

## PROLOGUE

Damian Trent was just as hot as he was daring, and as Layla Reece watched him that night, she slowly became interested in the man behind the mysterious, silver gaze. Lost in thought, she was interrupted by her best friend who handed her a drink.

"He *is* gorgeous," Cristina Cruz said, the renowned romance author and wife to Sunset Reads' CEO, William Jameson. They had recently married and were currently expecting their first child. They were probably one of the happiest and most in love couples Layla had ever seen. She could only hope she'd someday have what they did.

"Yes, I suppose he is," Layla replied, intending to seem uninterested, but not succeeding in the least bit.

Cristina eyed her friend closely. "You should go talk to him."

Layla shook her head, stealing a glance at Damian as he leaned against the wall and spoke to William. "No, he's probably not interested anyway."

Cristina looked over at him and her eyebrows shot up. She gently nudged Layla and said to her friend, "I doubt that very much." She smiled and then walked away just as Damian Trent headed towards them.

Layla took a long sip of wine and watched him carefully over the rim of the glass as he crossed the room. He was tall and imposing. He moved like a swift panther, taking long strides that brought emphasis to the strong muscles in his thighs.

"So, you are Layla Reece?" His voice dripped of sensuality, evoking sinful thoughts of naked bodies tangling beneath cool sheets.

She nodded slowly, cautious of the man in front of her. "And you must be Damian Trent."

He smiled, the gesture wrinkling the corner of his eyes, making him seem all the more rugged. His intense gaze caused a shiver to run through Layla.

"I've been wanting to come over and talk to you for quite some time. Well, ever since I saw you looking at me earlier." A smile played on his lips.

Layla's eyebrows shot up at his comment, "I didn't realize I was making you feel uncomfortable... nor that I was being so obvious." She muttered the last part.

Damian's eyes darkened, turning a steely gray. "So you admit you were looking?"

"Well if you saw me, then there doesn't seem to be a point in denying it." She shrugged, holding his gaze for a moment.

Damian searched her face, intrigued by her delicate features and her boldness. At that moment he decided to take a chance. "Do you want to get out of here?"

She furrowed her eyebrows, giving him a questioning look.

Damian leaned in, keeping his voice low. "I just want to talk. I promise. But if we don't disappear soon I fear we will unfortunately continue to be the center of attention." He gestured to the room and as Layla looked around, sure enough, they had an audience. He turned back to her. "Meet me outside in ten?" he asked.

Layla licked her lips nervously and nodded slowly.

"Okay," she whispered.

Ten minutes later, and after evading her friends and saying hurried goodbyes, she managed to escape. Then she found herself seated in a black, Dodge Charger heading God knows where with a man she barely knew.

*What is it about this man that draws me to him?*

"You keep staring," he stated, his eyes glued to the road.

Layla realized she was angled toward him in her seat, and forced herself to face forward. "Sorry. I don't normally do things like this." She bit her lower lip and turned to look out the window.

*I'm not sure what the hell's gotten over me,* she wondered as they drove.

His lips curved into a slight smile. "I figured as much."

He pulled over on the side of the road and parked the car. Layla spotted a small restaurant on the corner, and through the windows she could tell it was almost empty. Damian opened the door, and helped her out of the car. His hand was warm as it engulfed hers. He placed his other hand on the small of her back guiding her inside. His touch was light yet brought shivers down her spine. The intimacy of the small gesture surprised her.

They took a seat in a back booth where there was some semblance of privacy, and he slid in across from her.

He leaned in. The closeness of his silver gaze causing her to fidget.

"You're cheeks are flushed," he whispered, trailing a fingertip down her face. He didn't understand why, but he wanted to touch her.

His touch kept Layla frozen in her seat, as very erotic images of what she suddenly wanted him to do to her body flashed through her mind. She quickly pulled back and called for the waiter, trying to put some distance between them before things went in a different direction entirely.

They both ordered a drink and sat back, carefully studying each other.

Damian had wanted to talk to the beautiful, green-eyed vixen from the first moment he saw her at William's place. Her features were soft, with high cheek bones and full lips. She has a perfect sun kissed glow, and her skin seemed so soft that he immediately wanted to trail his hands down every curve of her body, just to satisfy his curiosity. She

was tall and reached his chin when she stood next to him, but he liked her height, mostly because she had the longest, shapeliest legs he'd ever laid eyes on.

When he'd decided to approach her, he knew she wasn't going to be a woman who'd be easily persuaded. Her direct approach showed openness and an innocence that captivated him. He suddenly wanted to be alone with her, to actually get to know her. The only problem with all this was that the more he talked to her, the more he wanted to delve into dangerous territory. Territory he knew was impossible for him to enter into.

Layla smiled. "I suppose you can't talk about your job since it might be *top secret*," she teased, trying to break the ice.

He smirked. "You're not entirely wrong."

"So what can you tell me about yourself, *Agent Trent*?" Her green eyes held his in anticipation.

He smiled wickedly and leaned in, bringing his face only inches away from hers. "What do you want to know, *Miss Reece*?"

Layla stared at those full, sensual lips, warmth spreading through her.

"Everything," she replied breathlessly, her eyes widening when she realized she had spoken aloud.

He stared back at her parted lips while she spoke, and fought the urge to close the distance between them. After a brief moment, he smiled and leaned back. "I *can* tell you that I'm an only child. I can also tell you I grew up here in New York. In Brooklyn. Joined the military at eighteen."

"How did you get recruited into the FBI?"

"I was a translator in the Special Ops unit. I graduated with two majors--"

"Two majors! Wow!" Her eyes showed genuine admiration.

"Don't seem so surprised..." he teased.

"Oh...no...it's just that, well you don't really seem like..." she trailed off, not sure how to continue.

"Like a book worm?" He smiled.

"Well. Yes." She played with her napkin nervously, her nerves catching up to her.

"And how do I seem, *Miss Reece*?"

Layla was briefly stumped by the question, but then pursed her lips in contemplation, mischief shining in her eyes.

"Rough around the edges," she paused, taking in his demeanor, "definitely reserved..." Her eyes traveled along his strong jawline, making her way across his broad shoulders, and pausing slightly on the muscles of his chest before she brought her eyes back up to meet his. "Powerful," she whispered.

He leaned in again. "Is that all?"

She smiled, a glint of amusement in her eyes. "Very Intelligent," she finished, and took a sip of her drink, taking a quick glance at him beneath lowered lashes.

He stared at those green eyes. "You're very observant, Miss Reece, and surprisingly rather bold."

She smiled. "So I've been told."

His eyes narrowed dangerously. "Have you also been told that you are very sexy, and that just by a glance from those emerald eyes you can make a man think deliciously, dark thoughts?" His voice was low and seductive.

A deeper flush crawled up Layla's cheeks, and she could literally feel herself growing hot. She quickly finished off her drink, and as much as she wanted to dive deeper into more dangerous conversation with Damian Trent, she also knew it would be all the more thrilling the next time they met.

"I should head back home," she said, standing up.

Damian placed a hand over hers, his touch stopping her short. "I didn't mean to make you feel uncomfortable."

She smiled down at him. "The problem is, Agent Trent, that I'm feeling a little *too* comfortable around you. I believe the drinks are starting to get to my head." She turned around. *And my body.*

He quickly paid and followed her out. "I'll take you back to your car."

Once again, the gentle touch of his hand on her back made her shiver, and she quickly stepped out into the cool night air.

A few minutes later, they pulled up beside her car and she looked over at Damian.

His lips turned up into a sly, very sexy smile. "I didn't scare you off, did I?"

Layla shrugged. "It depends..."

"On what?" he whispered.

She leaned in, catching a trace of his intoxicating scent; a hint of amber mixed with leather.

"Umm..." Her words escaped her as her eyes settled on his mouth.

Her lips parted and he leaned in closer.

"Will you be leaving me in suspense, Miss Reece?"

She slowly came back to reality, and shook her head. "Sorry. I lost my train of thought."

"I asked if I might see you again."

She looked up at his warm, gray eyes and nodded absent-mindedly.

"Good." He smiled, and suddenly turned and stepped out of the car. Layla sat staring at the empty seat, still not sure of what she was doing. The cold breeze hit her legs as he opened the door, and she gingerly stepped out, finding herself practically chest to chest with him.

“Th...thank you,” she stammered, feeling her cheeks burning again.

He smiled. “It was a pleasure, Miss Reece.” He slowly bent down, and Layla’s eyes fluttered shut instinctively.

He paused, looking at her serene expression and then smiled. *She truly is beautiful*, he thought, closing the distance between them and grazing his lips along her cheek. Allowing himself to hover just below her earlobe, he planted a tender kiss on her slender neck. He felt her shudder and a small, innocent gasp escaped her lips.

He moved away slowly, watching as she swayed towards him. “I hope to be seeing you very soon, Miss Reece.”

Layla snapped her eyes open and looked at him with a blank stare. “Yes.” It was the only word she was able to utter, before he got back into his car and drove off.

She floated back to her own car, not knowing exactly what had just transpired between Damian Trent and herself, but she did know she *liked* it. She liked him. It was a feeling she never felt before and she truly wanted to explore it.

Damian, on the other hand, didn’t quite understand why he had wanted to get close to Layla. She was everything a man would want, but she was innocent, and he knew he could ruin her in a few breathless seconds. But he couldn’t stay away. He needed to see her at least one more time...one more time before he left.

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AFTER THAT NIGHT, Damian called just wanting to hear her voice.

And then he called again the following night, until he had finally managed to see her once again. Their meetings always held the same intensity, the same sensual flirtations, and always ended with the same goodnight kiss.

Soon enough, Layla was wondering why she couldn’t get Damian to open up to her, but she was satisfied just by being near him. As much as she wanted him to, he never went beyond a soft touch or a gentle caress, and Layla’s frustration was beginning to build.

Three weeks later, Damian was dropping her off at home, after an excruciatingly quiet dinner. Layla could feel that something was up, but when she asked what was wrong, he would quickly change the subject to the food, or her dress, managing to lure her away from her question. Now, he stood in front of her with his head held low and his hands crammed into the front pockets of his leather jacket.

“Layla, I want to... I need to...” He paused trying to collect his thoughts.

She frowned and placed the palm of her hand on his chest. “What is it Damian?”  
“You’re scaring me.”

He looked up at her, those beautiful eyes trying to say more than he could verbally express. Suddenly, without a word, he wrapped a hand around her waist, dragging her up against his chest. He paused looking down at her, and then his mouth covered hers in a hard, almost desperate kiss that managed to set Layla's body on fire. His fingers wrapped around the slender slope of her neck, pressing her harder against him as his lips slid along hers, molding her to him.

The cravings he had held back all these weeks exploded at the soft touch of her tongue on his lips. Her slight moan brought his needs to a peak and he stumbled forward, slamming them against the brick wall of the three story house.

His mouth ravished hers, his hands searching for bare skin.

Layla wasn't aware of anything but his hot mouth over hers and the warmth his touch brought to her body. She leaned her head back in a desperate moment to catch her breath, but instead she found herself being suckled and manipulated to his every will. She wrapped her arms around his tapered waist, pressing her body along his, and he groaned as he felt her press against his arousal. Rearing his desire for her, he broke the kiss abruptly.

They stood still, leaning against each other, their breaths ragged, and their hearts racing. He cupped her cheeks tenderly. "I should go," he whispered.

Layla looked up at him wide eyed. "You don't have to..."

He silenced her by tracing her lips with his thumb. "Yes I do," he replied, his voice hoarse with emotion.

They stood there for a long, intense moment. He cupped her face, holding her still while she gripped onto his arms, almost afraid to let him go.

He leaned in and placed a kiss on her forehead. "Good night, Miss Reece," he whispered and slowly stepped away from her.

Layla stood frozen, staring at the empty street, as the after-effects of that fierce kiss seeped in.