

Chapter One

She was pretty enough to be a high-priced call girl, but he didn't think she was. Vince Mason stood back and surreptitiously watched the woman seated at table twenty-nine in the restaurant where he waited tables. She was a beauty with deep chocolate-brown eyes and full red lips. Stylish, short brown hair framed her face. He usually preferred longer hair on a woman, but in this case the style suited her. There wasn't one thing he'd change about this woman. *Catherine Reynolds*.

He knew her name because table twenty-nine was *his* table, and she entertained guests at the restaurant at least twice a week. That's what she appeared to be doing, anyway. She was with different people every night. Usually men, occasionally women, but Miss Reynolds always paid the ticket with her credit card.

Vince called her Miss Reynolds out of respect, and hoped one day she'd say, "*Call me Catherine*." She hadn't yet, but he still hoped.

Another waiter brushed past him from the kitchen and mumbled, "Watch out, man!"

"Sorry." Vince stepped out of the way, catching a glimpse of his reflection in the swinging metal door. Unkempt, curly brown hair was the first thing he spotted. Probably the first thing anyone noticed when they first saw him. He always thought the hair made him look about fifteen, and apparently others agreed. He was often asked to show identification when he bought beer or nudie magazines—even now, at the age of twenty-three.

He'd tried a super-short razor haircut once, but friends agreed it wasn't his best look. He was blessed, or cursed, with a head full of curls. Vince's mother called him *cute*. He wasn't sure about that, but he knew, starting around his junior year in high school, and all through college, he'd had no trouble attracting girls. Now graduated, he worked at the restaurant full-time, while on the side perfecting his true love, painting.

He had plenty of dates. Women seemed to love a starving artist, and many offered to pose nude while he painted them. He hated to tell them still life wasn't his thing. Greatly

preferring landscapes, Vince's favorite subjects were beaches and lighthouses. But the *Thomas Kincaid* route didn't get him laid nearly as often as the willing young models did, so he at least *attempted* still life on a regular basis.

Another glance at Catherine Reynolds had his cock tenting his khakis, and he tried to think about anything else to make the bulge go away. His thoughts kept returning to her. Glancing over, he studied her proper business jacket and skirt.

In his fantasy, they were alone in the restaurant. They both knew what they wanted and weren't going to be shy about getting it. She watched his face while peeling off her jacket, revealing a lacy chemise underneath.

Vince eyed her hungrily. Dropping his gaze to her full breasts, he reached out and trailed a thumb over one nipple. It poked out seductively through the silken blouse. He imagined ripping the soft white fabric from her body and burying his face between those two luscious mounds of flesh. When he'd had his fill, nipping and sucking each nipple to firmness, he'd lower her skirt and the tiny thong underneath. She'd lie back on the table and squirm with pleasure as his mouth and tongue explored every inch of the soft flesh between her legs.

Vince groaned. The bulge in his pants throbbed, and his daydream didn't help. She was damn gorgeous, and deep down he knew that being with her was an impossible fantasy. Catherine was perfection, grace, and style like he'd never seen before. For a brief instant, Vince wished she *was* a call girl, because then, once they'd agreed on the price she'd be his... for a night anyway. But he didn't really want that. He simply wanted *her*.

"She wants you."

"Huh?" Vince shook his head back to reality and looked at Tony the bartender.

"The classy broad at table twenty-nine. She's making eyes at you."

He glanced over and saw Miss Reynolds trying to get his attention. "Oh, yeah." Vince pulled her ticket from his back pocket and headed her way, his erection and dreams deflated.

"Have you saved any room for dessert tonight?" he asked cheerily.

"No...just the check, please." She looked right through him.

He handed her the ticket and she glanced over it absently before returning it with her credit card.

"Here you go."

"Be right back," he replied, and sauntered to the bar where he could ring up the ticket on the cash register.

"She's a looker," Tony commented.

Vince ignored him. Catherine was *his* dream woman and he didn't want to discuss her with anyone. He picked up her sales slip and credit card and returned to the table.

"Here you go, Miss Reynolds." He smiled as he set them in front of her and watched her

sign the slip.

"Thank you." She smiled briefly before returning her attention to her guests.

That quick smile warmed his heart more than her generous thirty-percent tip. She was a knockout. He could stay there staring at her all night, but she scooted out of the bench and stood. Her guests were leaving. Vince stepped back, reluctantly watching them go.

"Can we get some more iced tea over here, please?" A woman from the next table spoke up.

Vince turned his smile and attention to her. "You bet. I'll be right back." He glanced toward the door, but Catherine was gone. So was his excitement for the evening. Now it was mundane, routine work. Sometimes, he made it bearable by chatting up the older women customers. They enjoyed it and left better tips. The one woman he was really interested in had departed for the evening, and all he could do was wonder when she'd be back.

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