



**KIMBERLY LANG**

Girls' Guide to Flirting with Danger

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Kimberly Lang

**Girls' Guide to Flirting with Danger**

«HarperCollins»

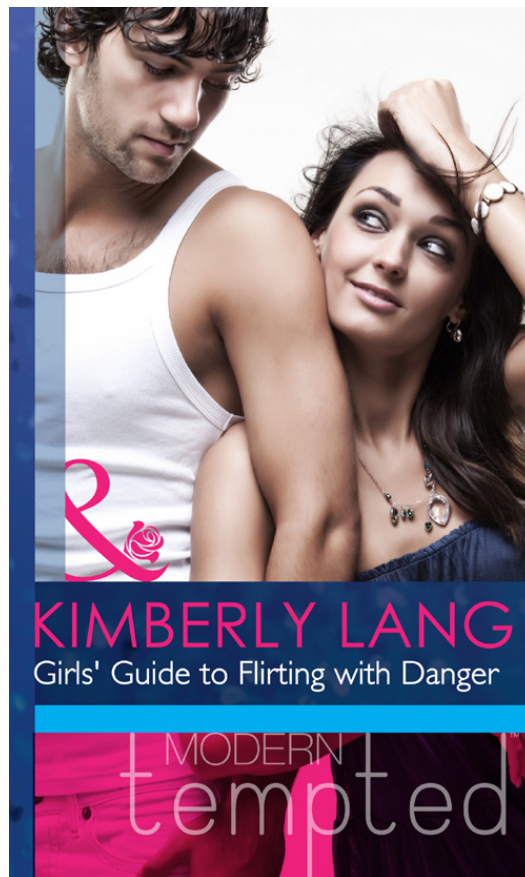
## **Lang K.**

Girls' Guide to Flirting with Danger / K. Lang — «HarperCollins»,

Rule #1 – Don't even flirt with your ex – let alone sleep with him! Life is good for marriage counsellor Megan Lowe – until the media discover that she's the ex-wife of Devin Kenney, America's most famous divorce attorney! Now the paparazzi are digging for a scoop just in time for the launch of Devin's new book. His gorgeous smile smirks at Megan from magazines and billboards – making him infuriatingly impossible to forget... It's time for Megan to throw her very bossy rulebook out of the window and face her dangerously sexy ex. And their sizzingly hot reunion – well, that's most definitely headline news...

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Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	27



## *Praise for Kimberly Lang*

'This enjoyable tale about a pair who think they're embarking on a sexy fling that soon turns serious treats readers to all the emotions, and all the highs and lows, that love entails.'

—RT Book Reviews on

*The Secret Mistress Arrangement*

'A sizzling tale of lust developing into love ...'

—Cataromance on

*Magnate's Mistress ... Accidentally Pregnant!*

'Talented author Kimberly Lang delivers a fresh, up-to-date story filled with strong characters and enough sexual tension to set hearts a-twitter. Entertains with witty repartee and sizzling passion.'

—Cataromance on

*The Millionaire's Misbehaving Mistress*

## *About Kimberly Lang*

**KIMBERLY LANG** hid romance novels behind her textbooks in junior high, and even a Master's programme in English couldn't break her obsession with dashing heroes and happily ever after. A ballet dancer turned English teacher, Kimberly married an electrical engineer and turned her life into an ongoing episode of *When Dilbert Met Frasier*. She and her Darling Geek live in beautiful North Alabama, with their one Amazing Child—who, unfortunately, shows an aptitude for sports.

Visit Kimberly at [www.booksbykimberly.com](http://www.booksbykimberly.com) for the latest news—and don't forget to say hi while you're there!

*Girls' Guide to Flirting with Danger*

Kimberly Lang



[www.millsandboon.co.uk](http://www.millsandboon.co.uk)

To Dee,

who taught me how to plant flowers,

flute a pie crust, and form proper jazz hands.

Despite her best efforts, I do none of these things well.

Thankfully, she loves me anyway.

## CHAPTER ONE

FIFTY MINUTES COUNSELING Mr. and Mrs. Martin left Megan Lowe's head pounding. She needed to talk with Dr. Weiss about getting their meds adjusted, or else one of them would end up killing the other soon enough.

Megan made a few notes in their file while the session was still fresh in her mind, and added it to the stack in her in-box. She then went in search of aspirin.

Julie, another of the three interns who handled most of the actual counseling here at the Weiss Clinic, held the aspirin bottle in her direction as Megan pushed through the swinging door of the lounge.

"I heard that all the way in here. You should be getting combat pay."

Megan laughed as she opened a bottle of water and popped two pills gratefully. "Their volume is just set on eleven this week. I don't think there's any actual danger to anyone or anything—except my eardrums."

"A thousand years in grad school and you end up the equivalent of a referee for pro wrestling." Julie shook her head sadly.

"Only it doesn't pay as well."

Julie tapped the sheet of newspaper under her hand, calling attention to the full-page, full-color ad for Devin Kenney's book. "Well, if you can't sort them out, at least you can recommend a good divorce attorney."

Megan felt her eye begin to twitch. "That is not funny, Julie. Not funny at all." Why couldn't Devin toil away in obscurity like everyone else? She'd fielded a bit of press interest last year when Devin's radio show, *Cover Your Assets*, had gone into syndication, but since his book of the same name had hit the top of every bestseller list, she'd felt like the most famous ex-wife in America. Or at least Chicago.

"Actually, it is kind of funny." Julie's smile wasn't in the least bit sympathetic. "And the irony is just delicious."

"Don't make me hate you. It's annoying, not ironic. Plus, it's ancient history." History that should have been lost in the mists of time, only Dev had to make it part of his career.

"A marriage counselor whose starter marriage left Devin Kenney so bitter he made it his life's work to get other people out of their marriages? Sorry, Megan, that's delicious. And newsworthy."

"You have a very liberal definition of news." Megan flipped the paper over so the ad no longer stared at her. "New topic. Did you get your grant paperwork in?"

She didn't miss the eye roll that accompanied Julie's dramatic sigh as Megan went to get her lunch from the fridge, but Julie did pick up the new topic, thank goodness. The amount of time she spent thinking about Devin these days simply wasn't good for her mental health, and talking about it wasn't going to help either. Strangling Devin for putting her in this position *might*, but that wasn't really an option. No matter how tempting the thought.

They were joined a minute later by Alice, the clinic's receptionist, who brought a stack of messages for them both. Megan flipped through the papers absently, until one caught her interest. "The Smiths canceled?" Allen and Melissa Smith were her most fanatical clients. They had a standing Monday appointment promptly at one o'clock. They never missed it. "Did they say why?"

Alice winced as she put her lunch in the microwave. "Yeah, they did."

There was that eye twitch again. She wasn't going to like this. "And?"

"They're very uncomfortable with the level of notoriety you've reached lately, especially since that blogger who's been lurking around here called them at home yesterday to ask about you."

"That guy identified and called one of my clients?" She caught Julie's shocked face out of the corner of her eye. "Please tell me you're kidding."

“I wish.”

“Oh, my God. That’s ... that’s ...”

“An invasion of the Smiths’ privacy and a black mark on the reputation of this clinic.” Dr. Weiss—the Weiss of the Weiss Clinic—spoke from behind Megan, making her jump.

“Dr. Weiss, I’m *so* sorry. This is just insane.”

“I agree.” Dr. Weiss looked unperturbed and calm, but Megan knew that might just be her “counselor face.” Dr. Weiss had been a therapist for more than thirty years; she wouldn’t show surprise if Megan jumped up on the table and danced a naked cha-cha. At the moment Megan sincerely wished Dr. Weiss wasn’t quite such a master of the poker face. It was simply impossible to tell how much trouble—if any—she was in at the moment. Strangling Devin was sounding better and better.

“I’m sure this will blow over soon. I’m just not that interesting, you know. And we all know how fickle people’s interest can be,” she finished with a lame attempt at humor.

“I’m glad to hear you feel that way, Megan.” Dr. Weiss’s voice was understanding and kind, but that didn’t stop the sinking feeling in Megan’s stomach. “I think you should take some time off until it does.”

The sinking feeling became a twenty-story drop. “What?”

Dr. Weiss joined them at the table and sipped her coffee. “You have plenty of vacation time, and now might be a good time for you to take it.”

“But my clients ...”

“We can handle them for a couple of weeks.”

“*Weeks?* Dr. Weiss, I know this isn’t a great situation, but ...”

“Megan, I will not have my clinic turned into a three-ring circus. And I will not have our clients embarrassed or inconvenienced.”

She felt like a chastised child—which was probably exactly what Dr. Weiss was going for—and anger at Devin boiled in her stomach. Julie and Alice were feigning attention to their lunches, but she could feel their pity and it tossed fuel on that fire. She fiddled with a pencil, focusing on it as she forced herself to remain outwardly calm.

“I understand. I’ll work with Alice to get everything rearranged after I finish with my anger-management group this afternoon...” She trailed off as Dr. Weiss shook her head.

“I’ll handle your group.”

The pencil snapped.

Dr. Weiss’s eyebrows went up. “Perhaps you might wish to join the group this afternoon.”

“No.” She forced her jaw to unclench and tried to smile. “It’s okay. I’ll start getting everything together. Alice, when you’re finished with your lunch, will you have a few minutes to look at my schedule?”

Alice nodded, and Dr. Weiss looked pleased—or maybe not. It was very hard to tell.

“This isn’t a punishment, Megan. As you say, this will die down soon, and you can work on those journal submissions while we wait for it to pass.”

“That’s a wonderful idea, Dr. Weiss.” *And I’ll get right on that, right after I kill Devin Kenney.*

Megan managed to walk out of the break room with some small measure of dignity, but she couldn’t get her fists to unclench. Her nails were digging painfully into her palms by the time she made it back to her office and shut the door.

Trying to focus on something other than Devin, she checked her calendar and started pulling files and making notes for Julie and Nate, the other therapist, who’d been with a client and missed the fun. But she was sure he’d be brought up to speed about thirty seconds after his client left.

*I’m not fired. I’m not being punished. This will blow over.*

Damn Dev. How many more times would she have to reorganize her life because of him?

*This will blow over soon enough.*

She kept repeating that phrase until she heard the soft knock and looked up to see Julie and Alice tiptoeing in.

“We’re so sorry,” Julie said.

“There’s nothing to be sorry about. This will pass.”

Julie sat in the chair across from her desk as Alice took the files from Megan’s hands. “We all know hate is a very negative emotion,” Julie began, “but I think we’d all agree that it’s not an inappropriate one in this situation.”

“Thanks, Jules.” She sighed. “You know, I’ve never hated anyone before in my entire life.”

“Not even Devin?”

“Oddly enough, no.” At Julie’s obvious disbelief, she tried to explain. “It wasn’t like that. I was bitter and angry and hurt, but I didn’t hate him. I was disappointed, disillusioned, heartbroken ... but it never crossed over into actual hate.” She shrugged. “And then I moved on. Dev’s obviously the one with lingering issues.”

“Sounds like he could use a good therapist.” Julie smirked. “Know any?”

“Sadly, I’m off the clock for the foreseeable future.” She rested her head on her hands. “All that time patting myself on the back because I’d moved on. Now *I’m* angry. The man is dead meat if I ever get my hands on him. Like I could,” she scoffed. “I’m sure he’s unlisted these days, and I doubt his firm would let me in the front door.”

“You could just go to his book signing, you know,” Alice offered.

That caught her attention. “His book signing?”

Alice nodded. “There was an ad in the paper today. He’s signing books downtown today from three to five.”

“Really. Hmm.” Devin was in town—not off doing the talk-show rounds in New York or L.A. “Interesting ...”

“Megan ...” Julie’s voice held a warning tone. “Do *not* make this worse.”

Megan was already running a search on Google for the bookstore. “How could it possibly be any worse? He’s already destroying my career, my reputation, my *life*.”

“Nothing’s in complete ruins just yet. Let’s not build a bonfire in the rubble prematurely.”

“I’m a professional, Julie. I think I can confront my ex-husband in a positive, appropriate manner.”

Julie snorted. “You really think that?”

Megan lifted her chin. “I do.”

“You know that means you can’t kill him, right? Or even throw a punch?”

She leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes. “Unfortunately, yes. But I’ve got to put a stop to this somehow. Before it gets any more out of hand.”

“You, Devin Kenney, are a force of nature, my friend. Incredible. You need anything? Water? A soda? By the way, love the shirt. It looks great on you.”

Devin wasn’t even slightly bolstered by Manny Field’s exuberance or insulted that Manny bolted off before those words were fully out of his mouth. It was just part of the job. Manny saw everything in terms of his 15 percent, and Devin knew he was the biggest cash cow in Manny’s herd at the moment; therefore, he was worth milking. *And sucking up to, as well*, he thought darkly. But Manny was his agent, not his friend—the kowtowing notwithstanding—and as his agent, Manny had made Devin a hell of a lot of money.

And vice versa—hence the pandering.

The last person in line approached. He scrawled his name one more time and handed the book over with a nod, trying to ignore the overbright smile and overenhanced cleavage of the woman gushing at him. She looked as if she was in the market for a husband—not looking to leave one. Just as the feeling registered, her next words confirmed that hypothesis.

“You know, Mr. Kenney—or can I call you Devin?—even after my last divorce, which your book would have helped me considerably with, I still think I’m a bit of a romantic at heart.” She smiled coyly and leaned forward, offering him another view right down the front of her blouse. “What about you? Are you still looking for true, lasting love?”

His on-air persona of Bitter Divorced Guy helped—a little—to avoid situations like this, but some women saw that as a challenge instead.

“If I—or anyone else—really believed in true, lasting love, I’d be out of a job.”

That should have shut her down midflirt, but instead she leaned closer and murmured huskily, “Maybe you haven’t met the right woman yet.”

*Maybe Manny needs to get his ass back over here and run some interference.* He heard the quiet whir of a camera and knew this woman and her breasts were about to make the front page of someone’s blog. *Great.* He didn’t want to insult a fan with his rebuff, but he didn’t want to hear the next offer either. *Where the hell is Manny?*

He scanned the store until he found Manny engaged in a conversation with a small blonde. Her back was to him, so he couldn’t see her face, but Manny certainly looked aggravated. The woman spoke animatedly, the motion causing a long ponytail to sway against her shoulders. She was casually dressed, the white T-shirt skimming over a lovely back and narrow waist before it disappeared into the waistband of faded jeans. Those jeans hugged her butt in a way that got his body’s attention—much more so than the cleavage nearly under his nose.

The woman hitched a battered brown bag over her shoulder, and something about the movement seemed oddly familiar. A moment later she turned to look in his direction and pinned him with a stare.

Megan.

Aware she now had his attention, she turned to face him, crossed her arms over her chest and tilted her head to one side. As her weight shifted onto her back leg, two realizations hit him at once.

First, the years had been very, *very* good to her.

Second, she was madder than hell.

Manny tapped Megan on the shoulder. Old instinct kicked in, and he was on his feet before he knew it. Manny could be caustic and slice people apart with mere words, and from the look on his face, Megan was seconds from getting the full Manny treatment. He barely glanced at the woman in front of him as he stood. “Enjoy the book. Hope it helps next time.”

The woman’s sputter barely registered as he crossed the bookstore, dodging a table full of his books, and got closer to Megan. As he closed the distance, her blue eyes narrowed, but not before he saw the cold fire burning there.

So the anger was directed at him, personally. Interesting. He should let Manny handle it, but his conscience wouldn’t let Megan’s feelings be hurt like that. It would be letting a bully kick a puppy, and regardless of anything else, he couldn’t let that happen.

Plus, he was too curious now to see what had brought Megan intentionally back into his universe after seven years.

The freshman fifteen she’d battled in college was long gone, bringing out her cheekbones and giving her a delicate look that was at odds with the angry jut of her chin. That T-shirt scooped low on her chest, snuggling tightly against the curves of her breasts—breasts that the position of her arms were pressing together and up as if they were begging for his attention.

As if she realized the direction of his thoughts, Megan shifted, bracing her hands on her hips and pressing her lips into a thin line. With her light blond hair, big blue eyes, tiny stature and ticked-off look, Megan resembled an angry Tinker Bell at the moment.

Manny stood behind her, still talking, but Megan didn’t spare him a glance. Her eyes bored into his as he approached.

“Sorry, Devin, but this woman says—” Manny started.

He waved Manny silent. “Not a problem.” Manny sputtered, and Megan seemed to be grinding her teeth. Aware of their audience, he turned on his best media-honed charm and smile. “Megan, this is a surprise. I’m flattered you’d come.”

She shook her head. “Don’t be. You’re a dead man, Dev.” Her voice was quiet, but the heat behind it was fierce.

Manny took a step back. “I’ll get security.”

“No need. This is Megan Lowe. My ex-wife.”

Manny scowled at Megan. “You didn’t mention that.”

She rolled her eyes in response. “Could you excuse us for a minute? I need to talk to Devin. Privately,” she forced out between gritted teeth.

Manny looked at him for confirmation, obviously still ready to get security to remove a half-crazy woman. It wouldn’t be the first time. Devin nodded. “It’s fine, Manny. Give us a minute. I’m sure Megan doesn’t actually plan to attack me.”

“Wanna bet?” she snapped.

“I’m sure you wouldn’t want to make a scene in front of fifty people, would you?” he warned. Megan was fired up about something, but he didn’t want this to make the papers.

She looked around, then blew out her breath in a long sigh. The most fake smile he’d ever seen crept over her face as she turned to Manny again. “Of course not. I just need a few minutes of Devin’s time.” The sugary sarcasm dripping off her words didn’t bode well for whatever she needed those few minutes for.

Manny backed off a few steps, and Devin reached for Megan’s elbow. She jerked away before he could touch her. Lord, she really was mad, but why had she decided to confront him *here*? Whatever bee was in her bonnet, the middle of a busy bookstore during one of his signings wasn’t the place to discuss it. With a sigh he indicated the stockroom he’d been stashed in earlier before the signing began. “How about in there?”

Megan hitched her bag up again and squared her shoulders. She walked stiffly, that fake smile fixed on her face until the stockroom door swung shut behind them. Then she turned on him. “How *could* you, Dev?”

“How could I what? You’ll need to be more specific.”

Megan pulled a copy of his book out of her bag and tossed it at him. “*This*.”

He caught it reflexively and looked at her. When she didn’t elaborate, he prodded her. “Should I make it out to you, or is it a gift for a friend?”

“Neither.” She snorted. “I’ve got your autograph already. On my divorce papers.”

“Then what?” She didn’t answer, but he could see the muscle in her jaw working. “Need some legal advice?”

She tilted her head, and the end of her ponytail fell to rest on the heaving swell of her breasts above the neckline of her shirt. A faint flush colored the skin there, barely noticeable in the dimness of the stockroom. “Actually, I could use some legal advice. What’s the difference between slander and libel?”

He pulled his attention from her cleavage. “What?”

“How about defamation of character? Can I sue you for that?”

Meggie rarely made sense when she got good and mad, but this seemed to be extreme, even for her. “Why don’t you calm down and tell me—”

“Don’t you dare patronize me, Devin Kenney. Your radio show was bad enough, but this book ...”

Old habits warred with each other. Placate or fight back? “I don’t think—”

“And therein lies the problem. Did you never once think that people *might* be interested in the ex-wife of America’s most popular divorce attorney?” Megan began to pace, her hands moving agitatedly as she spoke. “That people *might* think that some of the things you mention on the radio

or the stories in this book are based on your *personal* experience? Or that they might come looking for *me*, wanting dirt or backstory or something?”

Ah, *unwanted notoriety*. “You’re all spun up because some tabloid wants you to dish the dirt on me?”

She crossed her arms on her chest again as she stared at him, eyes snapping. “Not just *some* tabloid. *All* the tabloids. All the cable news channels. Half a dozen talk shows and every damn blogger in the universe. Do you not keep up with your own press? Haven’t you seen *my* name next to yours recently?”

He didn’t keep up with his own press; he didn’t have time. That’s why he had Manny. And they’d be having a conversation about *that* later on. After he finished with Megan.

Her anger made a bit more sense now. Megan was so shy, the media hounds would be too much for her to deal with without major stress. Feeling a twinge of guilt that Megan had been pulled into this media circus at all, he reached for her arm out of habit, simply to calm her. When she stepped back, he remembered he didn’t have the right to touch her anymore. He leaned back against a stack of boxes instead. “The fact we were married once is public record. I can’t change that.” She took a deep breath, and he held up a hand, trying to be diplomatic. “But I *am* sorry you’re being bothered by the press. It’ll blow over soon.” Something about that phrase made her nostrils flare and the color in her cheeks deepen. “Feel free to milk this any way you want, though.”

“I don’t want to milk this. I want it to go *away*. My career may never recover as it is, but if this continues ...”

He tried to follow the change in topic. “Your career?”

“I realize it was never high on your radar, but surely you remember I wanted one of those, too.”

Oh, he remembered, all right. She’d moved to Albany and filed for divorce in pursuit of her precious career. The bitter taste of *that* memory settled on his tongue and made his next words sharper than intended. “I don’t see how a little fame could have any detrimental effect on your career.”

“I’m a therapist.” He shrugged in question and Megan’s jaw clenched again. “Primarily a *marriage* therapist,” she managed to grit out.

He felt his eyebrows go up, and a small chuckle escaped before he could stop it.

Megan rolled her eyes and sighed. “Yes, yes, I’m aware of the irony. As are all the people contacting me about you. But I’m damn good at what I do. And I was building a nice client list and decent reputation. Until now.”

“And?”

“Let’s see. The press won’t leave me alone. They call my office and my house at all hours. My email overflows, and one even tried to pose as a new client. I could handle that, but now my *clients* are being harassed by the press, which is a horrible invasion of their privacy, not to mention embarrassing for them and the clinic I work for. The speculation in the tabloids about our marriage makes me look like some kind of psychotic harpy, which tends to make people think twice about listening to my advice.” She was pacing again, working that head of steam back up. “Oh, and there’s the little issue of being placed on extended leave because all of this interferes with the entire clinic’s ability to do business. So, thank you, Devin, for screwing up my life. Again.”

That accusation rankled, but he wasn’t going to argue who had screwed up whose life in the first place. He’d win that battle. But that was ancient history. He did feel slightly bad Megan was catching flak—and that he’d been unaware of any of it. Regardless of his reputation, he wasn’t completely heartless. Even when it came to her. “I didn’t know. I’ll try to do some damage control, if you want. Make it clear that we were so long ago that nothing of us is part of the book.”

Her shoulders dropped. “It’s a start. But I doubt it will help.”

Old frustration edged its way back in. “Then exactly what *do* you want me to do?”

\* \* \*

The question hung between them in the dim stockroom, and Megan didn’t have an answer.

Anger and indignation had brought her this far and now she regretted giving in to either emotion. So much for “positive confrontation.” All those “I” statements—*I think, I feel*—she was *supposed* to use in this situation had evaporated under the heat of her emotions. Good God, if Dr. Weiss had heard that outburst ... She cringed inwardly. She’d be sent back to Psych 101 to start over again. The outrage drained away, leaving her feeling hollow and foolish.

It was a familiar feeling. One she didn’t like.

She just hadn’t been properly mentally prepared to see Devin again. Face-to-face, at least. She’d debated taking this internship simply because Devin was so famous, and she wasn’t sure she wanted to be in the same town. But an internship at the Weiss Clinic was too prestigious to turn down over an ex-husband. Not in a town this size, where she was practically guaranteed to never run into him.

Then she’d moved here and his picture was all over town: on the sides of buses, on billboards, in magazines. Devin’s I’m-up-to-something smile was *everywhere*. It was wreaking havoc on her psyche, but she’d learned how to ignore it—for the most part.

But all that practice hadn’t prepared her to be in the same room with him. *Alone*. His long, lean body took up way too much space, and her nerve endings seemed to jump to high alert. Devin appeared to suck up all the available oxygen in the room, leaving her with nothing to breathe except the unique scent of him that she—and something inside her—recognized immediately. Those liquid brown eyes, the way his dark hair curled just slightly behind his ears ... Those hands—oddly elegant for a man who oozed testosterone from every pore—brought visuals she didn’t need right now.

It was terribly unfair to discover that after all these years Devin still had an effect on her—especially when she obviously had no effect on him at all. Her inner eighteen-year-old was stuttering and stammering just being this close to him, and it irritated her to no end.

And now she’d stormed in here and acted exactly like some kind of crazy ex. And considering how reasonable *he* was being ... She wanted to go hide under a rock for the next five years or so. She might recover her pride and get over the embarrassment by then.

Devin repeated the question, and the exasperation in his tone drove home how ridiculous she was being.

*I should have listened to Julie.*

“Well, Meggie?”

*You could start by not calling me Meggie.* It caused another one of those heartbeat stutters and brought back memories she was doing her damndest to suppress. But the question did deflate the last bit of the outrage that had sent her storming downtown to confront him. She sighed and dropped her shoulders in defeat. “I don’t know. I guess that’s all you *can* do. Eventually my fifteen minutes will be up, right?”

Biting her lip, she reached deep inside for a bit of the professional behavior she’d lost in her tirade. Without the anger and indignation fueling her, she felt foolish. And Dev’s proximity was just too much. “I apologize. I shouldn’t have come here in the first place, so I’ll go now.” A small laugh at the absurdity of the situation escaped her. “I won’t say it was nice seeing you again, but at least I can offer you my congratulations on your success in person.” There. She could end on a less embarrassing and slightly more mature note.

Dev nodded, but he had the oddest look on his face—rather as if he was concerned she wasn’t all there mentally. She couldn’t really blame him for that. “Bye, Dev. And good luck.” She held out her hand.

Seeming surprised and not bothering to hide it, Devin took her offered hand. *Damn it*. His touch caused her fingers to tingle, and it took all she had not to jerk her hand away.

“You, too, Meggie.”

Pulling herself together by force of will, she released his hand and refused to look back as she walked away. She pushed the door with a little too much force, causing it to swing wide. That annoying agent jumped back to avoid being hit.

“Eavesdropping? Really? Lovely.”

Manny had the sense to look a little abashed at being caught, but then he shrugged and grinned. It was a fake, practiced grin, and she wasn't the least bit fooled by it. Or by the false friendliness that followed. “You know, you really shouldn't take any of this personally. It's just showbiz.”

She pretended to think about that statement. “Showbiz. Yeah. Well, for those of us who didn't sign up for it, it sucks.”

Much like her life at the moment.

## CHAPTER TWO

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS under the covers and more ice cream than any adult should ever eat hadn't solved anything. Megan didn't feel better about any of it. And now her stomach hurt, as well.

She was tired of hiding in her apartment, mainly because seeing Devin had awakened every old repressed memory, causing her to relive their entire history. She was a complete mess now, thanks to him.

When the phone rang, *again*, she flipped back the quilt to check the number. No name. *Damn*. Not answering wasn't an option, since it could be a client calling. They all had her cell-phone number in case of an emergency. She mentally crossed her fingers, then immediately felt bad for hoping one of her clients was having an emergency.

"Dr. Lowe?"

"Speaking."

"My name is Kate Wilson. I'm a producer—"

She sighed. "No comment. Goodbye." The press was driving her crazy.

"Wait! Don't hang up, please." Something in the woman's voice caused her to pause. "I'm Devin Kenney's producer for *Cover Your Assets*."

*That's* why the voice sounded vaguely familiar. She'd heard it on the radio the once or twice she'd tuned in to Devin's show—strictly for research purposes, of course. "And I still have no comment."

It wasn't for lack of trying, though. She'd spent hours trying to come up with the perfect comment. One that would be pithy and quotable yet shut down any further questions. Sadly, such a comment did not exist.

"I understand your reluctance, but please hear me out. I'm not looking for a quote or a story." The woman laughed. "That's not my job."

Megan focused on the water stain on the ceiling and prayed for patience. "Ms. Wilson, I'm extremely busy today, so—"

"So I'll get to the point. I understand you're getting a lot of unwelcome attention from the media right now."

That was an understatement.

"I don't know how much you've dealt with the media in the past, but I do know one way to get this circus under control."

That would be too much to ask, especially since this woman worked for the media—and Devin. Therefore her offer to help sounded suspicious at best. "And that would be ...?"

"You beat them to it. Put yourself out there in a way you can control."

"Ms. Wilson—"

"Call me Kate."

"Kate, I'm really not interested in doing interviews or anything of that nature."

"Exactly. That's why I think you should come on Devin's show."

*What part of "no interviews" does this Kate not understand?* "I'm sorry, what?"

Excitement oozed out of the woman's words. "You could tell your side with Devin right there to corroborate the truth of the stories. You could take questions, even, and end the speculation. If you show that you and Devin aren't on opposite sides—and that you two think it's a nonissue—that issue will no longer be interesting. Problem solved."

That sounded way too good to be true. Too easy. "What makes you think anyone would—"

"Dr. Lowe, you have to know the fact you're a marriage counselor and Devin is a divorce attorney is the stuff blogs eat up. It just feeds on itself, and the more that's not said about it just gives rise to more speculation."

“I am aware of that.” *Blindly aware*, she thought as her eye began to twitch again.

Kate seemed to miss the sarcasm. “Then come on the show tomorrow night. You and Devin can address this issue head-on. Get the truth out there and end everyone’s curiosity.”

It couldn’t be that easy. Plus ... “I’ve never done anything on the radio before.”

“Don’t worry about that. You have a great voice, and Devin and I can walk you through the specifics.”

“I don’t know. Maybe I should talk to Devin first.” Oh, the thought made her stomach hurt again.

“It’ll be great for Devin’s ratings, too. I think a lot of folks will tune in to hear you two sort things out. And think, you could become the most popular marriage counselor in Chicago. It would probably increase your patient list.”

Something didn’t quite feel right. “Why didn’t Devin call me himself with this grand idea?”

“He’s in Atlanta today for a book signing and won’t be back until tomorrow afternoon.”

It was tempting. Very tempting. Except for the talking-to-Devin part. And the being-near-Devin part. That hadn’t gone so well yesterday. She cringed again.

Kate did have a point about taking control instead of being pushed along. And wasn’t she always telling her clients to act instead of react?

But the radio? Devin had a coast-to-coast audience. She wasn’t the same wallflower she used to be, but still ... Who *wouldn’t* be nervous at the idea of being heard by that many people? The possibilities for humiliation were *huge*.

But if it went the way Kate seemed to think it would ... Maybe she could shut this down before it got any bigger and get back to work. Put Devin out of her life once and for all.

“Dr. Lowe? If this is going to work, we need to jump on it now. Before it gets any bigger.”

Megan took a deep breath. “Then I guess I’ll come on the show.”

“Wonderful! You’ll need to be here by six so I can brief you. Do I need to send a car for you ...?”

Kate rattled off questions and instructions, but Megan was questioning her sanity and barely heard them over the sound of her head gently banging against the headboard.

Devin made the mistake of heeding Megan’s advice about reading his own press just as his flight began its descent into O’Hare. He put his seat and tray table in the upright position, stowed his electronics and changed to printed media to occupy the last few minutes of the flight.

There, on the front of the entertainment section, in type large enough to be read from Coach, was a promo for tonight’s show.

And Megan’s name was right next to his.

*What the hell?*

According to this, tonight’s very special guest would be his ex-wife, Dr. Megan Lowe. His surprise at Megan’s doctor title was quickly swamped by the news that she was coming on his show.

Whose bright idea was *that*?

He reached for his phone, only to remember he couldn’t use it. Waving over the flight attendant, he asked, “How long until we land?”

“Hard to say, Mr. Kenney. There’s a bit of a line and we’re going to have to circle for a while. I’ll let you know when we get an updated ETA, though.”

He didn’t know who to call first when they landed—Kate, Manny or Megan. Scratch Megan, since he didn’t have her number. This stunt reeked of Manny’s machinations, but Kate could’ve had a hand in it, as well. They were probably in collusion to drive him insane. Ratings and money: the two things Kate and Manny could be guaranteed to jump on any possibility of.

He shifted in his seat as the pilot announced the delay to the rest of the passengers.

How had they talked Megan into this idea? She had a fear of public speaking. She hated being the center of attention. Their small, family-only wedding hadn’t been all about finances—Megan just

couldn't face the idea of being the focus of that many people. She was an introvert, uncomfortable outside her zone.

That protective instinct that had appeared out of nowhere yesterday swooped back in again. The feeling was both familiar and odd at the same time. He'd been trapped by that feeling the very first time she'd turned those huge baby-blue eyes on him, awakening some caveman instinct to protect and shelter her from the big, bad world.

But it should be long gone by now, beaten down by the way she'd walked out on him, buried by her selfishness and immaturity....

*There* was the feeling he was used to getting on those rare occasions Megan crossed his mind. That older instinct had just been shaken loose by the surprise at seeing her the other day. That twinge of guilt he'd felt at the bookstore had been easily tamped down, even as several tenacious reporters had questioned him about their marriage in interviews yesterday. He'd evaded the questions as much as possible.

Megan wasn't a part of his life. She needed to go back to whoever she was and whatever she did when not crashing his book signing. She certainly wasn't relevant to his career.

And he sure as *hell* didn't want her on his show.

No man should have to deal with his ex-wife on a national platform. What drugs were Manny and Kate on to even consider it?

He should fire both of them.

And he just might, if this plane ever hit the tarmac and he could use his phone.

The high-rise building that housed Broad Horizons Broadcasting looked like any other office building on the Chicago skyline. Megan wasn't sure what she'd expected when the shiny black town car had pulled up at her door earlier to ferry her downtown, but she didn't feel as if she'd been brought to a radio station. It looked rather more like an insurance company or something. She thanked her driver as he held her door, feeling a bit like a celebrity herself from his deferential treatment.

As she walked into the building and read the company listings on the wall, she stifled a laugh when she saw the building was, indeed, an insurance company. And an investment firm, a law firm and several other things on different floors. She signed in at the front desk, and the elderly security guard's eyebrows went up when he read her name and destination.

"You're not what I was expecting, Dr. Lowe."

She wasn't sure if that was a compliment or not. "You were expecting me?"

"Ms. Wilson told me to send you straight up to fifteen when you arrived."

Ms. Wilson. Kate. *Not Devin*. She still hadn't heard from him, although Kate had promised to pass along a message for him to call her. They went live on the air in less than an hour, and she'd like to talk to Devin before then. They needed ground rules, a plan of action.... And she needed to be sure she had worked past all those stammers Devin seemed to cause in her *before* she made a fool of herself on air.

The guard walked her to the elevator bank. "I have to release the floor for you. Otherwise you'll have to go to fourteen first." At her look, he elaborated. "It's a security measure for the hosts and their guests." He inserted a key, pressed the button and gave her a friendly smile as he stepped out and the doors closed. "Good luck."

"Thanks," she answered, but the doors were shut and the elevator lurched upward. Megan tried to tell herself that the sinking feeling in her stomach was caused by the swift ascent, but she wasn't a very good liar. Especially to herself.

When the elevator dinged and the doors opened, she stepped out carefully. Once again she hadn't been sure what to expect, but so far, Broad Horizons looked a lot like every other corporate-type office she'd ever seen—gray cubicles, fluorescent lighting, sturdy carpet and the faint lingering odor of coffee and microwave popcorn. Most of the cubicles were empty, and the quiet of the post-five-o'clock workday had already begun to settle.

She stood there, feeling rather foolish and unsure what to do.

“Dr. Lowe!”

She recognized the voice as Kate’s and turned. Like everything else, Kate was completely *not* what Megan had expected. Tall and willowy with long black hair that curled in perfect unruliness around her shoulders, Kate looked like a supermodel. Someone that beautiful should be on TV, not hiding on the faceless radio.

At the very least, she should be sharing a couple of Dev’s billboards.

Megan felt plain and frumpy—and rather underdressed in a simple skirt, tee and cardigan. Kate looked as if she belonged on a catwalk.

A perfect smile nearly blinded her as Kate extended her hand and introduced herself. “I’m so glad you’re here, Dr. Lowe. Tonight’s show is going to be fantastic.”

*I’d settle for not horrific.* “Why don’t you call me Megan?”

Kate nodded before she indicated Megan should follow her through the labyrinthine offices. She had to trot to keep up with Kate’s longer strides.

“I have to admit, Kate, you’re not how I pictured you.” Realizing how that might sound, Megan tried to clarify. “Your voice, I mean. It seems like you’d be—” *Yikes. That sounds even worse.* “I mean ...”

Kate laughed. “I understand. No one looks like you think they should once you’ve heard them on the radio.” She shot Megan a sly smile. “Except for Devin, of course. People expect a panty-ripper when they hear his voice, and he doesn’t disappoint.”

“Excuse me, a what?”

“Panty-ripper. You know, the kind of man you’d rip your panties off for.”

Megan stumbled slightly over her own feet. She couldn’t quite argue with that statement, but she certainly wasn’t going to agree out loud. Hell, she’d been guilty of some panty-ripping on more than one occasion.... She stopped that train of thought. *Ancient history.*

Kate continued talking, thankfully unaware of the heat stealing over Megan’s face. “But that’s the key to Devin’s cross-demographic appeal. The men like his content, and the women like his package.” She winked. “What’s the saying? Men want to be him and the women just want him.”

Did Kate want him? Was there something going on between Dev and his beautiful producer? Megan told herself it was strictly professional curiosity, but that didn’t explain the little pang in her stomach. “So where is he? Did you give him my message?”

“Devin’s plane was delayed and he’s been frightfully busy all afternoon. He must not have had a chance to call. But you’ll see him shortly.” Kate held open a door for her. “We don’t have a Green Room or anything, but you can hang out here for a few minutes and make yourself comfortable. I’ll be back in a couple of minutes to start prepping you.”

*Prepping?* That sounded as if something painful was coming. Megan wished she had a clue what went on at a radio station.

As the door closed, she realized Kate had left her in a break room. Table, fridge, couch, coffeepot—it could have been in any office anywhere, except for the pictures on the walls. She assumed many of them were on-air personalities, but she didn’t recognize their faces. Except Devin’s, of course. She did, however, recognize the people they posed with—sports stars, celebrities, politicians. Dear Lord, was that the vice president shaking Dev’s hand?

The realization hit her a little too late. Some of America’s most popular and controversial talk-radio shows broadcast out of this very building. Possibly using the same microphones and everything she was about to use. It was a little intimidating.

She settled on the couch and ran a hand over her hair. A snort escaped. She was going to be on the *radio*; it didn’t matter what she looked like since only a few people would see her.

And one of those people would be Devin. It wasn’t vanity or wanting to look good for *him* that sent her digging for lipstick. She was about to go talk to thousands—possibly hundreds of thousands

—of people. She needed to feel confident. Even if they couldn't see her, the confidence of knowing she looked decent would come through in her voice.

It had nothing to do with Devin.

Hard on that thought, the door opened. Expecting it to be Kate, she finished with her lipstick and dropped it into her bag before turning.

Devin stood there, a slightly mocking look on his face. "It's radio, you know. No one can see you."

*Do not take the bait.* "It's a pleasure to see you again, as well." *Pleasure* might not be exactly the right word, since her stomach felt a little unsteady as he closed the door behind him, but at least her voice sounded normal enough to her ears.

Devin acknowledged the small slam against his manners with a mocking nod. He didn't seem happy she was here. Was he regretting inviting her on the show? Holding a grudge for her behavior the other day? He crossed to the fridge and took out two bottles of water. Handing one to her, he confirmed her earlier feeling. "I can't believe Kate convinced you to do this."

"Kate made some very valid points about controlling the press and putting the proper spin on things."

"Kate would sacrifice kittens on the air if she thought it would improve our ratings."

"So your plan is to sacrifice me?" A dread settled in her chest. Had she just walked into an even bigger disaster? Was this going to make things worse?

He shook his head. "This isn't *my* plan. Not by a long shot. I only learned of this bright idea as I was landing at O'Hare today. I've had to rearrange several things to accommodate you."

"Accommodate me? Kate said—" *Damn.* She should've ... "Why didn't you return my call? We could have avoided this."

He shrugged. "The publicity was done. And I've been a bit busy today."

That remark reminded her how busy she *wasn't* at the moment, thanks to him and his stupid book. "I can imagine. A radio show, a book tour—it must be exhausting. How do you find the time to practice law?"

"I don't. Much."

"What?" That seemed impossible. *Dev* loved the law. Loved the tactics, the arguments, the logic required. Way back when, he'd spend hours explaining the nuances of a case or a statute to her, and his passion for law and justice had been one of the things she'd loved about him. She'd been floored to hear he'd ended up a high-priced and notorious divorce attorney, but to give it up altogether?

"My name may be on the door of the firm, but it doesn't mean I'm on every case. That's what partners and paralegals are for."

"Do you miss it?" The question was out before she could stop it.

"I don't have time for that either." She wanted to respond to that, but Devin rushed ahead. "Sounds like you've done pretty well for yourself, *Dr. Lowe*. You became a psychiatrist after all."

"Clinical psychologist—" *no thanks to you* "—but you're close enough." As was she—just a few more months and she'd be official.

"And is it everything you hoped it would be?"

She could hear a small undercurrent in his voice that made her wonder if he was trying to pick a fight. No one else would notice it, but she knew that tone all too well for it not to send her hackles up. She lifted her chin. "And more."

"Good for you." He finished the bottle of water in one long drink and tossed it into the recycling bin.

Megan battled with herself. She'd sworn she wouldn't let her temper or her emotions control her and drive her to say or do anything that remotely resembled that debacle at the bookstore. She knew he was needling her. Intentionally. "Dr. Lowe" recognized that and knew how to handle it both properly and professionally. "Meggie," though, wanted to smack back.

Meggie won. “So how do you like being the country’s divorce guru? Is it everything you hoped for while you were in law school?” She feigned confusion. “Oh, wait, that’s not why you went to law school in the first place. Let me guess, there’s more money in divorce than in protecting the Constitution.”

“Lots more money.” Dev had the audacity to grin at her and she felt childish for giving in to the urge to snark back. “Bit more excitement, too.”

“And to think you used to be an idealist.” The disappointment in her voice wasn’t all fake.

“Blind idealism is dangerous.”

“Ergo *Cover Your Assets?*”

“Exactly.”

“And it doesn’t bother you?”

“What?”

“The pessimism you dish out. Anyone listening to you would begin to believe that all marriages end in divorce.”

He arched an eyebrow. “Wonder where I got that idea?”

She shouldn’t have started this. They were already falling back into bad habits, and they hadn’t even been around each other a full fifteen minutes yet. At this rate, they’d be at each other’s throats by the time they went on the air. Time to be a professional—and the bigger person—and make a graceful retreat. “I tell you what—let’s not make this personal.” Dev’s other eyebrow joined the first, and she quickly amended her statement. “Or more personal than it has to be, at least.”

He nodded his agreement. “That’s my plan.”

“Good. I’m glad you have one. Why don’t you fill me in on the details of this plan?”

“It’s not too complicated, but if we’re lucky it just might work out for you.”

“And for you?”

That seemed to amuse him. “Megan, this actually has very little to do with me. I’m fine no matter what you say or do.”

“In other words, you’re doing me some kind of a favor?” She did *not* want to be indebted to him on top of everything else.

He just shrugged again.

“But you’ll get a boost to your ratings, too.”

“I’m number one in my time slot. My ratings don’t really need a boost.”

“But Kate said—”

“Kate’s obsessed with our ratings. You know, maybe you could help her with that.”

“If this works, and I get to go back to work, then I’ll give her all the free counseling she needs.” Biting her tongue to keep anything else from coming out, she faced him again. “So. The plan?”

“Simple, actually. First you’ll need to bottle some of that hostility.” Megan felt her jaw tighten. “Be friendly, but not too friendly. Polite. Noncommittal. Kate culled some of the more inflated speculations from the tabs and the blogs—we’ll have a good laugh over that.” That was an instruction, not a prediction, so she nodded. “The trick is to describe to the listeners how boring and mind-numbingly average our marriage really was and then make our divorce sound even more so. We’ll take calls for a while, and then it will be over.”

*Over.* She’d thought she and Dev were over long ago, but here they were. And to hear Dev describe their marriage as “boring” and “mind-numbing” felt like a slap across the face. Granted, they’d had problems—obviously—and that last year had gotten pretty ugly at times, but the early days had been far from boring or average. At least for her.

They’d been living on little more than love, but they’d been happy.

Dev obviously felt differently.

All her education and training had given her insight into why their marriage had failed, and she'd come to terms with that. She even knew what to say to couples going through the same things that split up her and Devin. She had perspective. She had distance. She had closure.

But hearing Dev dismiss their good times opened up all kinds of old wounds she didn't realize could hurt anymore.

Until right now.

Thankfully, Kate choose that minute to return, giving Megan a much-needed moment to get hold of herself while Kate and Devin discussed show-related things she didn't understand.

If she was smart, she'd back out of this crazy idea and go back to Plan A: lie low and ride it out. Plan B—changing her name and moving to Canada—was starting to gain traction, as well.

But then something beeped, and Kate and Devin were gathering up the few papers and bottles of water.

Kate turned her supermodel smile on Megan. “You ready? It's showtime.”

Devin held the door open, waiting for her, and when she didn't move, that eyebrow arched up again. Irritation crawled over her, forcing her feet into motion.

She was walking to the gallows out of pure spite.

Dr. Lowe's official diagnosis? She was certifiably insane.

## CHAPTER THREE

SHE'D MISSED THE FOURTH-grade field trip to the radio station, so Megan had spent last night trying to find out what she could about radio stations and how they worked. A couple of movies, so hopelessly out of date the disc jockeys were spinning vinyl records, some video clips posted on the internet ... she still didn't have a clue. And she hated not having a clue. Research was her friend; it made her feel comfortable and confident. But the how-to's of radio were still a mystery, and she felt at a distinct disadvantage going into this.

That bothered her a lot. She didn't want to be at a disadvantage—of any kind—when it came to Devin. She needed to feel like an equal. She was, she reminded herself. She wasn't the same person she'd been all those years ago. She could hold her own—intellectually, professionally, sarcastically—against Devin Kenney.

She squared her shoulders as Devin opened a door marked Studio A. *I can do this.*

Two chairs facing each other across a small desk, two microphones, some computer screens—the booth looked a lot like what she'd expected from her research. Kate was on the other side of a large glass window that ran perpendicular to their table, settling into her chair and sliding large headphones over her ears. Somehow Megan knew Kate wasn't the kind of woman who would have "headphone hair" two hours from now. She, on the other hand.

Dev's "ahem" brought her back to the present. He was indicating a chair. "You'll sit here. That's your mic—be sure you get close to it, or folks won't be able to hear you. Here—" he handed her a set of headphones "—put these on. And don't touch anything."

Megan bristled. "I'm not five. I think I can handle that." Trying to look as if she did things like this all the time, she settled into the chair and smiled through the window at Kate.

"This is your last chance to back out, Megan. We're going to be live, and while there's a five-second delay, I won't be able to walk you through one of your panic attacks."

She almost let a sarcastic comment fly before she realized Dev had every right to be concerned about his show. It was the sign of a professional. She needed to respect that—at least while they were on the air. She'd keep her tongue behind her teeth if it killed her in the process.

She tried for a noncommittal tone. "I haven't had a panic attack in years, but thanks for your concern."

Dev looked surprised. "You haven't? That's a surprise."

"Do you think I could help other people if I couldn't learn to help myself first? I wouldn't have lasted long in this business if I couldn't talk to people."

"That's impressive, Meggie. Good for you."

She couldn't quite tell if that was grudging admiration in his tone or more sarcasm. She chose to accept the compliment, regardless of its sincerity. "Thank you. It means I should be able to get through this just fine." *At least I hope so.* She could feel all kinds of old insecurities bubbling up to the surface, and they felt much like a panic attack.

As Devin pulled his chair up to the desk, she realized how small the booth was. Not claustrophobic small, but not large enough to be in with your ex-husband sucking up all the oxygen, either. By the time she got her chair in place, only about a foot of space separated them. She tucked her feet under the chair, not wanting her legs and feet to accidentally tangle with his. *No footsie under the table tonight.*

Kate signaled them, and Devin put his headphones on. She did the same, and a panicky flutter started in her stomach. She took deep, calming breaths, trying to focus.

Through her headphones she heard Devin's theme music and intro. Then Devin leaned into the mic and started to speak.

It was as if his lips were only inches from her ear. She jumped, and her hands flew to her headphones, nearly pulling them off her ears in response to that baritone seeming to speak only to her.

She caught herself and pretended to adjust the headphones instead. Just another thing she hadn't prepared herself for. Her need to stammer seemed right on the end of her tongue, but Kate and Devin were bantering a bit, and the mention of her name returned her attention to the proper place.

“... welcome Dr. Megan Lowe, my ex-wife, to the show.”

Both Devin and Kate looked at her, obviously expecting a response, and for a moment she faltered. Her heart thudded in her chest. How many people were listening? Every old insecurity she thought she'd buried was clawing its way to the surface.

Then Devin smirked at her.

A little spark of ire flared in her stomach, and that helped her gain control of herself. Trying to match his mock, she plastered a smile on her face, leaned into the microphone and prepared to meet the nation. “Thanks, Dev. I can't say I'm *pleased* to be here, but I appreciate the invitation, nonetheless.”

He'd expected Megan to fold long before now. *Saying* she'd outgrown her shyness was a far cry from actually doing so, and he'd been ready to kill her mic and go to tape if she had a total meltdown. But twenty minutes into the show she sounded cool and poised, and her voice carried just a touch of mocking cynicism.

He'd seen the tiny flare of panic rise, but only someone who knew her very well would know that the wrinkle in her forehead was a warning sign of her discomfort. But the panic was gone as quickly as it had risen, and she managed to sound both amused and bored with the circus the media had made of her life and the outlandish speculation Kate had found on the blogs.

Megan's voice slid a notch down on the register as she leaned into the mic, giving her a seductive, husky tone that had to have half his male listeners at attention. He certainly was. When Kate commented on the main talking point—the fact Megan counseled couples to stay together when she herself was divorced—Megan chuckled.

She might as well have run a hand over him. The sound seemed to hum through his headphones directly through his body as if they were alone. Intimate.

He tried to shake off the feeling, but when Megan tilted her chin half an inch in his direction, he wondered if she'd done it on purpose.

No, Megan couldn't think she'd still have an effect on him after all these years. Hell, he wouldn't have dreamed it was possible if he hadn't felt the electric shiver over his skin.

Through the window Kate beamed an I-told-you-so grin, but she would have been equally glad to have Megan crash and burn. Kate pointed at her computer, meaning the callers were lining up. A glance at his screen confirmed it.

Seemed as if Megan was on her way to fifteen minutes of fame instead of shame. He was oddly, *inexplicably* proud of her.

He brought the first caller on. “Caller, you're on the air.”

“This is Andrea from Las Vegas. I'm a big fan of your show, Devin, but my question is actually for Dr. Megan.”

Megan covered an amused snort with a small cough before she turned to him and mouthed, “Dr. Megan? Really?”

He shrugged.

Megan shook her head and leaned into the mic. “Hi, Andrea. What's your question?”

“So why'd you two get divorced? Who left who?”

Oh, he couldn't wait to hear her answer to this. When Megan looked to him, question written all over her pixie features, he folded his arms over his chest and shrugged.

Megan stuck out her tongue at him before she answered. “Devin and I were young when we got married—college sweethearts, in fact—and we had some maturity issues and some disagreements about what we wanted from our lives and each other. Those differences proved to be irreconcilable.”

“So Devin left you?” It was more of a statement than a question. Maybe he should have warned her his listeners wouldn’t accept vagueness.

He saw Megan’s shoulders straighten. “Actually, I left Devin and filed for divorce.”

At the caller’s gasp of disbelief, he cut in, challenging Megan with a grin. “Hard to believe, huh?”

She rolled her eyes, but picked up the gauntlet. “Trust me, Andrea, he totally deserved it.” Her grin turned slightly evil, but her voice sounded conspiratorial. “He wasn’t always this charming, you know.”

“But surely he was still this hot, even back then. You had to be crazy to walk away from *that*,” the caller continued, and through the booth’s window he could see Kate practically crowing in glee as the queue of callers grew longer.

Megan cleared her throat. “There’s a lot more to a good marriage than the hotness of one partner. Lust can only hold a couple together for so long—at some point there has to be something more. Some commonality. Some kind of meeting of the minds. I’m not implying that Dev’s just a pretty face....” She trailed off, doing exactly that.

Kate was about to fall off her chair in excitement, and Megan shot him a look of triumph. The computer in front of him flashed as listener emails started flooding his in-box. It was time for him to take his show back in hand, damn it.

“Emotional stability helps a relationship, too. Both partners need to be mental adults.” Megan’s jaw dropped at the insult, and her eyes narrowed at him. He ignored her. “Thanks for your question, caller. Kate, who’s next on the line?”

The next few callers were predictable—folks commenting on the hype and irony, asking them to confirm or deny more rumors—but as the show went on, there were a few callers who were, amazingly enough, more interested in getting out of their own marriages than how or why he ended his.

He was trying to explain—for the thousandth time—that covering one’s assets did not mean hiding assets, since hiding assets was illegal in all states. The caller kept interrupting with bitter condemnations of his wife, as if that would allow him freedom with financial disclosure laws.

Pete-from-Tennessee harrumphed when Devin stopped to take a breath.

“Excuse me, can I butt in for a second?”

It was the first time Megan had commented on any question not directed at her or their past. He’d seen her shake her head a few times, and she’d probably bitten holes in her tongue, but she’d stayed off his “turf.”

When he turned in her direction, he could see the frown between her eyebrows. She was drumming her fingers lightly on the desktop. “You have something to add, Dr. Megan?”

She frowned at his use of her new nickname, but she nodded to him before turning to the mic. “Pete, I’m hearing a lot of anger and a lot of bitterness. I’m not saying it’s not justified, and without talking to you more or hearing your wife’s side of the story, I can’t offer any advice. *But*,” she stressed as both Devin and the caller tried to interrupt, “I’m also hearing hurt and jealousy, and that tells me there’s something else going on. Have you talked about some of these issues with your wife? Or a counselor?”

“Megan.” Devin started, but she held up a hand to stay him.

“Well, Pete?”

Pete-from-Tennessee muttered something unintelligible. Then he cleared his throat.

“Not everyone needs—or wants—therapy, Dr. Megan.”

“I understand that. But something tells me you and your wife have some communication problems. You might benefit from a few sessions with a counselor.”

“You’re a shrink. That’s how you make your money. Of course you don’t think people should get divorced,” Pete-from-Tennessee grumbled.

“On the contrary, I’d never advocate anyone stay in a marriage where they were mentally, emotionally, or physically in danger of any kind. There are some marriages that can’t be saved.” She met Devin’s eyes evenly. “And there are some that shouldn’t.”

Then Megan’s voice took on an earnest and almost hypnotic quality. The combination of compassion and concern tempered with a no-nonsense tone had even him listening carefully. “But from what you’re saying, Pete, I’m not sure your marriage is firmly in either of those camps. Marriage isn’t easy. Sometimes you have to fight for it. But it can be worth the battle.”

They must have taught Megan that idea in graduate school, because that certainly wasn’t her thinking when she walked out on *him*. The caller’s sputters had lapsed into silence, so Devin asked the question hanging in the air. “You agree, though, that divorce is sometimes the best thing?”

Megan met his eyes again, and the mood in the booth shifted. “I do. Sometimes divorce is the best and the healthiest option for both partners. Some people just shouldn’t be together. It’s a cold, hard fact that can be difficult to admit, but once those couples split, they usually find themselves to be happier.”

“What? No romantic notions about happily-ever-after or psychobabble—”

“Happily-ever-after isn’t a romantic notion—but it’s not guaranteed, either. Love and passion will only get you so far—like to the altar. It isn’t always enough for a successful marriage.”

Oh, he knew all about love and passion, and from the look on Megan’s face, she was remembering a few choice moments from their history, too. But they also both knew the reality of it not being enough. He didn’t break the stare, but he did try to inject a lighter tone to his next words for the sake of his audience. “Isn’t *that* the truth.”

Megan’s brows drew together in a frown, and the intense stare changed to a dirty look. “Pete, do me a favor, okay? Talk to your wife before you get any more advice from a divorce lawyer. You may be partly right—I do tend to look for ways to heal a marriage. It’s my nature and my job. But a divorce lawyer makes his money off your unhappiness and therefore has an unhealthy interest in your attempts to reconcile with your spouse.”

Devin heard the caller take a deep breath. “I’ll think about what you said, Dr. Megan.”

Megan was good—he’d give her that—but the smug smile tugging at the corners of her mouth and the mocking lift of her eyebrows told him *she* knew it, too. He’d had a lot thrown at him in the past forty-eight hours, but this new side of Megan was the hardest of all to grasp.

“That’s all I ask. Good luck, Pete, to both you *and* your wife. I hope you can figure out what’s best for you both in the long term.”

Kate took the opportunity to break in. “And on that note, we need to take a short break for your local news update and a message from our sponsors.” A second later she indicated they were clear, and Kate began to gush. “You two are fabulous together! The chemistry is just amazing and the audience is eating it up. Have you seen the call queue? The mail piling up in the show’s in-box? You guys are a hit! I knew you would be!” Kate wiggled in her chair, something he recognized as her “ratings dance.” “Oh, and you have three minutes.”

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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