

Once Andra's soles touched the last rung, she lightly hopped from the ladder, landing on nervous feet. Rotating Stefano's way, she was grateful his eyes remained averted because she wanted to hide the fact that her body was sexually agitated by his presence – which was uncomfortably close.

“But why are you *here*?” she demanded. “I mean, in *this* room?”

Andra's breath caught once he faced her. As always it took her by surprise how truly handsome he was whenever she had the opportunity to gaze directly at him. When he wasn't around, her mind tended to conjure up an obscure picture of the devil himself.

However, she had to remind herself the Bible revealed Lucifer at one time was the most beautiful creature created – *before* he became Satan.

“I have come for the same reason you are here,” The devil's counterpart answered, his Grecian accent deliciously decadent. “I needed to retrieve a book.”

“Well, have at it.”

Andra moved to step around him but was stopped when Stefano reached out a large hand and placed it on the rung behind her head. Her breathing caught only to come forth in shallow puffs as he moved closer, forcing her backside to connect with the ladder. His other hand landed on the other side of her head to grip the same rung.

Stefano's head dipped, his mouth stopping mere inches from hers. His lips mute, he hovered as if waiting for the right signal to cover hers.

“W-what are you doing?” she asked.

Her body vibrated with fear and another emotion she refused to identify. Sly's earlier accusations concerning their relationship floated inside her subconscious only to dissipate with Stefano's sigh.

“You are a lovely, mystical creature,” he said, his voice low, seductive. “Siren ...temptress. I sometimes wonder if you are real.”

After their last encounter, when Stefano had called her *Aphrodite*, she used her cell to troll the internet, searching for any information on the Greek goddess. *Lovely, siren, temptress, enchantress* were some words used to describe the mythical female – among other sensual, and sometimes lewd, definitions.

Again, Sly's smirking face filtered into Andra's brain.

Defiant, she lifted her chin. She slapped him hard, the impact of it forcing his head to one side.

"If you're referring to *Aphrodite* ...I'm *not* that imaginary creature." She wanted to shout, yet only managed to push out her words as a whisper. "You're ..."

*Delusional ...deranged ...coo-coo* came to mind.

Slowly he turned back to her, his gaze even more intense. Seemingly unfazed by her violent action, he used his thumb and forefinger to lightly touch her chin.

"Stefano, *please*." To Andra's horror, her voice sounded breathless, throaty. "What do you want from me?"

His answering sigh was heavy.

"What do I want?" he asked. A subtle hardness changed his tone. "I want you to leave my brother ...divorce him. Do what is right."

She wanted to slap him again but held back. The second time would feel too primal ...*too sensual*.

Andra found she couldn't break free from his penetrating gaze.

"Leave him."

She shivered at the near perfect inflection of his voice. It came across deadly, yet not in the sense that she feared for her physical life.

The danger was how it messed with her feminine emotions – causing her to mistrust her ability to resist his magnetic pull.

"No, I won't do what you say. You can't make me," she said, wishing she didn't sound so childish. His eyes lowered to her lips, causing her to moisten them with a short flick of her tongue. "I'll never give Jayson a divorce. I love him ...and he loves me. Get over it."

"How?" he whispered, his mouth positioned so close, yet appeared a million miles away. "How do I get over it?"

Confused, Andra grew quiet. His question didn't seem to have anything to do with what they now talked about.

His head lowered.

Fighting the urge to meet his lips, Andra ducked underneath Stefano's arm and scurried for the exit. A warning shiver immediately shot up her spine, alerting her that he now chased in hot pursuit.

Panic billowed from her gut to explode inside her chest, making it hard to breathe. She knew if Stefano caught her, he would sweep her into his embrace, and the forbidden opportunity she'd avoided just a few seconds ago would be an inevitable, undeniable fact.

Her fear flowed downward to virtually cripple her, making her knees wobbly, her sandaled feet slippery. She knew she wouldn't make it to the closed door before he captured her. Feeling a slight tug and subsequent release of her skirt from behind, Andra realized Stefano barely missed seizing the material within his grasp.

She darted to her right.

Racing for the room's center, she reached the circular mahogany table with the flower centerpiece mere seconds before he did. Shaking hands grasped the curved edge of the furniture as she quickly rounded it to place the heavy barrier between her and her pursuer. She nearly coughed up her heart when she observed Stefano stop on the other side.

Slowly, his body circled the heavy furniture, his dangerous eyes aglow with passion.

Breathing as if she'd just run a grueling marathon, Andra's chest unwittingly tightened beneath Stefano's probing gaze. During her flight her top separated to display twin crests, where each was drenched in beads of nervous sweat that slid down her neck to gather at the cleavage between them.

Dark eyes thirstily followed the watery trails leading to unbound breasts clearly outlined against her damp bodice.

Shaking her head, she circled the table, timing her shifting in direct correlation to his.

"Get thee behind me Satan," she whispered.

Stefano's brow lifted quizzically, painting for Andra a sardonic face that proved very irresistible in its presentation. She held back a groan at the seductive sight.

"Why? Why can't you just leave me alone?" Attempting to slow her breathing, Andra drew in deep, ragged breaths. "Look, I'm your sister-in-law. You shouldn't be doing this."

Stefano stopped in his tracks, forcing her to halt as well. His eyes took a moment to disconnect from her heaving chest to rise and meet hers.

"What am I doing?" he asked quietly. He produced a slightly arrogant shrug. "I am attempting to speak with you. However, you continue to run from me."

"You're trying to come between Jay and me – *that's* what *you're* doing," she said. "And I'm not *running* from you! I'm just ..."

*Scared.*

"Come to me."

Those three words slipped off his tongue as a soft command, producing an irresistible summons to her ears. It disabled her reasoning processes until they were completely deactivated. Legs that were as unsteady as a newborn calf's now grew strength.

Mesmerized, Andra took a step around the table – toward him.