

## CHAPTER FIVE



Mayson's anger evaporated once she was inside Tyler's apartment. But the fear returned, and with it came a suffocating isolation as she gazed out at a world from which she'd been cut off - sprawling Central Park, the crisp autumn breeze, Fifth Avenue's hustle and bustle and the East River sparkling on the horizon. She couldn't go to the Lincoln Center or Bloomingdale's, nor drive her shiny red BMW or even return to the Lyons for a change of clothes.

Fretfully, she turned from the window to study her new surroundings. The elegant trappings were gold, silver and brass, and the furniture strong and handsome. Persian rugs tastefully adorned the hardwood floors and the video equipment was naturally top of the line. This was Park Avenue, where all the apartments were the same - enormous, luxurious and where Corellis didn't belong. She felt imprisoned here just as if she were in jail. So what if the toilets had seats and the windows were bar-less? She still couldn't do what she wanted.

Time crawled. The afternoon sun faded and a reddish glow crept into the sky, followed by a golden hue so sweet she could taste it. A hot-air balloon glided over Central Park in a billowing descent. Who was there to greet it? Someone who'd been to the Bloomingdale's sale? Did they have exciting plans for the evening — Broadway, Lincoln Center? She was cut off from it all.

Miserably, she wandered through the apartment. For all its princely space, there was only one bedroom. And why would Tyler need another? Didn't his overnight guests, all female, share his king-size, satin-sheeted bed? Did rich, stupid *gavonnes* sleep on anything else?

Returning to the study, she dropped into the cozy window chair, again drawn to the strange souvenir posters adorning the walls. He'd made his Park Avenue apartment not an art gallery but a childhood museum. The posters were ancient and yellowed, creased yet clearly treasured as their expensive brass frames and

glass cases proved. Two announced Barnum and Bailey's arrival in Norfolk, Virginia over consecutive summers. He'd been nine and ten, she calculated; she'd been the same age in Brooklyn. She'd never been to the Barnum and Bailey, but if she had, would she have memorialized the event with expensively framed posters?

Her gaze drifted next to the two stadium posters announcing clashes between the Washington Redskins and Dallas Cowboys. He'd been twelve, then thirteen; she was the same age - twelve before the Songbird's departure and thirteen after. Two different lives, two different worlds. Examining the posters more closely, she noticed the ticket stubs and game programs inside the glass, as if he'd been intent on remembering every detail of the experience. Why had they been so important to him?

Two more posters featured Redskin Super Bowls, one in Pasadena, the other Tampa. They'd been fifteen for the first, eighteen for the second: he in the stadium, she in a Brooklyn tenement watching the games on her fuzzy, black-and-white TV. She recalled how superb the Skins had been during Joe Gibbs' glory years, with the Hogs blocking, John Riggins running and the Posse receiving. She'd also seen her beloved Giants win two Super Bowls, wishing to be in the stadium like Tyler, to meet the players afterwards as he had. She studied their autographs scrawled on box corners, whatever had been handy at the time.

With time to kill, she drifted out to inspect the other posters. Where the study's theme had been the circus and football, the hall was devoted to the silver screen with classic movie posters: *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *Bullitt*; fast cars and thrilling action that dazzled a little boy's eyes. The next posters puzzled her: *The Sound of Music*, *Mary Poppins*, *My Fair Lady*. It was hard to imagine Tyler sitting through these movies, much less their leaving a lasting impression. Why had they been included in his museum?

Aimlessly, she drifted into the bedroom to examine the posters of Disney World and its neighbor, Sea World. Her eyes glowed wistfully. Places she'd dreamed of, places he'd been. The others memorialized events she knew nothing about: the Annual Oyster Roast sponsored by the James River Country Club, some snobby social event, no doubt, invented by empty-headed Southern Belles;

and the last three announcing, of all things, piano recitals - two at the Tidewater Academy of Arts, one at the Dorothy Hamilton Cultural Center. Tyler devoting his Saturday afternoons to piano recitals was impossible to imagine. She returned to the study. Dropping into her cozy chair, the claws of fear scratched at her again. Outside the reds and golds had faded from the sky, a purplish pall now blanketing Manhattan with a chill she could almost feel. Soon the night sky glittered with myriad lights. People were dressing for elegant dinner parties at expensive restaurants and Broadway plays. So many things were happening in a world to which she no longer belonged and maybe never had.

The sight of Tyler suddenly in the doorway made her skin crawl. The evening breeze had fluffed his golden hair, enhancing his face's glow. He'd spent the last hours at the firm and yet escaped without a wrinkle in his tailored suit. He was the most elegant, handsome man in Manhattan and why shouldn't his river-blue eyes glow with the same confidence that carried his tall, athletic body?

"Dinner." He held out a bag. "Pizza, with extra cheese; no anchovies, though. Not everyone shares my passion. Do you like them? Anchovies, I mean?"

"I don't even like pizza, you stupid *gavonne*."

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because I'm Italian you assume I was born with a craving for pizza? Anything with tomato sauce, pasta and sausage - just throw it in a pot and whatever comes out is certain to light up the eyes of a Corelli."

"I didn't expect miracles," he frowned. "I just thought everyone liked pizza. I guess you don't like Chianti either." He took a bottle from the bag. "I can't blame you for that. Molson - now that's what you drink with pizza."

Three movies now came out, two of which she'd meant to see. How did he know? Putting the movies on the shelf, he left her in a wake of conscience. Pizza, Chianti, movies and she'd offered no gratitude, just insults. Rising, she followed him into the living room where he gazed at the glittering skyline. Until yesterday he'd been a one-dimensional "trust fund baby" blessed with material things she didn't have, but she was beginning to realize he was

much deeper. He did more than smile, joke and slap people on the back. He also brooded and fell victim to deep reflection. "I'm sorry for calling you a '*gavonne*.' You're not, of course."

"No." He turned from the window. "I'm much worse. I'm an idiot."

"For helping me?"

"Then you finally believe that's what I'm doing?"

She shrugged. "If not, you would've turned me in by now. Yes I believe you're helping me, but I still don't know what you expect in return."

"The truth, Mayson, that's all."