



ONLY FOR YOU – Book Excerpt

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This book is intended for mature audiences.

Prologue

If time-travel were possible, I'd go back and probe deeper into what my intuition had forewarned. My retrospection is pointless as nothing can change the present reality.

The danger surrounding my life causes me to look at everything more closely. Once trusting the giver of every kind word or friendly smile aimed my way, I now understand I must first consider the motivations of everyone before relinquishing my trust.

Having been cast into this pool of deception, I'm now called to this unwished-for assignment of being a huntress. Although my reluctance to step into this unfitting role is great, the danger confronting me is not likely to vanish.

Chapter One

Weeks earlier

“Here’s another one for your collection.”

Mattie looked up from her desk wearily, taking the file from Vada Miller as if it were the last thing she wanted to receive at a quarter-to-five on a Friday afternoon. “Thanks.”

“You didn’t forget about tonight, did you?” asked Vada.

“What’s tonight?”

“It’s Ron’s birthday celebration. You said you’d come when I asked you yesterday.”

“Oh, that’s right. I completely forgot.” Mattie sighed with exhaustion and then shuffled through some stapled papers inside one of the folders on her desk.

Vada threw her a look of irritation. “Are you coming out with us or not?”

“I don’t think so. I was hoping to get to bed early tonight.”

Vada looked at her expressively. “What’s going on with you, girl?” She leaned over Mattie’s usually neat desk that was currently besieged by numerous client folders and legal documents. “You’ve been acting *strange* all week.”

She looked at Vada thoughtfully. “I miss my mother. Tomorrow it will be six months since she died.”

“I know you’re hurting, but you can’t stop living. You’re too *damn* young to become an old maid. Next I’ll be hearing about you going out and adopting a cat. After that happens,

the next thing you'll do is lock yourself up in the house with a dozen or more cats, eating ice cream and pizza, day and night, while watching old black and white movies."

"Thanks for the vote of confidence." Mattie crossed her arms in front of her defensively.

"It can happen," she teased.

"Well, you're overreacting," said Mattie.

"I'm sure there are lots of people who never planned on becoming spinsters, yet they are, and if you're not careful that could be your fate too."

"What's so wrong about it if a woman wants to live her life as a spinster? You don't need to be married to be happy," she stated.

"That's what every single woman like you would say," Vada spoke with ridicule. "Oh, Mattie, I see a houseful of cats in your future. You better start socking away that cat litter."

"That's not going to happen to me," said Mattie.

"How can you be so sure?"

"Because I'm a *dog* person," she answered smugly.

"*Smart ass*," said Vada. "Fine, I'll let you off the hook, for now."

"Thanks. I just want a quiet night alone. I might do some writing."

"*Writing*," Vada rolled her eyes derisively, "I just don't get you."

"Hey, Luanne," said Vada with a noticeable hint of alarm in her voice as their boss Luanne Falk stood before them.

Luanne's gray eyes narrowed warily at Vada. Luanne's stealth-like approach to keeping watch over her office file clerks left everyone on edge. No one ever knew when Luanne would pop up unannounced. Luanne's 15 years in the military when she was a young woman had left her with a stern method towards management. Although she was at times thought to be controlling, she made certain everyone in her office was treated fairly. And if she did notice any injustice, Luanne was the ideal sort of person who'd rush in and set it right.

"Speaking of writing," Luanne said to Mattie, "you may already know about it, but there's a live poetry chat site here in the local Pittsburgh area. The site's rather *old-school*, considering all the other social networks out there these days, but I know how much you enjoy writing poetry so I wrote down the address for you." She handed her the note.

"Thank you, Luanne. That's so nice of you." She put the paper into her purse. Mattie didn't care to participate in any social networking groups whether they were via the internet or in person. To her, engaging with people online through social networks was an unfulfilling pastime. But since Luanne took the time to jot down the address for her Mattie didn't want to be ungrateful towards her boss's thoughtfulness.

Luanne noticed Vada looking around the room restlessly. "Something wrong?" she queried.

Vada gave her a tight-lipped smile. "Not at all," she answered while shaking her head heartily.

“Well then,” she tapped her fingers on Mattie’s desk.
“There’s still work left to do. I’ll let you girls finish up.”

“Thank you again for the poetry link,” she expressed graciously.

“Make sure you check it out,” she suggested.

When Luanne was out of sight and back in her office, Vada let out a deep sigh of exasperation. “I’m cutting out early. Ron sent me a text. He’s waiting for me outside.”

“Is he driving his *muscle car*?” Mattie looked at her curiously. “The Charger, right?”

“You mean the *cursed* one.”

Mattie’s blue eyes looked at her judiciously. “I don’t understand why you believe his car is cursed. It’s a car, not some powerful warlock.”

Vada’s expression appeared more angry than hurt by Mattie’s skepticism. “Listen,” she snapped at her while thrusting her face into Mattie’s, “if you experienced the numerous unexplained events that *damned* car is responsible for crafting, I know you’d think twice before getting into that car.”

“I wasn’t aware you felt so strongly about this.” She noticed how frightened Vada appeared. “I’m sorry for being insensitive, Vada.”

Vada seemed to shake off her anger upon hearing Mattie’s apology. “Forget it.”

“I should be more considerate of your feelings,” she offered compassionately. Mattie felt like she was the most despicable human being on the planet.

“Well, now you know I’m serious about this,” Vada stated flatly. “I have to go. You know how irritated Ron gets if I keep him waiting.”

Mattie nodded.

“Don’t tell anyone I left.”

Mattie mimicked a motion of zipping her lips. She then peered around the room in a deliberate, casual manner. “*Now go*. The coast is clear,” she whispered and then waved to Vada as she left the 3rd floor office where the file clerks worked.

Two file clerks standing by Luanne’s office whispered something to each other as they watched Vada sneak out of work again. Vada’s brazen habit of leaving work early was creating a lot of annoyances among her co-workers. With each day, Mattie noticed Vada’s shameless defiance towards the firm was getting on everyone’s nerves.

Mattie stayed in the office late until she filed the last of the client files. After organizing her cluttered desk to a tidy and presentable workspace, she took the last available bus on her route out of the city.

It was dark by the time the bus dropped her off at her stop. The 1-story, Arts & Crafts styled house she’d been renting for the past few years was located in a quiet neighborhood north

of the city. Her landlord traveled extensively leaving Mattie to tend to any needed maintenance on the house.

She began renting the 1-story house when her mother's rheumatoid arthritis was no longer manageable. Her mother was unable to physically get around her 2-story, 4 bedroom home. Mattie moved out of her small apartment after she found the 1-story house to rent. She invited her mother to come live with her so her mother wouldn't be alone. Things worked out fine for a while until her mother's health took a tragic turn for the worse.

The first major health crisis came following a seemingly simple fall on the kitchen floor. Mattie was at work when her mother fell. Her mother had to lay on the floor alone for nearly 5 hours until Mattie returned home.

Although it appeared to be a minor fall, her mother received a mild concussion and had fractures to both her right shoulder and her right hip. While she was in the hospital recovering from several necessary surgeries, her kidneys started to fail. A few days later, her mother's lungs could no longer breathe on their own and she was required to be placed on a respiratory life support system. Every moment became incredibly difficult for her weak body to bear. Mattie's mother survived this way for just a brief time, and just a few weeks following her accident she passed away.

After her mother died, Mattie decided to stay in the house instead of looking for another house to rent. She liked living in

the modest neighborhood of older homes and kindly neighbors.

A while back she considered the idea of buying a town house near the downtown historic district, which was close to where Vada and Ron lived. Mattie was impressed by the size and design of their condo, but considering her fondness for trees, flower gardening and a quiet lifestyle, renting in the suburbs suited her best.

“Another long day, Mattie?”

Mattie jumped at the sight of her neighbor James Darnett standing in the dark beside the shrubbery at her sidewalk entrance. “*James*. Hi.” James was an easygoing, rather beatnik-looking, rotund man in his mid-60s. Although Mattie didn’t go out of her way to socialize with him and his reclusive wife, she did like having them as neighbors.

“I didn’t mean to startle you. I just came outside for a smoke,” he said as he dropped his cigarette and then snuffed it out with the sole of his shoe. “Are you still taking the bus into town every day?”

“Yes.”

“Can’t you car pool with anyone from your office? Seems like a major hassle, waiting for a bus all the time.”

“I don’t mind.” Mattie was so exhausted, and the shoulder strap of her purse felt like it was connected to a 50 lb. bag of sand weighing down upon her shoulder. The last thing she felt like doing was to share friendly banter with James. “I envy you, James—working from your home office must be nice.”

“I’ve no complaints, except for being locked up twenty-four seven with my wife. She can be a real *battle axe* sometimes. Other than that, being a home-based software developer does have its perks.”

“Well, it was good seeing you.”

“Wait a second!”

Mattie stopped at the base of her steps and turned around impatiently.

“Did you hear about what happened to that young woman a couple of streets over from us?” added James as he caught up with her at her porch.

“What woman?”

“Her name wasn’t printed in the paper,” he said, lowering the volume of his voice so no one but Mattie could hear. “It happened over on Gardner Avenue. She was robbed and assaulted inside her apartment. I heard she was beat up pretty badly.”

“God! That’s *horrible*.”

“There’s a blurb about it in today’s paper. You ought to read it. Especially with you living here in this house all alone,” he added as if he was reminding her. “You can never be too safe, Mattie. I don’t mean to pry, but maybe you ought to think about getting a security alarm.” He pulled out another cigarette. “A lot of single women like you do. Couldn’t hurt,” he added casually.

James seemed pleased to inform her of the assault, she believed. She wondered if he wanted her to feel afraid.

“Thanks for letting me know. If you don’t mind, it’s been a long day and I really must go in.”

“Sure.” He started back down her sidewalk. “Have a good night.”

“Thanks, you too.”

Mattie stripped out of her work clothes. The more she thought about the neighboring woman’s violent assault, the more she wished she had gone out with Vada and Ron. At least then she wouldn’t have been around to hear the terrible news from James.

She made a cup of jasmine oolong tea and then sojourned to the bathtub for a long soak. The warm water felt good as she sank down into the tub. She closed her eyes and let the tranquil ambiance consume her senses. The quiet atmosphere seemed to draw the creative flow of energy from deep within her as a poem began to emerge and take form.

She reached over to the stand beside the tub and grabbed her journal and pen then wrote out the words consuming her thoughts.

STREAM OF LOVE

He stood by the water

My lover of light

His eyes filled with warmth

As He embraced me

With his gaze of radiant white

Willingly, I went to Him

*And fell to His arms
A submissive lover
For Him and Him alone
He held me with strength
Tender domination
Never to leave Him
His rapture consumes me
His definitive love captures my soul
I'm eternally His
It is Him only I love
My pure lover of white
Radiant light
Takes me with Him
Across the dark, forbidding stream
To somewhere beyond
The chosen place
Where only He and I exist....*

Mattie put down the pen and journal and then closed her eyes. A stirring of erotic emotions began to move into her body. It had been so long since she'd been in love, or even felt the touch of a man's hand against her skin.

She slid her hand gently over her breasts, imagining a lover's caress. She then remembered the brief physical contact she had with a handsome stranger a few days earlier. She was running late when she stopped in at the River's Bend Café, a downtown coffee shop near her office. After waiting in line

for what seemed an eternity, it was finally her turn. As she walked up to the counter—from her right—a man bumped directly into her.

He gently took hold of her wrist and apologized. She was at first shocked by his brashness, but for some reason the sensation of his hand upon her skin caused her anger to vanish.

That she was even thinking of this stranger and their pleasant *accidental collision* now made her feel foolish. The more she thought about it she understood it wasn't the stranger she was longing for, but it was the sensual feeling of a deep, powerful kiss she longed to experience. As her mind lingered on sensuality, she imagined the sort of passionate kiss that could make every part of her body tremble with desire.

For the past couple of years Mattie had no personal time available to give to seeking out a romantic relationship. Much of her life's focus and free time had been aimed at caring for her ill mother. Whether it was chauffeuring her mother to doctor's visits and physical therapy treatments, she barely had time to go to work or sleep, let alone go out on a date. Perhaps Vada was right, she thought, it was time for her to start living again.

Mattie dried off, slipped on her favorite over-sized white nightshirt and then turned on her tablet. Feeling incredibly famished, she made a quick stop in the kitchen to make a lettuce, tomato and chicken sandwich and then headed back to her bedroom.

Pushing aside her purse a little too exuberantly as she sat down at her desk to eat, the folded piece of paper Luanne had given her earlier fell out onto the desk. She looked at the paper thoughtfully for a hard moment and then decided to type in the website address into her tablet.

While touring the site something interesting caught her eye. ‘Read a Poem. Write a Poem’, it read in hypertext letters. She clicked ‘Read a Poem’. A red background screen appeared with the words ‘Most Current Love Poetry for Today’. She clicked it and a poem appeared.

PETALS

Taken in her eyes of liquid violet

I'm lost within her charm

As she snares me in her net

I fall onto her bed

On a scattering of a red, fragrant rose

I ravish her, my tender flower

And subdue her with love's throes

Mattie found herself pleasantly moved by the poem. She read the author's profile. The author was a male user going by the name ‘K39’, a vague user name, she thought. His poem was posted at 4:55PM that afternoon.

She'd never personally known a male poet and found his poem enticing. The arousing, romantic imagery made her wish she was the female subject he wrote about in his beautiful

poem. Mattie thought how pitiful she must be to be sitting there fantasizing about the poem's author.

Thinking it might be fun to post the poem she'd written earlier while in the tub, she boldly brushed aside her introverted nature and grabbed her poetry journal. She filled in the user information, choosing only 'Mattie', then typed her poem into the 'Write a Poem' area.

Just as she was about to submit it, an uneasy, nauseating feeling came over her. She assumed it might have been from the chicken sandwich she'd just devoured. It was only 2 day old chicken she remembered, still, she felt queasy. She chewed up an antacid tablet, washed it down with a big gulp of tea and then clicked the *send* button to post her poem.

The sick feeling in her stomach persisted, so she decided to turn in for the night. As she lay in bed she kept thinking about K39's poem and couldn't sleep. She tossed around some more, kicked off the covers and then got out of bed. She turned on her tablet and decided to re-visit the poetry website.

As she logged in an instant message popped up on her screen.

You have a message from poet K39. "Hello, Mattie."

She froze as she looked at his instant message glaring back at her from the screen.

"Are you there, Mattie?"

"Yes," she typed and then hit the *send* button while her chest tightened.

“I enjoyed reading your poem. You write with such passion.”

Mattie felt her cheeks blush uncomfortably from reading his compliment. “Thank you.”

“I couldn’t sleep,” he wrote.

Mattie leaned back in her chair. She felt comforted to know they shared the same condition. She looked at the clock. 2:37AM, it read. “Full moon,” she typed back.

“Your poem is what’s keeping me awake.”

Mattie blushed again thinking how she’d tossed and turned unable to sleep from pondering his poem.

Mattie wasn’t sure if she should correspond anymore with him. She didn’t feel comfortable communicating openly with strangers on the internet. She was about to log out when another message from him came in.

“I never do this, Mattie, instant messaging with people,” he clarified.

He seemed to be sensing her doubt, she thought. “Me neither.”

“The only reason I did *IM* you tonight is because something about your poem touched me deeply. I hope you won’t mind me speaking too openly,” he paused for a few moments and then continued writing. “When I read your words it felt as if you were speaking right into my soul. I could feel myself being cast into your poem. It felt like nothing I’ve ever experienced before. I hope my honesty hasn’t offended you.”

Mattie felt a rush of heat flow through her body upon reading his open admission regarding her poem. “No, not at all.”

“Please don’t let my direct comments scare you off. I meant only to let you know I deeply *feel* the meaning in your words.”

Mattie was beside herself as his message seeped in. She wasn’t comfortable discussing her poetry. Hearing an intimate viewpoint from a stranger was unusual, but it was in no way unpleasant. “I appreciate conversation with substance. It’s not often I meet someone with the same depth of understanding who’s not ruled by temporal happiness.”

“We think alike. I’d like to talk more with you, Mattie. Would you be interested in having a cup of coffee with me sometime? We could meet close to your place if you like.”

And there it was, she thought, the proverbial *hook* she expected he’d toss out to her. Mattie felt pressured by his request. “I don’t know.”

“You don’t have to tell me where you live, that’s fine.”

“I’d rather not,” she stated.

“Don’t resent me for asking.”

Mattie smiled lightly though still unsure about his sincerity. “I won’t.”

“I live 20 minutes east of downtown Pittsburgh,” he wrote.

He could have lived anywhere, she thought. Mattie initially suspected he might not even live in Pennsylvania at all and had joined the Poetry site for the sole reason to corrupt

desperate women. If he was telling the truth, he was near, very near, she thought. “You’re not far from me.” Mattie felt sudden regret for informing him of that particular fact, but it was too late to take it back.

“Then you’ll have to meet me for coffee. It’s fate. There’s a reason you came back on line tonight and we met, Mattie. Aren’t you interested to find out what that reason is? I know I am.”

The pressure Mattie felt made her eager to run, as if to flee an approaching apocalyptic event. But on the other side of the uncomfortable pressure she felt was this lingering mystical feeling that they shared some sort of connection. “Maybe,” she wrote.

“Maybe, yes?”

Mattie’s hands were trembling as she typed. “Yes.”

His typing stopped. She thought maybe the reason was because it had all been an amusement and he just wanted to see how far he could push her into agreeing to meet him. She felt like such an idiot for having let the game go on this long. She should have gone out with Vada, she thought. She may have woken up in the morning with a hangover from partying with Vada’s rowdy friends, but at least she wouldn’t have been screwed over by some devious internet predator.

“I’m trying to think of a place where we could meet, Mattie. Are you familiar with the South Side? We could have lunch near there if you’d like.”

He was still there. Maybe he wasn't a predator, she thought. "Yes."

"From which direction will you be traveling?"

"North."

"There are some restaurants down along the river you might prefer."

"I'm familiar with them."

"Great. Do you like music?"

"If you mean *Rock* music, sure, I can tolerate it. I think I know which restaurant you're inferring. It sounds like fun."

"How about we meet there tomorrow at 1:00PM?"

Tomorrow was the 6 month anniversary of her mother's death, she thought.

"Are you still there, Mattie?"

"Yes," she typed. "What's your real name? I don't like having to refer to you as K39."

"Kyle Bruno. Do you want me to text you directions?"

"No need, Kyle. I've been there a few times."

"Then I'll see you there. I'm looking forward to tomorrow, Mattie."

"Me too."

"Sleep well," he wrote and then signed off.

Mattie was about to turn out the bedside light when her home telephone rang. The caller ID read *unavailable*. "Hello."

No one replied but she could clearly make out the sound of someone breathing rather laboriously on the other end. "Who is this?" The connection then went dead.

End of Chapter One.

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