



At Odds with the Heiress (Las Vegas Nights Book 1)

By Cat Schield

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Yet when her safety's at stake, their flirtatious games turn serious. Scarlett suddenly needs him, too. As things heat up, their steamy kisses—and steamier nights—make her wonder: Is the man who has always tormented her finally showing his true colors?

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Editorial Review

Review

RT 4 Stars

"Schield provides an interesting premise for the new Las Vegas Nights series, in which three half-sisters compete to see who will run a casino empire. Throw in a hunky hero, a spunky heroine and the glamour of the Las Vegas casino scene and ... jackpot!"

About the Author

Cat Schield lives in Minnesota with her daughter, their opiniated Burmese cats and a silly Doberman puppy. Winner of the Romance Writers of America 2010 Golden Heart® for series contemporary romance, when she's not writing sexy, romantic stories for Harlequin Desire, she can be found sailing with friends on the St. Croix River or in more exotic locales like the Caribbean and Europe. You can find out more about her books at www.catschield.net.

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Logan Wolfe slowed his stride as he entered the fifth floor executive office, taking a moment to appreciate the feminine tableau silhouetted against the backdrop of the Las Vegas Strip. Although all three Fontaine sisters were brunettes of a similar height and bone structure, they could not have been less alike in attitude, style and background.

The three were half sisters who'd known nothing of each other until their common father, Ross Fontaine, died five years ago. When their grandfather, Henry Fontaine, chairman and CEO of the multibillion-dollar Fontaine Hotels and Resorts, found out that Ross had two illegitimate daughters, he tracked them down and brought them into the family fold. They'd both changed their last names to Fontaine and accepted important roles in the company in order to participate in a contest, devised by their grandfather, to see which of his three heirs would run the Fontaine empire when he retired.

"Good morning, Logan," Violet Fontaine called, waving him over. "Grandpa, Logan has joined us."

"Good morning, Logan." Henry Fontaine's deep voice sounded from the speakerphone. He was based in New York City where the company had their corporate office and kept in touch with his granddaughters through a weekly conference call.

"Good morning, Mr. Fontaine. I hope I'm not intruding."

"Not at all," the CEO said. "In fact, I have to run to another meeting. Violet, dear, once again, I'm sorry for your loss. Call me if there's anything I can do for you."

"Thank you, Grandfather."

As Harper Fontaine pushed the button that ended the call, Violet gestured to the empty chair beside her. Logan sat down and gave Violet's hand a sympathetic squeeze.

"I was sorry to hear about Tiberius. How are you holding up?"

Her eyes brimmed with unshed tears. "Even though we all knew he had heart problems, it was still such a shock. He was a live wire. His energy never seemed to stop. I figured he'd live forever."

Logan had been friends with Violet for seven years, since he and his twin brother, Lucas, had decided to expand their growing security company to Las Vegas. Violet was the grounded middle sister who had a girl-next-door charm. Her mother, Suzanne, had been a showgirl at one time, but after a brief affair with Ross Fontaine and the birth of her daughter, she'd gone to work for Tiberius Stone, owner of the Lucky Heart Hotel and Casino. Twenty years her senior, Tiberius had fallen in love with Suzanne and they'd moved in together. Growing up, Violet had shadowed Tiberius around his hotel and by the time she graduated high school she knew more about running a casino than people twice her age.

In fact, Tiberius Stone was the reason the three sisters were solemn this morning. Violet's surrogate father had been found dead of an apparent heart attack in his office at the Lucky Heart the day before.

As Violet dabbed at her eyes, Harper spoke up. "Have you had breakfast, Logan?"

The Fontaine sisters met every Wednesday morning for breakfast at one of the three luxury hotels they managed for their grandfather. Sitting side by side on the Las Vegas Strip, each property was a unique reflection of the sister who ran it. This morning, they were enjoying breakfast at Fontaine Ciel, Harper's property and the newest jewel in the Fontaine crown. Taking a cue from the French word for sky, Harper had designed her sixty-story tower to showcase panoramic views of the Strip. In the most expensive suites, high above the city, eighteen-foot walls of windows were designed to give guests a sense that they were floating just below a dome of intense blue. The signature color was echoed everywhere in the two-billion-dollar hotel.

"Thanks. I've already eaten." He'd been up for three hours already. First his morning workout. A touch-base meeting with Lucas and then the trip to Fontaine Ciel to check the progress of the team testing the security system his company had installed in the soon-to-open hotel. "But I'll take a cup of green tea if Violet doesn't mind sharing."

"There's more than enough for two." Violet's hazel eyes were warm as she filled an empty cup and nudged it over to him. "It's good to see that someone besides me appreciates the virtues of green tea." She looked pointedly at the sister to her left.

"Right," Scarlett murmured, speaking up for the first time. "Heaven forbid Logan would try anything that's bad for him."

Scarlett Fontaine, voluptuous, charismatic and just plain sexy, had a knack for getting under Logan's skin. In his opinion, the breathtakingly beautiful former actress was the last person who should be running a billion-dollar hotel and casino. Without a college degree or business experience, she relied on her abundant charm to get things done, and it rubbed Logan the wrong way how much she'd accomplished with such techniques.

She popped a bite of sugary pastry into her mouth. Her soft murmur of enjoyment made the hair on Logan's arms stand up. He was a millisecond too slow to brace against the shock wave of awareness. Compelling and unwelcome, lust rushed through him, leaving a destructive tangle of longing and fury in its wake.

From the moment he'd entered the room, he'd done his best to ignore the once-popular child star. Being near her aggravated his composure. She exuded sexual energy the way Harper projected professionalism and Violet radiated optimism. Many times Logan had watched Scarlett shake up a roomful of men by simply

appearing in a doorway. That he was similarly affected despite his best efforts to remain immune pissed him off.

He liked things that he could control. Computer systems. Fast cars. Any risks he took were carefully calculated to result in the best possible outcome. "Chance favors the prepared mind" was a motto he lived by. Scarlett would counter with "Fortune favors the bold."

"I've tried plenty of things that are bad for me," he retorted. Avoiding the allure of her witchy green eyes didn't make him immune to their impact. "I like living a healthy lifestyle. Both physically and mentally."

Scarlett gestured with her chin in Violet's direction. "You two are perfect for each other."

Logan agreed. He wanted a woman who matched him. Someone who shared his views about healthy living and maintaining a balance between work and home. Not a fiery siren who would turn his routines upside down and rock his world.

Violet shook her head, the melancholy in her eyes clearing for the moment. "We're too much alike. We'd bore each other to death. No. I think Logan needs someone who will challenge him." Violet got to her feet and aimed a wicked grin at Scarlett. "Someone like you."

There was a slight hesitation before Scarlett's dismissive laugh. Logan cursed his curiosity as he watched the exchange. What had caused the delayed reaction? His pulse spiked. He sat back with crossed arms and watched Violet exit the room. The pause didn't mean Scarlett had considered the idea. She'd never given him any reason to believe she suffered the same sexual attraction that plagued him. Quite the reverse.

In fact, Logan wasn't sure she was interested in any of the men who pursued her. She doled out flirtation like candy that her admirers gobbled up, all the while keeping them at arm's length. Which made them all the more determined to have her.

For the past five years, since she'd left her acting career behind in Los Angeles and moved to Las Vegas to run Fontaine Richesse, Logan had watched her disappoint one suitor after another. He'd decided she was a coldhearted woman who enjoyed tormenting men, and kept his own desires firmly in check. A challenge when she took great pleasure in teasing him.

Shifting his focus to what had brought him to Harper's office this morning, he gave her an accounting of what he'd found during his consultation with his team regarding her security system.

"There won't be any problem having the cameras adjusted before your soft opening," he concluded.

"Good." She'd been making notes as he spoke. "One less thing to worry about." She glanced at her watch. "If there's nothing else, I have a meeting in ten minutes." A line appeared between her brows as she muttered, "That's providing he bothers to show up this time."

"Actually, I did have one more thing," Logan said. "A favor, actually."

He caught Scarlett's sudden interest in his peripheral vision. She leaned her elbows on the table and watched intently. He would have preferred to make his request to Harper in private, but with her hotel opening only ten days away, her time was limited.

"My niece is in town for the rest of the summer and I wondered if she could shadow you for a couple weeks. Observe a businesswoman in action."

Harper, the oldest of the three women by a year, was Ross Fontaine's only legitimate child. She had the training and the ambition to take over for her grandfather when he stepped down in two years. Harper's mother came from old East Coast money and had insisted her daughter be raised in New York City and educated at an Ivy League school. Her style was elegant and professional, from her smooth chignon to her black designer pumps.

"You're the perfect role model," he finished.

"The perfect role model," Scarlett echoed, her throaty voice rich with laughter. "The ultimate professional."

Logan glared at her, realizing he'd laid it on a bit thick. But the task his sister and brother-in-law had handed him was outside of Logan's expertise.

"I'd love to help," Harper retorted. "As soon as the hotel opens."

"I was hoping you could start showing her the ropes sooner."

"I don't know how I can...." Harper sent a hopeful look in Scarlett's direction. "What about you?"

"My schedule is wide-open," Scarlett said, her gaze as steady and watchful as a psychiatrist's. "I'd be happy to help."

This was not at all what Logan had in mind. His relationship with Harper was professional and cordial. What happened between him and Scarlett could only be called acrimonious. His niece was already a troublesome seventeen-year-old. Under Scarlett's influence, the girl would become completely unmanageable.

"Unless Logan doesn't think I'm role-model material," Scarlett continued when he didn't immediately jump on her offer. Her ability to read his mind with unnerving accuracy gave her an unwelcome advantage over him.

"Don't be ridiculous." Harper appeared oblivious to her sister's subtext. "Besides, your hotel is operational. She'll get a much better sense of how things run. Now, if you two will excuse me, I have an internationally famous pain in the ass to meet with."

Logan stared after Harper, cursing his bad timing. He should never have brought up his problem within earshot of Scarlett.

"Tell me about your niece," Scarlett prompted.

"I don't need your help." Being subtle was not the way to handle Scarlett.

"No," she said in a sugarcoated tone, "you don't *want* my help." She added coffee to her cup, lifted the rim to her mouth and blew across the surface. "There's a difference."

Captivated by the small O formed by her bright red lips, he took far too long to respond to her gibe. "Very well," he agreed. "I don't want your help."

"How old is she?"

Logan took a couple seconds to grind his teeth. Despite being trapped between frustration with his niece and the woman sitting across the table from him, he told her what she wanted to know. "Madison is seventeen. She's my sister's youngest." And in the past three months had driven Paula and her husband, Randolph, past the edge of patience.

"Madison? As in the capital of Wisconsin?"

"As in Madison Avenue." Logan winced. "Her father owns a large ad agency in New York City."

And Paula was a partner in a prestigious law firm. Madison had inherited both brains and ambition from her parents. She'd graduated second in her class and had been accepted to four prestigious universities. If she'd wanted, she could've swiftly climbed any corporate ladder she chose. Instead, to both her parents' horror, the teenager had decided to become an actress.

"And he's hoping she'll follow in his footsteps? From your sour expression I'm guessing that's not what she wants to do."

"She's refusing to go to college. She turns eighteen in two weeks and is determined to move to L.A."

Scarlett's curiosity sharpened. "What's wrong with L.A.?"

"It's not the city, it's her chosen career path."

"Instead of me dragging it out of you one question at a time, why don't you just tell me what's really going on. And why you wanted her to shadow Harper."

Sharing family troubles with outsiders went against the grain, but he desperately needed help. Anyone's help. Even Scarlett's.

"Madison ran away to Los Angeles over spring break. She's determined to become an actress."

Scarlett's full lips twitched. Over the years he'd noticed how well she could read people. Normally he concealed how easily she riled his temper and his hormones, but in this case his sarcastic tone had given too much away.

"The scandal that must have caused your family," she deadpanned.

"She's only seventeen."

"And she could've fallen into someone's evil clutches." Logan didn't appreciate that she was having fun at his expense. "Thankfully that didn't happen."

"What did happen?"

Not a damn thing. Madison had moved in with a boy she'd met in New York City the summer before and signed up to take an acting class. She'd even gotten a callback for a commercial.

"Her father found her before she got into trouble and brought her back to New York."

"Why don't they just let her follow her dream?" Scarlett poured herself a little more coffee. "Being an actress isn't the worst job in the world."

"Paula and Ran don't think it's the proper career for a girl as bright and capable of going places as Madison," he explained. "They want her to go to college and get a degree."

Other than a brief narrowing of her eyes, Scarlett's expression remained tranquil. "I didn't go to college and I think I'm doing all right."

So said the former child actress whose exploits had kept the paparazzi awash in scandalous photographs for several years. Scarlett's support of Madison's acting dreams was exactly why he hadn't asked her for help.

"You also had a billionaire grandfather bring you to Las Vegas and hand you a hotel to run."

He didn't realize how insulting that sounded until her seductive charm vanished in a flash of annoyance. For the first time ever, Logan believed he'd been granted a glimpse of the genuine woman beneath the mask. And it heightened his already keen awareness of her desirability. He inhaled slowly and let his breath leak out as he wrestled his libido under control. As his blood continued to pulse hot and slow through his veins, he had to repeat his breathing exercise.

Damnation. Why the hell did she have to be so utterly gorgeous?

She had flawless pale skin, dramatic bone structure and a body built to drive a man insane: large firm breasts, tiny waist, lean long legs. The way she moved invited everyone to stare. And her mouth... Her lush, red lips were crafted for kissing.

"You're right," she drawled, her temper giving the words a sarcastic bite. "It's unrealistic to think I would be running Fontaine Richesse if Grandfather hadn't gotten this crazy idea that his granddaughters should compete for the CEO job. I'd still be in L.A., auditioning for roles, working when I could and waiting for the part that would reenergize my career. But I would still be a success and I would be happy."

"Look, I only meant that you never would have been considered as Fontaine Richesse's general manager if you hadn't been Ross's daughter."

Users Review

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