

RESCUE ME

by
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By the Author

Come and Get Me

Heart 2 Heart

Heartland

Uncharted Passage

Just Business

Power Play

Descent

Breaker's Passion

Rescue Me

CHAPTER ONE

You want me to do what?”

“Come on, Tyler. It’s not that bad.”

“That’s a matter of opinion,” Tyler replied, her fingers dancing over the almost-soundless keyboard.

“When was the last time I asked you for anything?”

“Last week.”

“Okay. Well, when was the last time I asked you for something like this?”

Tyler stopped typing and looked at the phone on her desk as if she could see Paul through the speaker at the end of the line. Even though he was her best friend and was right, she still didn’t want to do this. It was absurd. “There is no way I’m going to sit around with a bunch of straight people and pretend to be your girlfriend for five days. I’ve done it before, Paul, at a cocktail party or a fancy dinner with a client. But five days is four days and twenty hours too long.”

“Tyler.” Paul’s voice turned serious. “You know how much this means to me. I wouldn’t ask if I really didn’t need you.”

“Paul, when are you going to man-up and come out of your office closet? You’ve made that company millions. If they don’t like it tell them to get fucked.”

“It’s not that simple, Tyler, and you know it. I don’t have more money than God and men and women following my every word, like you do. I’ve told you, I need one more big deal in my pocket before I can write my own ticket and get any job I want. Do you think I like

it? Give me some credit. This is a means to an end, nothing more. Come on, Tyler, please.” His voice was almost a whine, which set her teeth on edge.

Tyler tiptoed around her real hesitation about going on this trip. “Paul, you know I can’t do this.”

“Says who?”

“Paul...” Tyler began trying to find the words that normally came easily.

“Tyler, you can’t not do things because you’re afraid.”

“I’m not afraid.” Get a grip, Tyler thought, after she realized she’d practically shouted into the phone.

“Yes, Tyler, you are. Look at your life, your relationships with women. You’ve buried yourself in your books, behind Blake, and you haven’t been out on a real date in I don’t know how long.”

“Who died and made you my date monitor?”

“I’m your best friend, Tyler. That and a myriad of other duties make up that job description. Now, am I right or am I right?”

Paul was nothing but always brutally honest with her, and most times she loved him for it. But this was another matter altogether. *Normal* definitely had a new meaning. He wasn’t living in her shoes. He didn’t wake up in the morning and see what she saw every day. An empty bed and... He didn’t give her a chance to answer.

“Come on, Tyler.” His voice softened like it always did when he showed her how much he cared for her. “Do it for me. No, do it for you.” Paul corrected himself emphatically. He continued his sales pitch, which, unbeknownst to him, wasn’t necessary. “They have electricity, indoor plumbing, and a satellite phone. It’s not like we’ll be living like the Swiss Family Robinson. I’ve seen pictures of the house. It’s fabulous.”

He would know, Tyler thought. Paul had a natural decorating flair he kept hidden from his tight-ass boss and equally homophobic colleagues. But he had turned it loose on her house and she would be forever grateful. The only thing she knew about decorating was writing the check.

Tyler recognized his comment for what it was. He was trying to take the serious edge off the turn the conversation had taken. He was

trying to get her to laugh. At times he was the only one who could, and because of that she said, “All right, but you owe me big time. And I mean B-I-G time.”

“You won’t be disappointed. I promise you’ll enjoy yourself. I’ll make sure of it. You won’t regret this.”

Tyler hung up but not before murmuring, “Yeah, right.” Somehow she knew better.

CHAPTER TWO

Kristin Walker hated these business functions. Entertaining the wives, the mindless small talk, idiotic chatter about the weather, and the latest crisis involving the spoiled children of her husband's employees were enough to make her head pop. More than once she wanted to tell these pampered women that their children needed a swat on the butt once in a while and limits—not those associated with a Platinum American Express card.

Most of all she hated being on display. She was the boss's wife and, with her position, came the stifling requirements to constantly be the pillar of decorum, good taste, and the latest fashion. She really wanted to stay home in her favorite old T-shirt she kept hidden in the bottom drawer of her dresser, dunk Oreos in milk, and watch old sci-fi B movies. At least she'd set the Ti-Vo to record the Mars-invasion marathon scheduled to run the week they'd be out of town.

She was bored. After the incident, Steven refused to let her work. He masked his decision by telling people that even with an MBA from the Sloan School of Business, she preferred being a stay-at-home wife who supported him behind the scenes. She couldn't conceive of a statement further from the truth. He told her in private that no wife of his was going to work, even though she suspected it was more than that. He didn't want her around, even if it was her family's business. Or at least it used to be. But where she found herself now was her doing, and hers alone. She never regretted her decision but often wished it hadn't come with so many strings. Kristin could swear they were tightening around her neck.

Kristin looked at the neatly packed suitcase while she mentally ticked off the agenda on the ridiculous event next week. Three of Steven's employees and their spouses would meet Monday morning at the hangar where Steven parked his plane and they'd fly to the island. That was almost correct. Two of the three had a spouse. Paul, her husband's chief of strategy, was the only single one in the bunch, even though Tyler often accompanied him to spouse-required business events.

She thought about "Paul's Tyler." When she first met Tyler at the company Christmas party several years ago, she had expected something quite different from the tall, regal, self-confident woman who walked into the restaurant with Paul. Her hair was dark, almost black, and shockingly short yet not at all masculine. She wore an exquisite Vera Wang suit in a beautiful shade of deep plum. Kristin couldn't keep her eyes off her as they headed directly toward her and Steven. Tyler had a slight limp but didn't hesitate when Paul introduced her and she shook Steven's hand.

When she repeated the greeting and thanked Kristin for the invitation, Kristin's breath hitched when Tyler looked at her. Her eyes were pale blue, unusual for a woman with otherwise dark features, and were cautious when she gazed at Kristin. Her voice was smooth and melodic, reminding Kristin of good scotch whiskey. When their hands touched, Tyler's was warm and softer than Kristin anticipated. Something about her was familiar in an oddly comfortable way. Kristin didn't warm up to people easily, especially those related to Steven's job. She had to keep her guard up at all times when most of the time she wanted to sit by the pool, her feet up, drinking a Hurricane.

She Googled Tyler Logan the next morning and, fascinated, read every article about her. Tyler, a critically acclaimed author of a series of action/adventure novels, had, according to *Publishers Weekly*, "millions of fans around the world anxiously awaiting her latest release, *Expedition*, the next book in a series featuring Blake Hudson." Kristin had read every Tyler Logan book twice and easily admitted to herself and no one else that she was one of those eager fans.

Three years and more functions than she cared to count had passed, and she found herself looking forward to seeing Tyler each time. Regardless of the circumstances, whether it be a dinner party or Christmas celebration, she always kept one eye on the door until Tyler and Paul arrived.

“Mrs. Walker, the caterer is here.”

The housekeeper Steven insisted on employing spoke quietly from behind her. They didn’t need her, but she had lost that argument and so many others with Steven she no longer even tried. What was the point? He’d overwhelm her with words like *status*, *entitled*, their position in the community, his reputation, blah, blah, blah. She didn’t care about all that. Never did, never would. Certainly not now. She had never been interested in keeping up with the Joneses, and now that she was the Joneses, the achievement wasn’t what everyone thought it was cracked up to be.

“Thank you, I’ll be right down,” she said to the hovering servant she knew had a direct line to Steven. On more than one occasion Steven had information about what she had done or worn that could only have come from her. After all, the woman knew who signed her paychecks. With a sigh, she turned and headed downstairs.



“Are you planning to wear that thing on your ear all night?” Paul asked as he turned onto the street where his boss’s house dominated the cul-de-sac.

Tyler waved him off as she continued her conversation. “I’m sorry, Roberta, but I told you several times in the last week I’ll be out of town. You’ll have to handle this on your own or it’ll have to wait until I get back.” She listened for a few seconds. “No, I won’t be reachable by phone. I’ll be on some godforsaken island in the middle of nowhere. This is why I hired you. This is your job, not mine.” Tyler had had this same conversation with Roberta two days earlier. Getting nowhere, she said her good-byes and hung up.

Tyler had landed in Houston late that afternoon in time to get to Paul’s house, shower, change, and get to this pre-trip dinner. The

week had been a blur as she worked to get everything settled at home, enabling herself to go on this ridiculous trip. And to top it off her flight arrived late, typical for practically every departure from San Francisco lately.

She was tired, having not slept much the night before, preferring to venture out to her favorite club—the one with no name and a very discreet clientele. It had been several weeks since she'd visited it and she was getting antsy. Between this trip and other commitments, it would be at least another three before she'd have any time to venture out, so she made time even if it cost her several hours of desperately needed sleep.

Venture out. What an odd way to phrase what she did. It was almost clinical, definitely sterile, and just the way she needed it. The club was in an old warehouse whose exterior verified its age, but inside it was all chrome, glass, and glamour. She paid a hefty price to remain on the guest list and never regretted it. And last night had been no exception.

The soundproofing of the building was perfection. Absolutely no sound emanated from the brick building she had stood outside. Several times while waiting to be admitted, Tyler swore she heard crickets chirping. But once inside, everything changed.

She stepped through a series of mantraps, small individual rooms with four walls, a ceiling, and a door opposite the one she stepped through. This elaborate architecture kept the private club, well, private, and the noise from leaking into the street. She had learned of the club from a friend who had died from cancer and left her membership to Tyler. It was more than odd and Tyler was more than confused when the attorney contacted her to give her the information.

After months she finally ventured into the club, following the bizarre set of instructions in the sealed white envelope the attorney had given her three years earlier. Knock five times, count to three, then knock again. Secret words and a small blue-and-white card got her through the final gauntlet. Once inside and a few drinks later she promised she would never, ever venture into any other lesbian bar.

Last night the woman had been a redhead, or at least Tyler thought she was. Tyler had spotted her a few minutes after she arrived, and it wasn't long before they were in one of the private rooms she paid extra for. The lights were intentionally low, providing a sense of anonymity for the guests. Tyler considered it a false sense of security because how anonymous can you be when someone's face is inches from yours? She didn't go for the masks like some of the others, but to each her own, she often said. Tyler didn't know why the others were there. Whether having sex with complete strangers turned them on, or they too had something to hide, it didn't matter to Tyler. She didn't have to make small talk, pretend it was something other than sex she wanted, and never had to completely expose herself.

The lock barely clicked when the woman's lips were on hers, anxious hands tugging at her shirt. As was Tyler's usual modus operandi, she had the woman pinned against the door, naked and gasping for breath, in less than five minutes. Tyler was completely clothed; however, her belt was open, her zipper down.

Tyler was much taller than the redhead, which made it handy, so to speak, for the woman to straddle Tyler's thigh. Tyler didn't care about the telltale traces of desire on her pants. She focused on only one thing—the woman in her arms.

They exchanged kisses, each fighting for dominance, each relinquishing control. Lips ravaged, tongues mated, and teeth bit. Tyler kept the woman's hands above her head, giving her free rein to explore the luscious curves and intoxicating scent of the woman. She didn't bother with light, soft caresses; the woman didn't want them and that wasn't what they were there for. Nibbles and teasing licks were for lovers; this was fast, furious, and completely basic. In other words, raw sex.

Tyler bit on one nipple while her hand explored farther south. The woman eagerly spread her legs, giving Tyler silent permission to take whatever she wanted. Tyler did, boldly plunging inside the woman.

Her fingers easily slid in and out, the stranger's juices coating Tyler's hand. She flicked her clit back and forth with her thumb, and

before long the woman muffled her scream by sinking her teeth into Tyler's shoulder as she came.

Tyler's arousal had climbed along with the woman's and she was aching for release. She shifted slightly and the woman quickly returned the favor, her hands mimicking what Tyler's had just completed. Stroke after stroke Tyler waited for the explosion that would release the pressure that had been building inside her. It was taking her longer to come this time, much longer than the last and the time before that. What used to take minutes now took practically forever, and if she didn't completely concentrate she might not come at all. She waited and waited, and when she finally felt the familiar tingling in the pit of her stomach she focused on imagining the rush of orgasm spreading through her body.

It was over almost before she knew it. Her orgasms were far less powerful and cataclysmic than before as well. Maybe her age caused the difference. She was thirty-nine and had read that as a woman ages, her orgasms change. Once, just once, for a fleeting moment Tyler thought that maybe she should blame the fact that her climax satisfied her body but did nothing for her soul. She quickly banished that thought.

Tyler hung up as Paul stopped in front of his boss's house. Every time she saw the monstrosity, she thought this was by far the ugliest house she had ever seen. It was modern, sleek construction, a maze of sharp angles and chrome that she swore would someday come to life and fly into space. It was the perfect image of its owner and what she secretly hoped would happen to him.

She had despised Steven Walker from the moment she met him. Actually, even before she met him. If he was the type of boss that would fire her best friend just because he was gay, then she wanted nothing to do with him. But because Paul was her best friend she tolerated Steven and his pompous, blustering, self-righteous bullshit. She was sure tonight would not be any different. She needed to have her head examined to go on a weeklong retreat with him. Maybe she and Paul could pretend they were starved for each other and everyone would leave them alone. Yeah, another dream. Steven would probably like to watch.

Paul opened the passenger-side door of his BMW, extending his hand to help her out of the low-slung vehicle. This simple act and hundreds of other reasons were why Tyler would do anything for him.

They had met twenty years ago in high school when Tyler was the new kid and fell victim to the typical cruelties of teenagers who thought they were perfect and better than everybody else. She was overweight, wore thick glasses, had hair as limp as a mop and a chest as flat as her ten-year-old brother's. Paul, on the other hand, had thick blond hair, crystal-blue eyes, a perfect complexion, and was a shoo-in for homecoming king. He had been well over six feet in the tenth grade and at thirty-eight had grown into a strapping man that she often described as tall, dark, and Harlequin gorgeous. What Tyler knew, that no one else in the school even suspected, was that Paul Campbell was gay. Or, as Paul's father often phrased it, "as queer as a three-dollar bill."

Branch Oak, Arkansas was not a metropolis in anyone's imagination, and they had supported each other while Paul faked his way through dating, Tyler's first-kiss-turned-first-slap, and everything since. When Paul went to Purdue and Tyler to work at Walmart, they continued their friendship and somehow had grown closer. When her second book hit the bestseller list, Paul convinced her to go back to school and get her degree. He was the first person she hugged when she walked off the stage, thirty-three years old, a crisp diploma in hand. And then came the accident, when Paul really showed his true colors. She never would have made it through without him.

"You're the one who invited me on this trip. The least you can do is shut up long enough for me to get my shit together enough to be your adoring squeeze." Tyler loved their playful banter.

"You'll love it and you know it. Nothing to do but lie on the beach and—"

"Be bored shitless. Do I look like the kind of girl who enjoys doing nothing? The last time I did nothing I was in the womb." Her mother always said she came out moving and never stopped.

"You're a woman, Tyler. Fake it."

She jabbed at him and missed when the front door opened.

The housekeeper who had answered the door the half-dozen other times Tyler had been to this house greeted them and led them to the living room. On the way Tyler noticed that the flowers typically in place on the side table had been replaced by a large brass statue of an eagle scooping up a rabbit in its talons. It was so garish and distasteful. Tyler shuddered

A choir of loud voices reached her as they approached the living room. She recognized the harsh New York accent of Mark Starfield, the chief financial officer of PPH Development. By far the stuffiest, most conservative financial guy Tyler had ever met, he proudly displayed his wife Patty like a trophy, a role she was obviously born to play.

Tyler took a deep breath and slipped her arm through Paul's. "Here we go, sweetheart," she said under her breath.