

I'm
SO
Sure

A *Charmed Life* Novel

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THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO BEIJING

chapter one

That dirty rotten cheater.

I lower my binoculars and swap them for a camera. A moment like this needs some megapixel proof. The lens zooms closer and closer on my target. I shove my way farther into the bushes of the Truman City Park and aim toward the old tennis court, where the loser twines himself around a girl who is definitely *not* his girlfriend. Leaning over and balancing on one leg, I angle my body and get the perfect shot. One more close-up to seal the deal.

“Hello, Bella Kirkwood.”

With a squeal and a jerk, I topple over and crash into the shrubs.

Spitting dried leaves, I glare at the boy standing over me. “Hey, Chief.”

As the sun shines behind him, the editor of the Truman High *Tribune* smiles, and for a moment I forget that I’m sprawled in a small tree with limbs poking me in very uncomfortable places.

Luke Sullivan is *delish*. Except for his attitude. And his arrogance. And his broodiness. And his genius IQ that makes me feel like I have all the intellect of a gerbil.

“What are you doing?” With his hand on mine, he pulls me upright and I’m catapulted straight into his chest.

“Working.” I take a step back. “Mindy Munson hired me to find out if her boyfriend was cheating.” I jerk my head toward the couple making up their own game on the court. “I’d say we have a definite love violation here.”

“So you’re taking pictures of a guy without his permission. Don’t you think that’s a little creepy? A little unethical?”

I consider the idea. “Not so much.”

“This has got to stop. Ever since we busted the football team, people think you’re Nancy Drew.”

It’s true. When you get kidnapped by the leader of a deadly football gang, and said leader tries to permanently erase you from the planet, people think you’re the stuff. And when you walk away from the attempted murder with your head still intact, folks start to think you’re some sort of sleuthy hero.

Oh, the many perks of almost dying. I’ve spent the last two months tracking down stolen iPods, cheating boyfriends, a drill team stalker, and one lost bullfrog by the name of Mr. Toady Pants.

Not only does it keep me busy, it keeps me in shoes. Hey, the Prada fairy doesn’t visit me like she used to. I do what I must.

“Did you finish the article I assigned?” Now Luke’s all business.

“I’m working here. According to my watch the school day has been over for an hour, and believe it or not, I do have a life outside of the paper. What are you doing here anyway? If you’re so hard up for female company that you have to follow me around, maybe you should give Mindy Munson a call.” I throw a look at her loser boyfriend. “My keen reporter’s instinct says she’ll be on the market by tonight.”

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A corner of his mouth twitches; then he tilts his head and pierces me with those ocean blue eyes. “Who says I’m on the market?”

I blink. “Um . . . because I’ve never seen you with a girl. I realize I’m new to detective work and all, but unless your lady is invisible, she—”

“She’s at Harvard.” He picks a leaf from my jacket. “Freshman. And no, we don’t see much of each other, but she should be in for Christmas.”

Why do I suddenly feel like a deflated balloon? “You never mentioned her.”

He grins, revealing perfectly straight teeth. “You never asked.”

A chilly wind blows, and my chestnut hair reassembles itself into a new formation. Luke reaches out and tucks a wayward strand back into place, his fingers sliding across my ear.

“Get that shot!”

I jump as a flash explodes in my face. As three men surround us, Luke pushes me behind his back.

A squatty man sporting a Donald Trump comb-over steps forward. “Can we get another one of you and your boyfriend?”

I peek around Luke. “*What?* Who are you?” I shove Luke’s protective hands away and plant a fist at my hip. “And this *isn’t* my boyfriend.” Why am I explaining here?

“Doesn’t matter—just move in closer. These will be great promo shots.”

“Drop the camera and leave her alone.” Luke steps toward the guy. The boy may be tall and wiry, but he’s a beast on the soccer field, so he’s got some muscles on that frame.

“We just need a few more pics of the girl. Maybe you two could huddle up again?”

I gasp. “We were *not* ‘huddled up.’” Though we have kissed once. But it was just to escape the deranged football players. I barely remember it. Just a dim, faded . . . totally hot memory. Donald Trump snaps another picture. “I don’t know who you are, but how dare you spy on me and take my picture without my permission!”

Luke quirks a dark brow my way, then returns his stare to Mr. Comb-over. “Who are you?”

The short man shoves his card in Luke’s hand. “Marv Noblitz. I work for WWT.”

“Who?” No clue what that is.

Luke studies the card. “World Wrestling Television.”

Though it’s a vague fog swirling in my mind, I feel trouble beginning to take shape. “I think you might be looking for my stepdad.” He’s known as Captain Iron Jack on the amateur wrestling circuit. But I just call him Stepdaddy Spandex.

“We’re looking for the entire family.”

A horror movie soundtrack begins to play at full volume in my head. The kind of tune that pounds out right before things get ugly and the fake blood spews. “Look, Mr. Noblitz, Jake’s the wrestler. Whatever you’re working on, I didn’t sign up for it.”

“It’s a reality show—*Pile Driver of Dreams*.” He chuckles. “And you didn’t have to sign up—your stepdad did that for you.”

“Huh?” My brain tingles with dread.

“Get ready, kid.” He pulls out a cigar and sticks it in his mouth. “Hope you’re prepared to live your life in front of millions, because we’re going to follow you and your family for months. You’ll barely take a tinkle that we won’t be there with a camera.”

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I stand there mute. Frozen.

Luke pats me on the back, his face grim. “Looks like Hollywood’s knocking on your door.”

I sigh and close my eyes. “Yeah, well somebody needs to tell Hollywood Bella Kirkwood is *not* at home.”