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SIERRA MALONE TRUSTED THE WRONG MAN
NOW HE'S TRYING TO KILL HER

WENDY DAVY
DEADLY
CHASE

Deadly Chase

Wendy Davy

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Deadly Chase

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Dedication

In honor of those who protect and serve.
Thank you.

Praise for Wendy Davy

2010 SARA Merritt Award Winner *Reluctant Bridesmaid*

“...*Reluctant Bridesmaid* by Wendy Davy is a charming romance with likeable characters and lively dialogue. While the growing romance between Jordan and Tanner is the main focus of the story, the author also focuses on their Christian faith and how the events in their lives have shaped their beliefs and their willingness to depend on God to get them through their troubles...I was captivated by her writing style...”

~ Night Owl Reviews Top Pick ~ Maria

Night Waves

“Wendy Davy weaves a tale of suspense that captures your attention and pulls you in from the very first page. Her characters are engaging, and the suspense builds until the very end. I was kept guessing through every twist and turn of the plot. *Night Waves* is a wonderful read...you don’t want to miss it!” ~ Mary Manners

Snow Angels

“...The conflict in this story is so moving...If you enjoy characters that you “live” along with, moving conflicts, and impossible romance, then *Snow Angels* is a book for you! ~ The Romance Studio ~ Steph B.

Other Books by Wendy Davy

A Matter of Trust

Drake's Retreat

Night Waves

Snow Angels

Reluctant Bridesmaid

Prologue

"...God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." II Timothy 1:7 NKJV

Seattle, Washington

Stark terror brought Sierra Malone fully awake as a heavy body pressed her deep into the mattress. Darkness cloaked the room, but she didn't need vision to know who had invaded the privacy of her home. His sickening, familiar scent washed over her, confirming Kevin Eason's reign of terror continued.

His sweaty palm clamped over her mouth and powerful fingers closed around her throat, constricting her airway. She clawed his skin and thrashed her legs. Sheets tore from the bed, wrapping her in a shroud of tangled cotton. His bruising strength outmatched hers, dooming her attempts at freedom. Pinpricks of light danced before her eyes. Just when she feared she'd pass out, Kevin removed his hand from her mouth and eased the ironclad hold on her throat. Sierra filled famished lungs to capacity and opened her mouth to scream, but managed only a strangled sound.

He shifted and switched on the lamp. As light flooded the room, Kevin's face—contorted with fury—came into focus. Revulsion turned her stomach. How could she ever have thought him charming and handsome? Blood beaded along his jaw where her

fingernails had penetrated, and a heavy drop fell onto Sierra's bare shoulder.

"If you kill me, they'll put you in prison for the rest of your life." She forced the words through her raw throat.

"They didn't catch me before. They won't this time."

"What do you mean?" Sierra rasped the question as panic squeezed her chest.

"You're about to find out." Heated breath, tinged with peppermint, scorched her skin. "Did you really think I would let you walk away from me? Did you think a flimsy piece of paper could protect you?"

"I have a right to live my own life."

Molasses-colored eyes, which once regarded her with adoration, now projected contempt. "I thought I made myself clear, *bien-aimée*. You have no life apart from me." Rage saturated his words. He straddled her waist and backhanded her.

White hot pain flashed across Sierra's face as her head whipped to the side. She tasted blood, and nausea rolled her stomach again. She braced her arms across her face, knowing another forceful blow could knock her unconscious.

"Now look what you made me do." Perspiration rolled down his temples to land on mangled sheets. He wiped his brow as his breaths came in ragged gasps. "If you had obeyed me, none of this would've happened."

If she had obeyed him, she would've been his prisoner. A life with Kevin would be no life at all. Physically no match, Sierra searched for an escape. "I'll try harder. W-we can work things out. We can talk about what I've done wrong. We'll be together just like

you've always wanted."

"You're lying."

"No, Kevin. I never should've left you. I should have accepted your gifts and returned your calls. I...I made mistakes. I'm sorry I pressed assault charges against you and filed for the restraining order. Let me make it up to you."

Confusion flickered in his expression. He climbed off the bed and paced the room. Fisting his hands, he pressed them against his forehead as if fighting an inner battle only his twisted mind could comprehend.

Sierra ignored her throbbing cheek and seized the moment. She wedged her hand between the mattress and box springs, and grabbed hold of the pepper spray she'd recently purchased. She took aim. When Kevin lowered his hands, she took a deep breath and pressed the lever. A stream shot forward, bathing his face in debilitating fluid.

High-pitched wails tore from his lips, and he stumbled, crashing about the room. Coughing spasms wracked his body as he spun, hands splayed wide, long fingers aiming for her slender neck. Blinded and off balance, he swept his palm across her dresser. Perfume, hair brushes and make-up clattered in disarray. The restraining order, which had instigated his brutal attack, fluttered uselessly to the floor.

Sierra tossed aside the canister and unwound her legs from the sheets. Residual particles of the spray hung in the air, choking her and stinging her eyes. She gasped for breath and dashed toward the hallway. Her bare feet slapped against cool hardwood, but she took no time to slip on shoes. In the foyer, she grabbed her purse and yanked open the front door. Freezing air blasted through her thin nightgown, frosting exposed

Wendy Davy

skin. She stumbled across the threshold, alone and vulnerable, praying God would lead her to safety.

"You...can run, but...you can't hide. I'll find you." Kevin's malicious words cut through fitful coughs. "And then I'll kill you."

1

Two weeks later...

A silver sedan careened past Sierra leaving behind exhaust fumes and wet tire tracks. She thought she'd left the rainy weather behind when she had arrived in Shenandoah Valley. Apparently April rain flowed in Virginia as often as it did in Seattle.

Her skin prickled with warning as if someone lurked in the darkening alleyways, waiting to strike. As cool, wet drizzle dampened her face, anxiety mounted, and she cast a series of nervous glances over her shoulder. If she hadn't promised to deliver the leftover pastries from her friend's bakery to the homeless shelter tonight, she would've turned around and headed back to the apartment she temporarily called home. Not that she felt safe in the tiny, one-bedroom place, but at least it had four walls and locks on the door.

Sierra crossed the intersection of Chapel Street and Second Avenue, and then dared to glance behind her again. The silhouette of a tall, broad-shouldered man emerged from the alley about a hundred yards behind. His long, dark overcoat swayed in the breeze as he ambled along.

Sierra's heart rammed against her ribcage, and blood rushed through her ears, drowning out all other sounds. She swallowed the fear rising in her throat, assuring herself this man couldn't be the same one

who'd robbed her of everything she'd once held dear. Kevin Eason never ambled. He strode through life with a clear purpose in mind, as if taking anything slow wasted his precious time. Born a hunter, he hid behind the guise of a highly respected profession. As a prosecuting attorney, he'd learned to set his sights on a target and then claim it with ruthless efficiency.

Shivers wracked Sierra's body, and she banished the invading memories, but fear wasn't as easy to relinquish. She faced forward as long as she dared and then took a quick look behind again. The man continued walking, but his long-legged strides outmatched her shorter ones, and the distance between them dwindled.

He probably meant her no harm, but unwilling to take any chances, Sierra lunged off the sidewalk onto Third Avenue. Her tennis shoes splashed through puddles, and cold, grimy water coated her pant legs. She ignored the discomfort and sprinted across the street. The Hope Center offered security, and she focused on its distant glowing lights.

A horn blared and headlights speared her in the waning light. Tires squealed on wet asphalt, and a large SUV swerved as if out of control. Sierra darted to the side, unsure which direction led to safety. The headlights were aimed straight at her—she'd chosen wrong.

Paralyzed, she squeezed her eyes shut and braced for impact.

Lord help me.

The blow came from the side, knocking the wind from her as she flew through the air. She'd expected to be hit from the front. She'd also expected the impact to be cold and unyielding. But, although a huge, rock

solid object plowed into her, it was warm and conformed to her, shielding her body. When the landing came, she didn't hit cement. Instead, she crashed into steel arms and a sturdy chest.

Sierra tried to regain orientation and find her lost breath as the SUV sped past in a blur. Had the guy trailing her knocked her out of the way? As her hands touched warm, corded muscle, and a rich, earthy male scent filled her senses, she had her answer.

The stranger eased her onto the sidewalk. Sierra shifted, gaining a full view of the man's face, illuminated by a nearby streetlamp. His forehead creased under strands of dark, wavy hair, and he peered at her with concerned, emerald eyes.

"Are you all right?"

"I think so, considering I just had a brush with death." Had the near miss been intentional? Had Kevin found her? Again, fear took hold. "Did you see the license plate number?"

"No. I was hoping you did. But, there's nothing we can do about that now." He angled his head. "Are you sure you're not injured?"

"I'm OK. How about you? Did I hurt you?"

His gaze raked over her, and not for the first time, Sierra wished she'd grown taller than her five-foot four inches. A corner of his mouth lifted. "You couldn't hurt me if you tried."

Of course she couldn't. But, he could easily hurt her. He had an athlete's build—solid, strong and lean. She'd felt power when he'd wrapped her in his arms, protecting her with his body; power he could easily use against her.

He climbed to his feet, standing tall and dusting his long overcoat with his palms. He held out a hand,

but Sierra scrambled up without assistance concentrating on steadyng herself and creating distance between them. "You put yourself at risk for me. Why?"

He lifted a shoulder. "It's what I do."

"Who are you? Some kind of superhero?" She retrieved the still intact box filled with pastries, nearly dropping it again from unsteady hands.

"I've been called a lot of things. A hero isn't one of them." He stepped close. "Allow me." He slipped the box from her grasp. "I'll walk with you to the Hope Center."

Blood drained from her cheeks clear to her toes, and her legs threatened to give out. "H-how did you know where I was going? Were you following me?" Sierra took a step back ready to flee.

"Take it easy. I'm not going to hurt you." He nodded toward the box, yet his gaze remained steady on her. "I assumed you were walking to the center because the lid has 'donations' written on it, and you were going in that direction. As far as following you?" He shook his head. "I was just heading there myself looking for a hot meal."

Sierra took in his appearance again. His hair, although clean, was longer than it should be and a bit disheveled. A patchy, untrimmed beard covered his square jaw. Dirt splotched his black coat, and he wore sweatpants with scattered holes. The soles of his shoes appeared so thin she doubted they protected his feet.

"O-oh m-my," she stuttered. "I'm sorry. I just...I didn't realize you were...you know." The warmth creeping up Sierra's cheeks turned into a blazing inferno.

"Don't worry about it."

"Well, I'd better get going. Luanne's expecting these." Sierra attempted to take the box, but he did not release his hold.

"After you."

She thought to argue, but a glance in his determined eyes told her he wasn't about to change his mind. One block separated them from the Hope Center. Although Sierra had made the trip several times, she never realized how long that block took to walk until she had to travel next to an enigmatic stranger. The man acted like saving lives was something he did every day, speaking and moving with a quiet inner confidence, and looking at her as if he knew more than he should.

He tossed a quick look back over his shoulder before catching her gaze. "I didn't mean to frighten you and make you run back there."

"It's not your fault. I normally wouldn't have thought twice about someone walking behind me, but things haven't been normal in a long time." Images of Kevin flashed in her mind—his charming smile, his evil intent. He'd taken her sense of security and crushed it in his ruthless grasp. She trailed her fingers along her neck, remembering the pain he'd inflicted.

"Did something happen to you?"

Sierra couldn't blame him for being curious about her behavior, which he probably considered more than a little off-balance, but she didn't want to explain. "A lot of things have happened."

He nodded as if deep in thought. As they approached the center, he shifted the box and opened the door. "Let's get out of the cold."

She stepped inside and the aroma of steaming soup and toasted bread filled her senses. Several tables

laden with food lined the front wall, and about a dozen people stood in line for food, while others sat eating at long banquet tables. Luanne, the center's manager, had brightened up the place with splashes of color. Yellow tablecloths and a red rose adorned each table providing a welcoming atmosphere.

Sierra turned to her rescuer. "The pastries go directly into the kitchen. Then the volunteers take care of the distribution." She reached for the box again.

The man shifted the box, but didn't release it. "I'll follow you."

"If you insist." She had been up since before dawn, helping in Allie's Bakery, and was too tired to argue. She dodged the people in line and headed for the kitchen. "I didn't catch your name."

"You didn't ask."

"I'm asking now." She pressed, undaunted.

He nodded. "Chase Price. And you are?"

"Sierra." Uncomfortable with giving out her last name, she added quickly, "Well...Mr. Price, if there's anything I can do to repay you—"

"Call me Chase. And as far as repaying me, you can stay safe. That'll be sufficient for me."

"God's grace is sufficient." The words popped out automatically. The pastor at Mountain Rise Community Church had spoken about how God's grace is made perfect in weakness. That passage had stood out among the rest in last Sunday's service, as if God was telling her she wasn't on her own in her plight.

Chase paused. "I know that one. Isn't it in Corinthians?"

Sierra stopped at the kitchen's threshold. Loud conversations faded as she stared at him. "You know

Scripture?"

"God and I haven't exactly been on speaking terms lately,"—he paused—"but I do remember plenty about what's in the Bible." His expression hinted at a subtle, yet deep-rooted defiance.

"That's a shame. I mean...about the part where you don't talk to God. I wouldn't know what to do without Him. He's been a great comfort to me, especially lately."

Chase raised his brows, but didn't comment; instead he knocked on the kitchen door. "Luanne?"

"Is that you, Chase?" Luanne replied. "Come on back."

"You know Luanne?" Sierra followed Chase through the kitchen, surprised again by this stranger.

"I've been in the area a few weeks. I come and go on occasion, and I've had the opportunity to speak with her a time or two."

"You come and go? So you're a drifter?"

"Something like that. How about you?"

"I usually tend to stay in one place." Having lived in Seattle her entire life, with exception to the last few weeks, Sierra considered herself anything but a drifter. She'd never even ventured out of the country.

Chase sidestepped around a counter where a volunteer buttered toasted bread. "I meant how long have you known Luanne?"

"Oh." Sierra had become accustomed to giving little information, and she cautiously replied. "For a while."

If Chase noticed her evasive answer, he didn't show it. He scooted past an older woman stirring a pot of steaming soup. "With both of us coming by the center, I suppose it was a matter of time before we *ran*