



peace of mind

book two of the evie sanders series

**a novel by
linda lamberson**

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PEACE OF MIND

by

Linda Lamberson

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prologue

Last winter, I was a college freshman at Indiana University. Quinn Harrison, a sophomore, had approached me after class the one morning I'd mastered the art of looking like a complete and utter disaster. He, of course, looked perfect in every way, and I was immediately taken with him—so much so that I couldn't get him out of my head.

Quinn could've had any girl on campus, but for some strange reason he wanted me. He asked me to meet him at a fraternity party later that week, and I remembered obsessing over whether or not I should go, what I should wear, and what I would say to him. I was nervous Quinn might try to kiss me, but I was secretly even more nervous he might not.

And when Quinn did kiss me that night, it took my breath away. It was the most amazing kiss of my life. Our lips touched and everything changed between us. I realized this was more than just some infatuation of mine, that Quinn was more than just some unbelievably cute guy. We were connected in some inexplicable way. Fate, however, had other plans for us. Days later, I was involved in a fatal car accident, and my life was suddenly over.

Little did I know, my death marked my beginning. I'd been given a fresh start—a new “life.” I was transformed from a living, breathing human into an immortal guardian—a Shepherd. But walking down this road meant never looking back. Shepherds weren't allowed to keep any memories of, or ties to, their pasts, and with the wave of a hand, I'd quickly forgotten mine. The Archives was now the only home I knew. I had a new family made up of my mentor, Peter, as well as Teddy, Agnes, and Eli—all immortals like me. I also had been given new abilities that allowed me to use my mind to travel, communicate, heal, and even fight when needed.

And Quinn became a mysterious and intriguing stranger whose life I was charged with protecting from the Servants, the same clan of demons responsible for my death. Safeguarding Quinn was my sole focus—at least it was initially. But my death and newfound immortality hadn't erased everything I used to be. I still felt human; I was still capable of experiencing every human emotion and desire.

Against all odds, the bond between Quinn and me had survived my death. It didn't matter that I couldn't remember him; I couldn't deny what I felt for him each time I looked into his sapphire blue eyes. And I learned that Quinn was more than my true love—he was my *true soul mate*.

Regardless, my relationship with Quinn was forbidden, and there were consequences for my indiscretions. Faced with an ultimatum, I chose the lesser of two evils: to remain Quinn's Shepherd, I had to strip his mind of all memories of me—of us—since I was assigned to protect him. He would never again remember me as his guardian and best friend. He'd never know what it felt like to experience the rare and unyielding love we had for each other. Only I would.

Erasing Quinn's memory would be the worst thing I'd ever do.

1. a brief reunion

I stood on the sidewalk below Quinn's apartment building and gazed up at his living room windows. His lights were already off. I looked down at my watch; it was just after eleven, but it seemed like most of Chicago was already sound asleep. I closed my eyes and let the midsummer night's breeze caress my skin as it slowly wound itself through the streets of the West Loop.

I still couldn't believe I was actually here, just moments away from seeing Quinn—from touching him, kissing him. The mere thought sent ripples of excitement through me. It all seemed like the most incredible dream; one I was terrified I'd wake up from at any moment. I had to keep telling myself that this was real, that somehow I'd negotiated with the Council Tribunal and managed to steal a handful of hours to spend with Quinn before ...

I noted the time again and tried to ignore just how much these next eight hours with Quinn would cost me in the end—would cost *us*. But the bitter truth was all too happy to pinch me, reminding me of the harsh reality that awaited me tomorrow morning. When I erased his mind of every memory of me since becoming his Shepherd, I would not only be losing Quinn, but I'd also be breaking the one promise I made him.

I took a deep breath and tried to convince myself yet again that I'd made the right choice—that this was the right thing to do. I told myself that this wasn't me giving up on us. This was me fighting for us. This was the only way I could remain by his side. This was the only way I knew how to keep him safe from the Servants' demonic plans to end his life.

My situation was far from ideal, but it was definitely a hell of a lot better than the alternative, which was to abandon Quinn without so much as saying goodbye, without explaining why I vanished in his arms nearly two weeks ago, leaving him to forever wonder what had happened to me that night. I could never willingly do that to him.

If there's a way for me to remain your Shepherd and for us to be together again, I'll find it, I silently pledged. I might be breaking one promise I'd made him, but I was secretly making him a new one—one I was intent on keeping. But not tonight. Tonight, I wanted to take full advantage of the wild card I'd been dealt.

Even though the Council Tribunal hadn't expressly said so, I knew I had free reign to be with Quinn in every way I'd dreamt of over the next eight hours. Council Member Tara certainly wasn't an idiot, and her silence on this matter was as golden as her aura. In fact, the only "conditions" placed on my last night with Quinn were the length of time I could spend with him and what I had to do when the last grains of sand slipped through the hourglass.

"Talk about borrowed time," I said to myself, remembering Quinn's claim not long ago that there was no other kind.

"He's all yours," I heard a familiar voice call out from behind me. I turned around to see Agnes, my healing mentor, standing under a nearby streetlight, hands clasped, perfectly poised, and dressed in an elegant pewter-colored silk pantsuit. The subtle lines around her eyes and forehead in her otherwise flawless face were the only hints of her real age—well, her "mortal" age anyway. Agnes had become a Shepherd when the Servants claimed her life at age fifty-two, but that was over five centuries ago.

"Agnes!" I exclaimed, pleasantly surprised. "What are you doing here?"

"I was assigned to watch over Quinn while you met with the Council Tribunal. Didn't Peter tell you?"

"No." In fact, Peter hadn't said much of anything to me since my Inquiry.

"Well," Agnes continued, "I'm pleased to report there haven't been any attempts on, or overt threats to, Quinn's life while you've been away. But," she paused, "there is something about him ..." Her voice trailed off and she sighed. "I probably shouldn't be telling you this," she

continued, shaking her head slightly, “particularly in light of the *arrangement* you made with the Tribunal members, but I believe you should know the truth.” She took my hands in hers and looked at me sympathetically.

Instantly, anxiety began welling up inside the pit of my stomach. I was afraid of what she was about to say. From my perspective up in the Archives, I’d only been gone a matter of hours. From Quinn’s perspective down here, however, it’d been *twelve days* since my disappearance. I couldn’t even begin to imagine what could’ve happened to him during my absence.

“What is it? Is he hurt?” I asked urgently. Every muscle in my body tensed up immediately. I yanked my hands out of hers and took a step backwards in preparation to teleport myself to Quinn’s side.

“Physically, he’s fine, my child,” Agnes quickly reassured me. “It’s just that ... well, he’s heartbroken. It’s quite apparent that he loves you deeply. And he misses you.” The corners of her mouth curved slightly upwards. “He’s been dreaming about you—asking for you in his sleep. But there’s something else ... He’s so worried about you. It’s as though he blames himself for what happened to you the night you disappeared.”

The expression on my face must have changed from sheer distress to pure shock because she chuckled.

“I know,” Agnes said, still smiling. “I was surprised myself. Who would ever imagine a human heartbroken over one of us? A mortal *choosing* to fall in love with a Shepherd? It’s the darndest thing I’ve ever heard!”

Agnes had misread my reaction. I wasn’t at all surprised that Quinn still loved me or that he missed me. And her characterization of Quinn *choosing* to fall in love with me was also misguided. She didn’t understand just how strong the bond between Quinn and me had become. In fact, I was still struggling to figure it out myself. One thing was becoming clearer to me though: the more I learned about my fate—about Quinn’s fate—the more I realized free will had very

little to do with the way we felt about each other. We didn't choose each other so much as we were chosen for each other. Quinn and I were put on this Earth to find one another—the Three Sisters had made sure of it when they'd woven the threads of our fates. Although, Aurelia, Perpetua, and Harmonia also seemed to take great satisfaction in making it nearly impossible for us to fulfill the destinies they'd chosen for us.

What surprised me most about Agnes' comment was the notion that Quinn would feel the slightest bit responsible for what happened to me the night we made up—the last night I saw him. Yes, the thought had crossed my mind, but I summarily dismissed it. I mean, it was only a matter of time before Quinn and I gave in to one another, and that night we were especially vulnerable. We'd both harbored so much pent up frustration, love, and desire for each other that neither one of us could continue to deny ourselves of what we so badly wanted. So we didn't. We stopped fighting and let our need to be with each other consume us. But the unforeseen chain of events that followed was beyond either of our control. Quinn had to know that. Surely, he'd have figured out by now that my disappearance had nothing to do with him and everything to do with me getting my memory back. He'd been right there. He saw the whole thing unfold in front of him. Unless ...

I suddenly felt dizzy. "Oh no!" I gasped. An icy-cold feeling spread through my fingers and toes before making its way through the rest of my body. Within seconds, I felt completely numb.

"What is it, my child?" Agnes asked, concerned.

"He doesn't know," I whispered, aghast, my mind running frame-by-frame through every moment of that evening.

"Know what?"

"He doesn't know," I repeated, looking up at Agnes with horror-filled eyes, "that I got my memory back. He has no idea that I remembered who I am, I mean who I *used* to be,

and who he is. He doesn't know that I remember everything about my life."

"You—you got your memory back?" Agnes asked slowly, her eyes wide with wonder.

"Yes. The night I disappeared from Quinn's apartment and ended up back in the Archives. I think that's *why* I vanished. You see, Quinn and I were ... well, we were *reconciling*." I felt my cheeks getting warmer. Out of the corner of my eye, I glanced at Agnes, who either seemed to fail to appreciate the underlying meaning of what I was saying or simply chose to ignore it. Pushing my embarrassment aside, I cleared my throat and continued.

"Quinn and I were in his apartment when snapshots of my life suddenly began bombarding me. The pain was indescribable. I thought my mind was literally being ripped apart—I almost wanted it to so the torture would end." I squeezed my eyes shut; even the memory of the pain I'd experienced was too intense for me to bear. "Anyway, the next thing I knew, I began to phase uncontrollably right there in Quinn's arms. He tried to hold on to me, but he couldn't—there was nothing for him to grab. And then ... I was gone. I woke up in the Archives a few days later with Peter by my side." The words were spilling out of my mouth almost faster than I could think of them as I recounted the events of that evening.

"Don't you see, Agnes? I never had a chance to explain to Quinn what was happening to me. For all he knows, it *was* his fault I disappeared. For all he knows, I'm gone forever." I felt sick with guilt.

"Well, isn't that something. You actually remember your *life*." Judging from the distant look in her eyes, I doubted Agnes had heard a word of my rambling. After another moment or two, she snapped out of her daze and looked at me inquisitively.

"How did it happen?" she prodded. "How did you remember?" Her normally sweet-natured disposition was now

replaced with an unfamiliar edginess that made me a little uncomfortable.

“I’m—I’m not sure. One minute, I was with Quinn and the next ... I don’t know. I was grabbing my head and seizing in pain as memories of my past came at me one after another.”

“Remarkable ...” Her thoughts seemed to trail off again before she clapped her hands together. “Well, the clock is ticking. I don’t want to keep you from your Prince Charming any longer.” Agnes’s eyes filled with warmth once more and she smiled. “I must confess,” she added, “at first, I couldn’t understand what all the fuss was about this human—that is until I saw him. He is perfectly lovely ... and quite a catch.”

“Yes he is.” *For someone else*, I finished the rest of my remark in my head. I couldn’t help but frown as thoughts of tomorrow began to edge their way into the forefront of my mind.

“Don’t fret, my child. Something tells me your story with this young man is far from over.” She reached out and hugged me. Everything about her body language had softened; she was once again the gentle, nurturing Agnes I’d come to cherish and trust. She tucked a loose lock of my long brown hair behind my ears and gave me a quick once over. “Perfect. Now then, put on your best smile and go to him. I’m sure you have some *catching up* to do.” Agnes winked at me. “And just remember, there’s nothing purer than true love—no matter how you choose to express it.” She began to phase out of view, but not before I felt my cheeks surge with heat once more.

I looked back up at Quinn’s loft windows, and my chest flooded with different feelings—with anxiety and making its way front and center on the stage.

“Great. Perfect timing to be an emotional basket case,” I chided myself. I took a deep breath to calm myself down, and then another ... and another.

* * *

I materialized inside Quinn's living room. It was dark, but I could see open boxes scattered about, each one partially filled with the scant number of possessions Quinn had brought to the loft he'd sublet for the summer. I turned on the light next to my favorite chair and took a closer look around.

Of course, I thought. It's the middle of August. Quinn's summer internship is over, and IU's fall semester will begin soon. He was packing up to head back to Bloomington.

I looked down the hallway towards Quinn's bedroom—the last place I'd been with him. The anticipation of seeing him again made my body buzz uncontrollably.

"No time like the present," I said under my breath as I slowly made my way towards his bedroom; it seemed like a million miles away.

As I reached the open doorway to Quinn's room, I sucked in my breath and held it. I peered in and saw him asleep on the right side of the bed—"his" side. A wave of excitement crashed over me, making me feel weak in the knees. I grabbed the doorframe with my right hand to steady myself. I wanted to rush over and jump into his arms, but I couldn't. He would be startled enough just to see me. I had to take this one step at a time.

Breathe, I told myself. I took a deep breath and exhaled as I stood there for another minute. I could hear the steady rhythm of his heart, which was perfectly mirrored within my own chest. I smiled, realizing how much I'd missed having that part of Quinn with me while I was detained up in the Archives. His heartbeat was a constant reminder of how much I'd let him in—of how much a part of me he'd become. Standing here now, feeling his pulse resonate through my body, made it seem like this was where I belonged—like being with Quinn was the only place that truly felt like home.

I walked over to his bedside and gently caressed his thick black hair, but he didn't stir. I noticed how pale my hand looked against his golden, sun-kissed skin. I studied the

features of his face—his long, dark eyelashes that framed his almond-shaped eyes, his perfect nose, his full lips. He was even more stunning than the first day I'd seen him in Professor Swain's psych class. I wanted to bend down and kiss him, but it wasn't time yet.

Quinn's cell phone was connected to the docking station sitting on his bedside table. I found "our song," hit play, and turned up the volume slightly, hoping the music would stir him, but he only sighed and rolled over. The sultry rhythm and lyrics took me back to the first time Quinn kissed me at the fraternity party last winter. And I was reminded of how Quinn teased me when celebrating our one-month anniversary this summer. A warm, tingling sensation made its way through my body. I grinned, knowing that I no longer had to fight how much I wanted him.

I tiptoed to the other side of the bed and slid out of my clothes, watching them disappear into thin air as they hit the floor. I carefully slipped under the covers; the crisp, cool cotton sheets felt good against my skin. Quinn shifted a little, unconsciously moving closer towards me. I grinned again as my body instantly responded to the heat radiating off of him. Hints of citrus, mint, and chlorine filled my nose, just as they had the first day I met Quinn.

You are the greatest love of my life—I just never knew it until my life was over.

"Quinn," I said softly.

He turned his head towards me slightly.

"Quinn, it's me ... Evie."

Slowly, he opened his eyes and looked at me, thoroughly dazed and bewildered. He blinked a few times to make sure he wasn't dreaming. He didn't say anything. He didn't move.

"Quinn, I'm here. I'm home."

"Evie?" he barely managed, his voice trembling slightly.

"Yes," I whispered. I caressed his face with my hand and felt the wet trail of a tear that had rolled from the corner of his eye down the side of his face. I wanted to embrace him. I

wanted to nestle my face into the small of his neck. But I didn't—not yet anyway.

He reached over to his bedside table and turned on the light, never taking his eyes off of me. He cautiously reached out his hand and caressed my cheek, moving down my neck to my bare shoulder.

"I thought you ... I mean ... I thought I would never see you again," Quinn uttered. "That night ... I didn't know what to do. I thought I had—well, I didn't know what could happen to you, but I thought that I had ... hurt you somehow." He rested his head back on his pillow, put his hand on his forehead, looked up at the ceiling, and paused for a moment before continuing. "You know, I actually consulted a priest about what bad things could happen to angels."

"You did *what*?" I asked, unable to hold back a giggle.

"Don't mock me," he said sternly, turning his head towards me. "Evie, it's been almost two weeks since I've seen you ... You should have seen yourself that night ... You were in so much pain, and I couldn't do anything to stop it. And then—just like that, you were gone."

"Quinn, I'm so sorry you had to go through all of that. You have to believe me when I tell you that none of what happened to me that night was your fault."

"How can you say that?" Quinn replied. "None of it would have happened if I hadn't kissed you ... if I hadn't tried to—"

"You weren't the only one who wanted to take things further that night, you know," I interjected. "I was kissing you too."

"Yeah, but I should've been stronger. I should've stopped things before they got that far. I knew there were Rules, Evie, and I *wanted* you to break them. I was hoping you would. I was selfish, and *you* ended up paying the price."

"Shh," I purred as I placed my finger on Quinn's mouth. His full lips were so warm and soft—so inviting. I pictured myself kissing them and a ripple of energy passed through me. "Quinn, you actually helped me that night." I flashed him

a flirtatious little smile. “Besides, do you *really* think you would’ve had the restraint to stop yourself?” I sat up slightly, just enough for the covers to fall away from me and expose the top half of my naked body.

Quinn took a deep breath and exhaled slowly, taking me in with his eyes. I began to draw little circles on his chest, my fingers gradually making their way down towards his stomach.

“Well,” he cleared his throat and closed his eyes, trying to focus on his answer. “I certainly ... would’ve tried.” A slight groan escaped his lips as my index finger traced the rim of his navel. I smiled even wider.

With his eyes still closed, I leaned forward and kissed him. He kissed me back, and fireworks went off inside me. I kissed him harder, deeper, as I began to maneuver myself on top of him. Quinn didn’t resist—at first. But then he stopped me abruptly, pushing me off of him. He looked more worried than I’d ever seen him.

“It’s okay,” I tried to reassure him. “Everything will be fine.”

“Fine?” Quinn asked in disbelief. He sat up, propping his back up against his headboard. “After what happened to you the last time we tried this, how can you risk breaking the Rules again?”

“You don’t understand,” I said softly. “Tonight, there are no Rules.” I leaned in to kiss him again.

“What do you mean?” Quinn asked, avoiding my kiss and shifting his body to put a few more inches of space between us. I could almost hear the questions running through his mind. I knew it was unfair of me to deny him an explanation as to why it was okay for us to be with each other tonight, but I didn’t want to talk about it. We had this one night together, and I didn’t want to waste what little time we had left dodging questions I wasn’t permitted to answer anyway. I sighed, trying to come up with something that would end this conversation as quickly as possible.

“Quinn, I’m so tired of explaining myself and having to justify my actions. Right now, I just want to be with you. I *need* to be with you.”

Denying Quinn the opportunity to protest further, I leaned over and teased his earlobe with my tongue. He inhaled slowly and held his breath. My lips traveled to his neck, nipping it tenderly with my teeth. I could feel his body reacting to my touch. Another groan escaped his lips; I kissed him again, but he still hesitated. Not giving up, I playfully brushed my lips against his as my hand wandered down his chest and his stomach until I reached the waistband of his boxers.

Instantly, Quinn grabbed my hand to stop me. I jumped back slightly, stunned by his quick response. We both froze and stared into each other’s eyes, waiting to see who would make the next move. He chuckled suddenly.

“What?” I asked, unaware there was any humor to be had in this moment.

“Never in a million years would I have imagined myself as being the responsible one in this type of situation,” he said, still chuckling. “Especially with you.”

“Well, I’m asking you to be irresponsible tonight.” I kissed him, never breaking my gaze. “Please don’t fight me on this,” I begged. “Not tonight.”

He closed his eyes momentarily as if to mentally weigh the pros and cons of what I was asking him to do. I leaned over and kissed him again. In one swift motion, he flipped me onto my back. I could feel the full weight of his body bearing down on me. His face was barely an inch from mine. I could feel his breath on my face, and it made me crave him even more.

He stared at me with such intensity I almost had to look away, but I was too mesmerized by the blue flames dancing within his eyes. I had seen that look before; I knew it meant Quinn wanted me.

“This discussion is not over, Evie,” he warned.

“I know.” I reached up and kissed him.

“I want some answers.”

“I know.” I kissed him again.

“Evie—” he mumbled in protest.

“I love you, Quinn,” I said, cutting him off.

“You know I love you too.”

“Then show me what love can *feel* like with you.” I continued on my seductive warpath, my lips making their way to the nape of his neck.

Quinn sighed, “You’re impossible.”

“I know,” I smiled flirtatiously. “I can also be very persuasive.”

He chuckled again. “What am I going to do with you?”

“Oh, I can think of a few things.” I lightly caressed his back and felt his muscles tense beneath my hands. I felt the goose bumps form on his skin under my fingertips. He kissed me tentatively, stopping to assess the state of my physical well-being. When he concluded I was still okay, he kissed me again, only to pause once more a moment later.

“You see? I’m fine,” I assured him, my eyes pleading with him to give in to me.

When Quinn kissed me this time, he didn’t hold back—and neither did I. Our mouths couldn’t find each other fast enough. The most intoxicating, dizzying warmth spread through me. His hands began to explore my body, and I could barely control myself. I’d never wanted someone this much before. I flipped Quinn over so I was now on top.

“Nuh-uh-uh. Play fair. No superhero stuff.” A wicked, mischievous smile stretched across his face as he swept my long brown hair over to one side.

I couldn’t think of a witty retort, and I’d run out of patience. Right now, all I wanted was him—*all* of him.

“Quinn, you have no idea how many times I’ve dreamt of this moment,” I whispered. “How much I’ve wanted this.” I kissed him as my fingers began to trace the muscles of his chest, making their way down his body to his boxers.

“Damn it!” Quinn grumbled angrily as he rolled me over onto the bed and sat up. “Trust me, Evie, I want this to

happen. I *really* do. But ...” He turned his head to look at me, and I could see the turmoil in his eyes. I knew what he was going to say.

“The proverbial ‘but.’” I couldn’t mask the disappointment in my voice. I grabbed the sheet from Quinn’s bed and wrapped it around me as I stood up and walked over to his bedroom windows.

“Evie.” He followed me, stopping a few inches behind me. “You have to understand. I keep picturing you in my arms that night.” I could see his reflection wincing in the windowpane. “If there’s even the *slightest* chance that you’ll get hurt if we head down this road again, then it’s not worth it. I won’t let you go through that again. I can’t.”

“Quinn,” I pleaded as I turned towards him, “I told you, it’s different this time.”

“How can you be so sure?” His eyes were full of skepticism.

“I just am.”

“That’s not good enough,” Quinn replied.

Ugh, here we go again, I thought. *Why do you have to be such a stubborn ass?* I sighed reluctantly. “Let’s just say I was able to reach an understanding.”

“You mean, you made a *deal*,” he scowled in disapproval. He walked back over to the bed, sat down, and ran his hand through his hair. Then he sighed and looked up at me. I could see the frustration in his eyes. I just stood there, not knowing what to say.

“So what are the terms of this ‘*understanding*,’ Evie?” I recognized the cold, hard edge in his voice as the same one he used the night we broke up this summer.

“Please, let’s not talk about this now, okay? Not tonight.” I tried to give Quinn a reassuring smile, but a cockeyed grin was all I could muster.

“Why not?” he probed.

“Because,” I began, kneeling down in front of Quinn to make sure he was looking directly into my eyes. “Because being without you was unbearable.” I took both of his hands

in mine. “Because I look at you and all I can feel is eternally grateful to be here. Your safety aside, nothing else matters to me except being with you right now. And more than anything, I don’t want to waste this gift we’ve been given.

“Quinn, don’t you see? Tonight, we can finally be together in every way we’ve ever wanted to. So forgive me if the details of how and why we got this second chance don’t really concern me at the moment. Forgive me for solely wanting to focus on you and me right here—for not wanting to waste another second with you.”

He sat there for a minute, staring at the floor.

“Quinn, please don’t let this chance slip away. Not when we’ve come this far.”

“Fine, I’ll let it go—*for tonight*,” he agreed reluctantly. “But don’t expect me to just sit back and accept the fact that you made a deal that affects both of us without so much as a heads up.” He sighed heavily. “I hate not knowing what’s going to happen tomorrow, and I honestly don’t understand how you can stand there and so easily pretend to forget.”

“You would if you realized it was the only way I could be here with you,” I said soberly. The fear of losing Quinn was beginning to build inside of me, and I did my best to stifle it. I had this one night with Quinn, and I wasn’t going to be pulled into a downward spiral—not yet. There would be plenty of time for that tomorrow.

“And,” I shifted gears and smiled at Quinn, raising my eyebrows playfully as I stood up. “It’s not all that difficult to live in the moment when you consider the thoughts that have been running through my head.” I stood up and let the sheet wrapped around me slowly slide down over my chest, the curves of my waist and hips, and the rest of my five-foot-seven-inch frame until it gathered at my ankles, exposing myself to him entirely.

His eyes flickered wildly as he drank me in. I could hear his heart pounding furiously while it echoed in my chest. I could feel his pulse racing, which only made me want him more.

“You are so unbelievably beautiful,” Quinn said, his voice slightly hoarse, as he drew me in closer. His hand traveled slowly and deliberately from my breasts down to my waist; his touch singed my ivory skin with a scorching heat that I’d welcome every second of every day if I could.

“You have no idea how worried I’ve been,” he said softly, kissing my belly gently. “How much I’ve missed you.”

“It couldn’t have been half as much as I missed you.”

Quinn tilted his head back, his sapphire-blue eyes were smoldering. Keeping his gaze, I bent down and kissed him.

“You’re sure about this?” he asked cautiously. I knew this was his final line of defense—the last wall of resistance to come tumbling down.

“I’ve never been more sure about anything.”

Quinn leaned back, gently pulling me onto the bed with him, our eyes still locked. His gaze seemed to penetrate my very soul. He was surrendering himself to me, but I wanted him to be the one in control—I wanted to follow his lead. I rolled over onto my back, and he instinctively followed my cue.

“I’m yours,” I whispered.

Before I could take another breath, Quinn’s lips came crushing down against mine. I knew that any reservations he’d been harboring were gone for good. I’d pictured this moment over and over in my head, and I couldn’t help but beam as I was hit with the realization of what was finally about to happen.



Linda Lamberson is a Chicago-area native, an author, and a devoted mother and wife. After studying at Indiana University in Bloomington, she attended graduate school at The University of Chicago, where she received her Master's degree in Social Service Administration and then her Juris Doctor degree, and worked as an intellectual property attorney.

In 2009, Linda was inspired to create the Evie Sanders series while on a flight home. A conversation with a neighboring passenger made Linda think about a car accident she'd been in while a freshman in college—an accident she was lucky enough to walk away from unscathed, much to the surprise and shock of witnesses. For the remainder of the flight she couldn't shake the thought, "What if I hadn't survived? Would that have been the end of my story?" That same night, Linda started writing.

Read *Borrowed Heart* and *Soul to Shepherd*, the first & third installments of the Evie Sanders series, now available.

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