

ONLY YOU

Sierra Grayson was having the time of her life in San Francisco. The city was breathtaking, the food fabulous, and the shopping superb. An added bonus was that she had left her match-making mother in Santa Fe. Ruth Grayson was determined that her youngest child and only daughter follow her four older brothers into matrimonial bliss—just as she had predicted and planned - whether Sierra wanted to get married or not.

What her children wanted hadn't mattered to their loving mother who had been sure they would be happier married. Sierra would give her credit for being right in choosing the perfect woman for each of her brothers, but Sierra had no intention of being next. She enjoyed life too much to be tied down to some man who'd want her to cater to his every whim.

When her sister-in-law, Sabra Raineau-Grayson, invited Sierra to San Francisco with her and Pierce, Sierra jumped at the opportunity. Having her other brother, Brandon, and his wife, Faith, join them had made the trip a fun-filled romp. And, as of five minutes

ago, it had just gotten better.

She had just been presented with the golden opportunity to meet the movers and shakers of the city's elite. Of course, when she did, she'd look for an opportunity to sell them a prime piece of Santa Fe real estate. She almost skipped with glee in her new Jimmy Choo sandals.

A winsome smile on her face, she sauntered through the spacious and opulent lobby of the St. Regis Hotel. She would have had to be blind not to notice the attention she garnered. Since nothing much ever got past Sierra, she dismissed the interested gazes of the men along with the curious stares of the women.

Without being conceited Sierra knew she looked good. It helped that she wore a new purchase, an imported white Valentino embroidered-and-beaded couture cotton sheath that complemented her golden skin. As always she'd dressed with care, but especially this afternoon. Otherwise there was a distinct possibility that she wouldn't have charmed Ken Simpson, the chairman of the auction that night, into accepting her as a replacement for her latest sister-in-law, Sabra.

Not only was Sabra stunning, she was a two-time Tony winning Broadway actress. But just as it was Sierra's brain that had taken her to the top of her profession in Santa Fe, that same sharp intelligence impressed Mr. Simpson.

As Sierra had explained to Mr. Simpson and the rest of his enthralled committee members over cocktails in a five-thousand-dollar suite, as much as Sabra wished to fulfill her obligations it didn't seem the right thing to offer a bride on the auction block. What Sierra didn't say, was that if they didn't agree there would be a third person at the winner's dinner table-- Sabra's love-smitten husband and Sierra's youngest brother,

Pierce.

Stepping outside onto the terrazzo floor of the outdoor restaurant, Sierra searched the almost deserted area for Faith. She'd called just before Sierra had gone to meet Simpson and said to meet her on the patio when she finished. Brandon, Sierra's third brother and Faith's husband, had gone to visit a friend who, like Brandon, owned and operated his own restaurant near the Cannery. The lovebirds, Pierce and Sabra, had taken off with Isabella, Sabra's dog, for Fisherman's Wharf.

Continuing into the lush area overflowing with red bougainvillea, verdant ferns and towering palms, Sierra searched for Faith. If Faith said she would be there, she'd be there. She was dependable to a fault.

Just as Sierra turned to search another area a deep, masculine voice stopped her dead in her tracks. A hot shiver raced over her body. Disturbed by her reaction, a frown puckered her brow as she swung back and moved toward the engrossing sound.

Before that moment she would have bet she wasn't the type of woman to get all hot and bothered by a man's voice. Seems she would have lost. Curious, led by instinct and an unexpected need, she sought the owner of the captivating voice.

She'd sensed something else in his tone, a tormented spirit.

Since Sierra was a direct descendent of an African high priestess and a Native-American shaman, she didn't question how she knew he was hurting or her own actions. Her breath held, her palms damp, she stepped around a ten-foot potted palm.

Less than fifteen feet away Faith stood in profile with a broad-shouldered man. A gray tailored suit fit his powerful build perfectly. His muscular arms curved loosely around Faith's waist; her hands were splayed on his wide chest as she smiled up at him.

Since Sierra trusted Faith completely she didn't jump to conclusions. Instead Sierra ignored the strange tingling in her body and openly studied the stranger. One of her unique abilities had always been to size people up quickly and accurately. She did so now. Wealthy, powerful, dangerous. This man would take what he wanted and damn the consequences.

As if sensing her, he slowly turned his head. Their gazes clashed. There was no other way to describe the shock of his onyx eyes boring into hers. Never one to back down Sierra continued to stare boldly at him as his gaze accessed her in one slow smoldering sweep. The tingling spread like liquid fire over her body.

He was sensually beautiful, Native-American and magnificent with burnished copper skin. Thick jet-black hair secured at the base of his neck with a silver band hung past his wide shoulders. At least six-foot-five, he had chiseled cheekbones, incredibly long lashes, and a mouth meant to make a sensible woman sin.

He was also one of the few men she had ever seen who was equal to her brothers, the Taggarts, or her cousin, Daniel Falcon. The sheer male beauty of the man, the noble bearing gave her pause, but it was his eyes, fierce and black, that sent another hot shiver racing down her spine.

Faith, apparently realizing the man's attention had wandered, glanced around. Seeing Sierra her smile broadened. The warm smile faltered when it wasn't returned. Quickly Faith stepped away from the man and moistened her lips in an uncharacteristically nervous gesture.

Sierra's sister-in-law ran a five-star hotel in Santa Fe with enviable ease. Nothing rattled her. She also loved Brandon to distraction.

“Sierra, I-I see you found me.” Faith’s smile slowly faded. “Sierra Grayson, Blade Navarone.”

“Ms. Grayson,” the man greeted, his voice stroking her.

“Mr. Navarone,” she returned just as formally although there was nothing formal about the midnight eyes closely watching her or the heat searing her. So this was the infamous Blade Navarone, billionaire real estate mogul.

Faith looked from Blade to Sierra, then wrung her hands when neither said anything further. “Sierra is Brandon’s sister. Blade is a very good friend, Sierra. He happened to be in town on business. We bumped into each other in the lobby.”

“You missed the wedding. It was beautiful,” Sierra pointed out, but she already knew he attended few non-business social events. She’d done a thorough study of the elusive man after he’d unrepentantly shown up in Santa Fe at Faith’s request. His mission was to make Brandon jealous.

Sierra hadn’t seen Blade while he was there, but he’d succeeded. Easy-going Brandon had become possessive and territorial where Faith was concerned. Only a fool wouldn’t worry if a man like Blade took an interest in a woman he wanted.

No Grayson could ever be called a fool.

“I was unavoidably detained elsewhere.” Something flickered in Blade’s eyes as he glanced back at Faith. “Faith understood.”

Sierra’s brow furrowed. There it was again, the pain just beneath the surface. There hadn’t been any mention of problems, personal or professional, in the numerous news articles on Blade. There had been a few out of focus photos and a lot to read and admire. Navarone Properties and Resorts, the playgrounds of the rich and famous, were

scattered like priceless jewels around the world.

The titillating possibility of being his exclusive broker for the next Navarone property in Dallas where fifty-five private estates were going for one to eleven million dollars would have been a dream job for Sierra. For that she would have put off opening her own brokerage firm. The commission would have been staggering, the prestige boundless.

She hadn't even received a response from her query. She'd shrugged it off and gone on. Now, what Sierra couldn't figure out was how Faith and Blade, complete opposites, were friends.

Faith was guileless, open, a nurturer like Brandon. Blade was known to be ruthless and relentless. He didn't give second chances. He'd come down on you like a hard rain if you crossed him.

Before her cousin Daniel had cut back drastically in his business to be with his newborn son, he and Blade were friendly business rivals. They also had the same unforgiving personality. Marriage and a family had changed Daniel. From what Sierra had read, there was no special woman in Blade's life.

"He's just a friend," Faith explained as she moved toward Sierra and away from Blade.

'Just' was not a word you'd associate with Blade Navarone. He'd come seemingly out of nowhere with grit, nerve and a razor sharp intelligence almost twelve years ago to build a financial empire.

"Sierra?"

The unmistakable hurt in Faith's voice finally pulled Sierra away from her

examination of Blade. Stepping forward, she extended her hand. The contact of his large calloused palm against hers sent more shivers skipping down her spine. His black gaze narrowed. He felt the unsettling sensation as well.

Pulling her hand back, Sierra resisted the urge to swipe it against her dress. She had a strong feeling it wouldn't do any good. Blade wasn't the type of man a woman could forget easily...if at all.

"Faith, I hate to interrupt, but we should be going before they give away our appointments at the spa," Sierra said, firmly turning her attention to her sister-in-law. "Because of the auction, we were lucky to be squeezed in."

"Did they let you switch with Sabra?" Faith asked.

Sierra smiled and almost relaxed. What was the matter with her? She hadn't met a man she couldn't charm. "Did you doubt?"

Faith laughed and hugged Sierra, then turned to Blade. "Sierra changed places with her sister-in-law, Sabra Raineau, so she could be one of the prizes for a dinner tonight at the auction."

"And to keep my brother from being an uninvited guest at their dinner," Sierra explained with a chuckle.

"I won't detain you further then. Goodbye, Faith. Ms. Grayson."

Still trying to figure out why she'd reacted so strongly to him, Sierra watched Blade walk away. No, not walk. Saunter like a big lazy cat.

"You had me worried for a moment there." Faith hooked her arm through Sierra's and started back to the hotel's lobby.

Sierra bumped her shoulder against Faith's. "You're smitten with my brother. The

same over-the-moon way he is about you.” She tilted her head to one side. “I guess I was just caught off guard by seeing Blade Navarone in the flesh.”

The words had no more left her mouth than her mind tried to conjure up a picture of a naked Blade – strong wide shoulders, bare chest delineated with muscles, rock-hard abdomen. She shook away the unnerving image before her mind ventured further down his incredible body. “Or that you two were such close friends.”

Faith tucked her head before answering. “I hope one day he finds the happiness he helped me find with Brandon.”

Sierra caught the sadness in Faith’s voice. Instinctively Sierra knew Faith could tell her the reason behind Blade’s unhappiness, but she was just as sure that she wouldn’t. Faith would never betray a confidence. And Blade Navarone was definitely a very private man.

“Come on, we better hurry.” Arm in arm they entered the lobby and headed for the elevator.

In the spacious room Sierra was unable to keep from searching for Blade. With his towering height, she quickly located him heading toward the revolving front doors. Two men, both tall and athletically built, flanked him. Suddenly he stopped, turned.

She felt the rush, the punch of his gaze. Without taking his gaze from her, he said something to the man on his right. Then as abruptly as he had stopped, he spun and continued. The man he had spoken to watched her for a second longer, then he followed.

She’d see him again. She was sure of it. She just wished she knew how she felt about finally meeting a man who made her glad she was a woman.

