

# Chapter One

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LAX

Dorrie ducked her auburn head down to blend into the crowd, hoping to avoid running into Gunther Quill. *Dammit!* As she exited the plane, she cursed herself for bringing so much luggage. *Now, I have to hang around the baggage claim. He's sure to find me.*

She stole a furtive glance up and down the corridor then breathed a sigh of relief. *No sign of him.* She straightened up and strode confidently toward the luggage area. *I guess he changed his mind about meeting me here. Good. We have nothing to talk about other than the movie. Maybe I can deal with one of the other producers on the film instead.*

After unwrapping a piece of gum, she popped it in her mouth.

"Got an extra?"

Dorrie looked up to see Grace Brewster, her companion from the flight, standing with her hand out. She handed Grace a piece and smiled. "Gum keeps me from overeating."

"I could afford to lose some weight, too."

This was an old habit Dorrie used to deal with nerves and avoid drowning herself in comfort food, especially when she was a professional dancer. Though choreographers don't have to be as slim, they still need to be in shape. She chewed rapidly, unable to shake her dread of running into Gunther.

"Is he here?" Grace asked, looking around.

Dorrie shook her head. "Not yet. I hope I can get my suitcases and leave before he shows up."

"Me, too."

"You know Gunther?"

"Don't ask."

Dorrie nodded. "I see."

Grace blushed. "I'm sure you do. I'd rather not rehash it."

"I don't blame you. He does have a way of...getting around."

Grace's blush deepened. "It didn't end well."

"It never does with Gunther." Dorrie glanced at the door for the tenth time.

"He's pretty pissed at me."

Dorrie raised her eyebrows. "Really? It's usually the other way around."

Grace's smile tightened. "Trust me, it wasn't happy on either side."

"Sounds familiar," Dorrie said, her gaze perusing the area. "I'll keep watch while you grab our bags. Mine is dark blue plaid."

The carousel jolted then began to move as luggage slowly slid down the ramp and was transferred to the moving belt. Grace moved toward the conveyor and reached for a suitcase.

While Dorrie took her gaze off the entrance to check for her bags, the hairs on the back of her neck stood up, and her skin prickled. One puff of hot breath warming her ear alerted her to Gunther's arrival. She jumped.

"If I was insecure, I'd think you were avoiding me," he whispered, standing too close to her.

Dorrie's heartbeat doubled as adrenaline poured into her veins. *Fight or flight? Let me out of here.* Taking a deep breath to steady herself, she pasted a smile on her lips and turned to face him.

"Why Gunther, what a surprise."

"You little liar. I texted you."

"Did you? Can't get those on the plane."

"Still playing tag with the truth," he growled in a deep, low voice. "You're avoiding me." He gripped her biceps hard, detaining her. She caught a glimpse of Grace Brewster stealing away, stopping to give a quick wave.

"I don't know what you mean. Oops, there's my luggage." She ripped her arm loose and approached the conveyor belt. Dorrie's mind raced to think up an excuse to escape. But Gunther was right behind her.

"This blue one?" he asked. She nodded. He reached over and picked up the large suitcase as if it were nothing. She saw his muscles strain against the sleeve of his sport coat and remembered a time when that sight had thrilled her. *Not anymore. Yes, he has a great body but no heart.*

"I can take it from here." She moved toward her valises, but he held them firmly in his grip.

"My car is right outside. Allow me." He gave a half bow, appearing gracious. But the sharp look in his narrowed, dark eyes gave away his intentions. Dorrie got it. He wasn't going to allow her out of his sight. She dropped her gum in a trashcan and swallowed. Searching for a glimpse of Grace, she spied her friend headed for the exit.

"There's Grace Brewster. I need to catch up."

"I doubt Ms. Brewster wants to run into me."

"Can't we give her a lift, too?"

Gunther turned his head toward Grace, who glanced backward once, then moved rapidly through the door.

"Ahh. Too late. Shucks," he said, his eyes glittering dangerously.

Dorrie was caught in his trap. *No one evades Gunther Quill.* She followed him out to the waiting limousine and climbed in. The air was cool, almost cold. Gunther offered her a drink, which she refused.

"Are you going to stay in that drab apartment with your dreary roommates?"

"Lease is up next month."

"Good. Why don't you let me find you an apartment?"

She studied him, trying to figure out what he was up to. "Why would I do that?"

"I'm doing very well financially. I can afford...an extra place."

"Oh? And what would I have to do to live there?" She cocked an eyebrow at him.

"You know."

"Spell it out for me."

"Come, come, Dorrie. Don't be so low class. You're a tasty morsel. We could have such fun times...just like we used to." His gaze rested on her chest.

"I don't think so. Thanks, but no thanks. I have enough money to get my own place." She crossed her arms over her chest to cut off his view of her breasts.

"You disappoint me. I was looking forward to being with you again."

"Aren't you engaged?"

"You mean Elsa Marquette? She's a very understanding woman."

"That's not what Grace Brewster said." Dorrie mustered all her confidence and faced him.

"Grace? Why would she have an opinion about Elsa?"

“I don’t know, Gunther. Why don’t you tell me? Grace’s a close friend of mine...she didn’t have anything nice to say about you.”