced down the table, considering how long it would take before the lovely woman could organize the wedding. Just watching her, even from a distance, had his body stirring and he knew that he was going to enjoy their wedding night. He acknowledged that he'd made a good choice with this one and made a mental note to thank Joan for a job well done. There were many things about Eva that he already appreciated, including her delightful profile and her lush figure encased in that sapphire gown.

Eva wasn't stick skinny but was curvaceous in all the right places, a preference he hadn't realized he wanted until now. He'd watched Eva sneak away earlier and had appreciated the glimpse of her sumptuous hips and long legs, emphasized by the blue dress she was wearing which was both elegant and conservative, a style which he heartily approved. If anyone was going to see his wife, he wanted it to be himself. He definitely didn't want a wife who displayed her charms for strangers to ogle.

It was good that he was attracted to his fiancée although he knew it wasn't a prerequisite. He wanted several children so he was relieved that he wouldn't abhor climbing into bed to procreate with his wife. He hadn't anticipated giving up his

mistresses, but with Eva, he would at least be interested in his wife for a while before finding his next mistress.