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Police chief Juliette Tremblant recognized the shape of the man strolling down the street—in as calm and leisurely fashion as if it were the middle of the day rather than midnight. She slowed her car, convinced her eyes were playing tricks on her. It had been a long time since Tyler O'Neill had been seen in this town.

As she pulled to a stop at the curb, he turned toward her, and her heart about stopped.

"What the hell are you doing here, Tyler?"

"Well, if it isn't Juliette Tremblant." He made his way over to her, then leaned down so he could look her in the eye. He was close enough to touch.

Juliette was not, repeat, *not* going to touch Tyler O'Neill. Not with her fingers. Not with a ten-foot pole. There would be no touching. Which was too bad, since it was the only way she was ever going to convince herself the man standing in front of her—as rumpled and heart-stoppingly handsome now as he'd been at sixteen—was real.

And not a figment of all her furious revenge dreams.

"What are you doing back in Bonne Terre?" she asked.

"The manor is sitting empty," Tyler said and shrugged, as though his arriving out of the blue after ten years was casual. "Seems like someone should be watching over the family home."

"You?" She laughed at the very notion of him being here for any unselfish reason. "Please."

He stared at her for a second, then smiled. Her heart fluttered against her chest—a small mechanical bird powered by that smile.

“You’re right.” But that cryptic comment was all he offered.

Juliette bit her lip against the other questions.

Why did you go?

Why didn’t you write? Call?

What did I do?

But what would be the point? Ten years of silence were all the answer she really needed.

She had sworn off feeling anything for this man long ago. Yet one look at him and all the old hurt and rage resurfaced as though they’d been waiting for the chance. That made her mad.

She put the car in gear, determined not to waste another minute thinking about Tyler O’Neill. “Have a good night, Tyler,” she said, liking all the cool “go screw yourself” she managed to fit into those words.

It seems Juliette has an old score to settle with Tyler.

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to see how he makes it up to her.

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*Amy and gorgeous man both froze,
leaning over the spilled bag of
powdered sugar.*

The cloud had enveloped them—sugar was sprinkled over their faces, their hair, getting in their mouths, even up their noses.

She blinked. Yes, there was a bit on her eyelashes, too.

The man coughed. Amy did, too, sending tiny puffs of white powder into the air once again.

“Oh, my God, I’ve probably ruined your suit,” she said, afraid it had cost more than several months’ rent on her apartment.

“Don’t worry about it,” he said. “I’ll just take this off right here.” He shrugged out of his jacket, more powder flying as he did.

He peeled off his tie next. He started to unbutton the shirt, but then quit when he had it half-off. “Is this... Do you mind?”

Amy shook her head.

Mind was not the word.

More accurate ones would be...

Appreciate the sight before her?

Oh, my.

Dear Reader,

It all started innocently enough with a trip to Barnes & Noble. They have really wicked things in their in-store cafés. On a trip last year I bit into the most glorious creation—a lemon/raspberry bar. Tart and lemony, yet sweet and sinful.

I did it for you, Dear Readers, I swear. See, I somehow knew there was a story idea in those lemon bars. Really, I did.

So here you have it, the book that started out from a lemon bar. My heroine nicknamed them Sugar Daddies, a name that, yes, causes some trouble for her, but it all works out in the end.

And in this story please welcome back the sweet, meddling little old ladies Kathleen and Gladdy from my last book, *Runaway Vegas Bride*. Their friend Eleanor's godson is about to marry the wrong woman, and they're determined to help him before it's too late.

Hope you enjoy it (and the lemon bars),

Teresa Hill

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TERESA HILL



SPECIAL EDITION

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America's Publisher of Contemporary Romance

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Silhouette Special Edition

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**Spies, Lies and Lovers* #940
**Cinderella and the Spy* #1001
**Her Secret Guardian* #1012

†Written as Sally Tyler Hayes
*Division One
**The Foleys and the McCords

TERESA HILL

lives within sight of the mountains in upstate South Carolina with one husband, very understanding and supportive; one daughter, who's taken up drumming (earplugs really don't work that well, and neither do sound-muffling drum pads—don't believe anyone who says they do); and one son, who's studying the completely incomprehensible subject of chemical engineering (Flow rates, Mom. It's all about flow rates.)

In search of company while she writes away her days in her office, she has so far accumulated two beautiful, spoiled dogs and three cats (a black panther/champion hunter, a giant powder puff and a tiny tiger-stripe), all of whom take turns being stretched out, belly up on the floor beside her, begging for attention as she sits at her computer.

To my niece, Rachel, who has welcomed her first child, Ashley Nicole, into the world and brought incredible joy to my parents, now the happiest great-grandparents ever.

Prologue

Eleanor Barrington Morgan smiled and nodded, she hoped with nothing but a mixture of happiness and acceptance showing in her face, as her most favorite person in the whole world, her godson, Tate Darnley, told her he'd met yet another woman.

This one was an investment banker.

"Mmm." She nodded, having to grit her teeth beneath her smile. "Someone from your office?"

"Yes," Tate said.

Eleanor could just picture her, disciplined as could be; fastidious in her dress, diet and exercise plan; highly intelligent when it came to numbers and strategy; working her little fanny off to get ahead.

She probably came to bed clutching a spreadsheet, not quite able to let it go completely.

Eleanor's husband used to be that way. He was an investment banker, cool, calculating, highly intelligent and with

the warmth and interpersonal skills of a deep freeze. She'd endured thirty years of trying like a fool to change him, to figure out what was wrong with her that she couldn't make him love her or want her the way she wanted to be loved, and she wanted so much more for Tate.

Instead, he'd been raised by a stockbroker, become a venture capitalist himself, and showed all the signs of following in all of their footsteps.

Especially in his choice of women.

She wanted to weep, to scream at him, to try to knock some sense into him, to tell him there was so much more to this world and to life other than money, the latest business deal and numbers. But of course, a Barrington-Holmes woman simply did not do those kinds of things. She'd been raised to be too dignified for that.

So she sat there and smiled and nodded, until he kissed her on her cheek and left. Her best friends at Remington Park Retirement Village, Kathleen and Gladdy, saw him go and came to hear the news right away.

"He found another one," Eleanor told them. "Just like the last one and the one before that, it sounds like. How can men be so stupid?"

Kathleen and Gladdy shook their heads and sighed, having heard it all before.

"That first woman like that? Did she make him happy? No," Eleanor said, answering her own question. "The second one? Was he happy with her? No. The third one? Not even close, and now, here we are. Number four, who sounds like a clone of the first three. I could tell by the way he talks about her. No real emotion there at all, no excitement, no warmth. Just all this bunk about compatibility and shared goals. Please! It sounds like they're going into business together."

Kathleen frowned. "What exactly is your objection to..."

trying to gently nudge him toward someone else? Someone you think would make him happy?"

"Well, Mother always said we shouldn't meddle," Eleanor said.

"Oh, please." Gladdy dismissed that with a huff and a smile. "What kind of mother is that? And besides, you told me your mother died twenty years ago. It's not like she's going to come scold you for anything now."

"I know, but...well, the honest truth is I've tried before to steer Tate in a different direction, and...I'm afraid I'm just no good at it," Eleanor admitted, much as it cost her to say so. She was raised to never admit any kind of inadequacy she might have.

"Oh, honey." Kathleen laughed. "We can fix that. Gladdy and I are terribly good at meddling. Just ask anyone. What we pulled off with my darling granddaughter Jane..."

"It was a thing of beauty. A master feat," Gladdy bragged. "And now, Jane's happy as can be, and believe me, we despaired of Jane ever truly being happy. In truth, sometimes we despaired of her ever so much as going on a date."

Kathleen nodded. "It was bad. Very bad. I don't think anyone but Gladdy and I ever thought we could save Jane, but we did. We can save your godson, too. Just say the word, and we'll go to work."

Eleanor sighed. She'd heard this story. Practically the whole of Remington Park had been involved in the match-making scheme and had a blast doing it, she'd been told.

Her people, the Barringtons, and her husband's, the Holmes, were just repressed, stuffy, private people, crippled emotionally and quite possibly beyond all help, Eleanor sometimes thought, and it was hard, breaking the patterns of decades, the ones imprinted on the very DNA in every single cell in one's body.

"I wouldn't even know where to start," she said.

"Don't worry." Gladdy patted her hand reassuringly. "We do."

Eleanor tried to be good. Truly, she did. She stayed out of Tate's supposed love life, although honestly, she doubted there was any kind of love involved, emotional or physical. Poor thing.

And what did her noninterference get her?

Six months after first mentioning her, Tate announced he was engaged and finally admitted the woman he'd been seeing all that time was none other than Victoria Ryan! A girl he'd known for years. They'd practically grown up together, acting more like brother and sister than anything else. And Victoria, unfortunately, had the most disagreeable mother. Eleanor shuddered at the thought of ever having to face that woman over a holiday dinner table or, even worse, at a wedding.

Still, Eleanor thought it wouldn't last. No woman ever really had with Tate. She wasn't worried, wasn't sorry she'd stuck with her plan of not butting in.

Six months after that, the wedding—a huge extravaganza in that mausoleum of a place Eleanor once called home—a mere two weeks away, she was hungrily searching for any signs that the nuptials would somehow fail to take place.

Two days before the first of the family guests were scheduled to arrive for the five-day event, she was desperate and went to Kathleen and Gladdy.

"Well, the simplest thing, of course, is another woman," Kathleen said quite calmly in the face of Eleanor's outright panic.

"But, he's not seeing anyone else," she explained. "Not that I know of."

“No, I mean, we have to find him another woman—a real one, not an ice sculpture,” Gladdy told her.

“Where are we going to find him a real woman in two days? He’s been dating for fifteen years and hasn’t found one yet,” Eleanor said. “And even if we did find one, what then? It’s not like we can guarantee he’s going to fall for her. I mean, he’s a man, and we all know what most of them are like. But he’s not a rat. I just don’t think he’s going to be looking for another woman on the weekend of his wedding.”

“We put them together and see what happens. That’s all it should take,” Kathleen said, sounding remarkably confident.

“Yes, and we all know just the woman!” Gladdy announced, glancing into the kitchen, where Amy, their sweet, most favorite former employee, newly graduated from cooking school, had arrived with a special birthday cake for one of the ladies in their cottage who’d always been a favorite of hers. “Eleanor, didn’t you say you were going to hire a chef for the weekend? To feed all those guests staying at your house?”

“Yes, I did. A lovely man named Adolfo.”

“He’s going to come down with something at the last minute,” Gladdy said, pointing to the woman in the kitchen. “And you’re going to replace him with her.”