

Seducing the enemy
has never been so
tempting...

SLEEPING WITH THE BOSS

AN ANDERSON BROTHERS STORY

MARISSA CLARKE

LOVE
—struck—

Seducing the enemy has never been so tempting...

For the last five years, bookish Claire Williams has been living for the dying. Now that her stint as caretaker is over, she's off to see the world. She needs quick cash first, so a temp job at Anderson Auctions seems perfect, especially with the unexpected benefits, including the hottest man she's ever laid eyes — or hands — on.

Former Marine William Anderson has been burned one time too many. His military training makes him the perfect man to flush out the spy undercutting his family business, but no amount of training can prepare him for the kind of undercover work he'll have to do when the sexy new temp is implicated. Desire lands them in bed...but duty may cost him his heart.

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This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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LOVE
→struck→

*For my sister, Karren Lynch, who taught me smart women
read romance.*

And to Sophie Jordan, who taught me smart women write it.

Chapter One

“Hold the door, please!” Claire skidded into the crowded elevator, heart hammering from her full-out sprint through the lobby. “Thanks.” She squeezed in next to a woman in a business suit who looked like a prototype for a Wall Street Barbie doll and was wearing too much perfume.

Achoo!

Crap. Claire held her breath to avoid irritating her nose any further.

Achoo!

This time when she sneezed, she bumped someone behind her. Wall Street cast her a sideways glance and *harrumphed*—gave an honest-to-goodness *harrumph*. Claire hadn’t heard one of those since graduating from Mrs. Reynolds’s second-grade class. She resisted rolling her eyes. Barely.

Mercifully, the door slid open, accompanied by a classy *ding* befitting the sleek, stylish, and oh-so-exclusive Anderson

Building.

Why the hell had she agreed to this? Because she had never been able to tell Heather no, that's why. Well, she needed to learn how. She rubbed her nose and risked a breath. Bad idea. She was really allergic to whatever it was—like, ants-in-the-nostrils allergic. Claire pinched her nose, praying to not sneeze again.

Several people shuffled off, but unfortunately, not the person wearing Eau de Hell. She rubbed her nose with the back of her hand and someone behind her chuckled. It was almost impossible not to turn around to check out the source of the low, masculine sound bordering on a purr.

Ding. More people got off, including Wall Street, and the air cleared a bit.

Floor twenty-two, and they were only halfway to the top. She glanced at her watch, and yeah, she was late. She pinched her still-itching nose as the door stopped on floor thirty and everyone filed out except for a guy at the back of the elevator. Claire found herself gawking as the door slid shut.

Hot? Holy smokes, he was hot—and huge, like a football player. Her body buzzed to life like she'd just chugged that double-shot cappuccino she'd passed up because she was late. No need for caffeine now. Maybe her best friend Heather was right; maybe getting out of the house was a good thing. Claire jerked her gaze away and faced front, pushing the button for the top floor as if hitting it again would matter.

He pulled a handkerchief out of this top jacket pocket and held it out to her.

She shook her head. “No, no thanks. I'm good.” Blasted sneezing. The woman had left an olfactory equivalent of the

atom bomb.

Achoo!

He wiggled the handkerchief. “I insist.”

She shook her head and pushed her glasses into place. “I...uh...” Feeling another sneeze coming on, she conceded defeat and accepted his offer. In her usual style, she dropped her purse. Items scattered in all directions over the rose marble elevator floor.

Heather called this kind of thing a Claire-ism because she was Murphy’s Law personified. If something silly, awkward, or bizarre could happen, it would happen to Claire.

Track repairs making her train late to work? Check.

Shoe strap breaking as she ran from subway station to building? Check.

Bizarre, intense perfume allergy kicking in while stuffed into a packed elevator with a painfully hot guy? Check.

Spilling her purse in front of said painfully hot guy? Check.

Four Claire-isms in a morning was impressive, but not unheard of. She shook her head and tried to smile. “Just one of those days,” she said, bending down to pick up her belongings. And, yep, that ripping sound would be her skirt, bringing the total to five—an all-time record. Somehow she didn’t feel like cheering for this impressive accomplishment.

The guy reached over her and inserted a tiny key into a slot above the top button, and the elevator came to a smooth stop. *Oh, God.* That meant he was someone important.

He squatted down next to her as she snatched up her lipstick, keys, and rail pass. “I think something ripped,” he whispered.

She dropped the items into her purse and met his bright

blue eyes. “Yeah, that would be the sound of the last shreds of my dignity being torn in two.”

He laughed and reached across her to pick up her cell phone. His nearness and the timbre of his laugh sent a ripple of thrill through her.

At least she wasn't sneezing anymore. And hallelujah for that because he smelled as delicious as he looked. Like a big peppermint lollipop. Broad shoulders, closely cropped brown hair, and great cheekbones rounded off the other three bases, making it a hot-man home run. She shook her head. What was wrong with her? She should probably never leave the house. She was a walking disaster.

To add to the awkward, the guy stood and shrugged out of his perfectly tailored jacket and held it out to her. “To cover your shredded dignity,” he said in a completely serious tone. Only a dimple on his right cheek betrayed his pseudo-somber demeanor.

She rose to stand, keeping her front to him, praying the damage to her skirt wasn't that bad—though the draft of cool air over her butt told another story. She'd probably lost the whole back seam. “Thanks.”

She slid the jacket on, ignoring the fact that his eyes were trained on her reflection in the door over her shoulder. She scanned the floor of the elevator for missed items, but found none. Hey, at least nothing really embarrassing had been in her purse.

“Ready?” he asked, dimple still present and accounted for.

His jacket hung way below her skirt line, so no matter how bad the damage, she was covered. At least the worst was over. What else could possibly go wrong?

He turned the key and the elevator smoothly rose the remaining flights before making its final refined *ding*.

“I’m Will Anderson,” he said, extending his hand.

William Anderson of Anderson Auctions. Her boss. *Awesome*. Claire groaned inwardly, and shook his hand, mentally tallying the Claire-isms to a record-breaking six, and it wasn’t even eight o’clock yet.

Chapter Two

Will watched the woman wearing his suit jacket scurry across the lobby and disappear into an office. He straightened his tie and grinned. The scenery had certainly improved in the weeks he'd been gone.

“Where’s your jacket?” The question came before he’d even gotten all the way into his brother’s office. Michael had a bad case of big-brother-itis, along with a side of OCD, and always insisted on business attire and stuffy professionalism in the workplace because clients sometimes showed up unexpectedly.

“Hey, Mikey. Good to see you, too. My trip was great, thanks for asking.” Will sat in one of the two leather wing chairs opposite the huge mahogany desk that had belonged to their father before he retired three years ago, then pulled at the tight collar of his dress shirt. Out of habit, he scanned the room for potential threats. Everything looked the same as it had the last time he’d been here, with the exception of

the rolling suitcase in the corner, hanging bag draped over the top.

Michael sat back and steepled his fingers. “Sorry. Glad you’re back. How were the islands?”

“Lonely.”

The word hung there like a long football pass in slo-mo and neither man said anything for a while. It had been almost a year since Will’s return from his second tour in Afghanistan, and he should be over Beth by now. *Should* be. Michael finally broke the awkward moment. “Want some coffee?”

“I’d prefer a beer.” Will knew his attempt at humor missed its mark when his brother responded with a scowl. “I’m just messing with you.”

Michael studied him for a moment before speaking. “We need to talk about something that came up while you were on vacation.”

Some vacation. Sitting alone on the porch of their family villa, staring at the empty beach where he’d brought Beth the summer before he was deployed. He should never have gone back there. All he did was lament the dreams he’d lost when he lost Beth, which made his gut churn. He had a great job and a family who loved him. *Get your shit together, Anderson.* “What came up?”

“We have our suspicions that there is a spy in the office.”

Suspicious. His brothers had hovered like mother hens for the first months after his return from Afghanistan, calling him into the office for every little thing to keep him from holing up in his house like he wanted to. They’d let up over the last four or five months. Hopefully, they weren’t back at it. He leaned forward. “Meaning what?”

Michael's chronic formal demeanor cracked for a moment, and his brow furrowed before he responded a little too loudly. "Meaning *exactly* what I said."

Will leaned back and crossed his arms over his chest, studying his uncharacteristically flustered big brother. Maybe this wasn't just an excuse to get him into the office. "You said 'suspicions,' indicating rumor or innuendo, rather than hard evidence."

"I don't have any hard evidence."

"When you call to tell me to dress up like I'm going to a funeral and appear at the snap of your fingers, I assume it's important."

Since his return to the States almost a year ago, Will had set up and managed security for all the Anderson family holdings, including this building and their lucrative antiquities brokerage business that occupied the top two floors—a perfect use of his military recon training. The deal he had struck with his brothers on his return was that he would set up the security, train the personnel, and run it remotely from his home on Long Island, only returning to New York City on an as-needed basis. He hated it here. He felt smothered in the city and overwhelmed with dread—just as he had in Afghanistan—like something terrible could be lurking in every alley or around the next corner.

A spy could certainly warrant an in-house visit, but he needed more to go on than a hunch. This could have been done with a phone call. "Suspicions are a waste of my time. That's what I trained your security team for."

"Will! Great to see you, man," a voice called from the doorway.

"Chance! How's it going?" Will asked, rising and

extending his hand. With the exception of a squarer jaw, his little brother looked exactly the same as he had in high school and college. All hard lines and long hair—freedom and rebellion stuffed into a business suit.

Chance shook his hand. “Glad you’re back.”

Will was glad, too. He’d thought the island would bring him some peace, but like shrapnel under the skin, regret made his every move ache.

“Things have gotten kind of weird around here,” his little brother added, pulling him back to the moment.

“So I’ve been told.” Will moved closer to the window and caught a look on his big brother’s face he’d seen hundreds of times before. Incapacitating worry and guilt. Michael had always taken every failure on himself as if he were personally responsible. His father had brought him up to run this company from an early age, and the burden had robbed him of the carefree fun his brothers had experienced as teens. In lots of ways, Will felt sorry for him.

“We could lose millions because of the spy,” Michael continued. “We have to stop the loss immediately. I can’t believe I let this happen.”

“This is not your fault,” Will said. “The company is trading in rare and priceless antiquities, jewelry, and art. It was bound to happen at some point.”

“I should have seen it coming. Prevented it somehow.” Michael leaned back in his huge leather office chair and closed his eyes. “We’ve lost several important deals. If this continues, it will shut us down. And the timing is terrible. I leave for the airport for Greece in three hours.”

That explained the fire under Mikey’s ass. Will relaxed a little. “How long will you be gone?”

“Nine days. A private archaeological team found some unusual pottery. I’m hoping to acquire some of it on behalf of a museum in California. Hopefully, I’ll beat the phantom dealer to it this time.”

Well, that explained the suitcase in the corner. “Why don’t you fill me in on what you know, since you’re on a tight schedule.”

“The broker is an outsider, but he has an operative inside our company. Every deal we’ve lost has been an existing client who contacted us first, then decided to sell to a higher bidder or bypass a scheduled auction, selling instead to an anonymous buyer.”

“That happens all the time.”

“No. They are all well-established Anderson Auctions clients. When I do a follow-up visit, they all have the same story. A woman in her twenties, calling herself Florence Smith, visited them with a proposal from a private collector, represented as a male. She’s been described as blond, brunette, and redheaded. They jump to the conclusion that the woman is working in conjunction with us somehow, though the buyer is presented as outside Anderson Auctions. That’s pretty much all I know.”

“That’s not much. We have quite a few employees. A female narrows it, but not enough. It could be a male employee’s cohort. What else do you know?”

“Not much.”

“I have the file in my office,” Chance said, striding to the door. “I have an appraisal to review and certify by noon and two new contracts to fire out, but I’ll have my secretary bring it up to you, Will. Want to meet up for lunch?”

“Sure.”

“Great. We can discuss the file and catch up on what you’ve been up to.”

Feeling sorry for himself, that’s what he’d been up to. And twisted as it was, he was charged up a bit by the security breach at his family’s business. He enjoyed running the security for Anderson Enterprises’ holdings, but sometimes it seemed too routine. Tracking down the company spy was the most exciting thing to come his way in a while—well, that and the blonde in the pink thong with the ripped skirt. Now, there was an interrogation he wouldn’t mind...maybe it could include a thorough body search. His own body came to life at the image. *Shit, where did that come from?* He hadn’t had thoughts like that in ages.

Michael cleared his throat. “You okay? You have an odd look on your face.”

“Yeah, I’m fine. So, you want me to find out who she is and fire her.”

His brother shook his head. “I really want the bigger fish. I need you to get hard evidence she’s the spy and figure out who she’s working with.”

Now it was really getting interesting. He loved this kind of shit. Too bad it was Michael’s pet auction business, and not one of the other Anderson endeavors being affected—all the more reason to find the spy quickly. He ran a hand over his short hair. “I’ll need the company personnel files.”

“You’ll have to talk to Beverly.”

“Dear old Beverly Higgins. How is she?”

“Mean as hell.”

Will laughed. “Some things never change. How is the spy accessing the accounts?”

“I have no idea, but they’re all recent deals coming in

with established clients. Nothing intercepted has been under contract, so no laws have been broken. She's very smart."

"Are you logging the client information or the object descriptions online somewhere?"

"The only people other than me with access to the items considered for auction are Chance, editorial, and Mildred, of course. None of the financial data or private client information is accessible to anyone but Chance and me."

Will returned to his chair and tapped his fingers on the desk. There was no way Mildred was tipping anyone off. She'd been with the company from the time their dad began it and was completely loyal. Michael and Chance were the only ones with access to client info, which meant it had to be the material distributed to editorial regarding the auction items themselves.

Will slid off his tie and shoved it in his front pocket. "I need access to your office while you're gone. I also need the files on all deals that have been intercepted by the anonymous dealer and a full description given by the clients of the woman." He ignored Michael's scowl as he unbuttoned the top button of his shirt. Formal had never been his thing. "Oh, and I want access to all personnel files."

Michael smiled. "Yeah, well, you'll have to fist-fight Mrs. Higgins for those."

He was glad to see his brother's mood lift. "Good thing I'm trained in hand-to-hand combat. Besides, Beverly could never say no to me. Just let her know I need them so she can't say the top boss man didn't authorize it."

"I'll shoot an email to her. You want to crash at my apartment since it's closer than your house?"

He unbuttoned the next two buttons of his shirt. "No.

I'm sleeping right here.”

“That’s not necessary. You’ll be more comfortable at my place.”

Comfortable. Will almost laughed. He had slept in bombed-out buildings, all-terrain vehicles, and the middle of the desert for years. A sofa was like a resort. “You go to Greece and make a deal. I’ll stay here and catch a spy.”

• • •

Claire heaved a relieved sigh as she settled into her desk chair. When Beverly the Beast had seen her come in late, she was sure she’d be fired but only got chewed out for irresponsible behavior. Maybe the old bat was chill because she knew Claire was only a temporary employee.

Beverly seemed much more disturbed by an email she received during their brief meeting that resulted in her shouting at her secretary to pull all personnel files. So disturbed, in fact, she simply sent Claire off with a stack of printed pages and the brusque command, “Fix this.” She knew her friend Heather was on friendly terms with Higgins the Hag and dealt with her a lot through the placement agency, but she just didn’t understand the appeal.

Through her open office door, Claire had a view of the lobby. It was a huge open space where the company sometimes held parties and even a smaller auction now and then. This morning, it held only a couple of antique settees and a table with a floral arrangement the size of a small car. Beyond that was a set of mahogany double doors. It was the office of Michael Anderson. Everyone seemed intimidated by him, but she’d never spoken to the man herself. His

younger brother, Chance, was the company lawyer and worked on the floor below. He seemed nice enough the couple of times she'd run into him in the lobby or elevator. She had known there was a third brother who had returned from fighting overseas recently, but she'd never seen him until today, and holy crap what an eyeful he was. Her face grew warm when she pictured him in the elevator. Big and hot and... God, what a fiasco. Happy Monday.

Her own office was sparse, but everything in it was high-quality and efficient. She hadn't bothered to give it a personal touch because, really, why bother? She'd be leaving for Egypt in a couple of weeks.

She thumbed through the documents on her desk and flicked the mouse to wake the computer up for her mindless chore. She'd been tasked with proofing and editing copy for sales brochures—a no-brainer task that would keep her distracted from the miserable events at the hospice last month.

She ran her fingers across the lent jacket lapel and took a deep breath, smiling as the smell of mint and something unmistakably masculine and delicious flooded through her. Yeah, editing this brochure could be a distraction from lots of things, like the tall, impossibly hot guy in the elevator who may or may not have seen her nearly naked butt when her skirt ripped. She took a deep breath and shifted in her chair.

At least the skirt had been an easy fix. It had torn cleanly down the seam. Nothing a little packing tape from the mailroom didn't solve. From the outside, it looked perfect. From the inside, it was barely held together by whatever means available. She choked out a laugh. She was sitting on a metaphor for her life.

After opening a new document on the computer, she began entering the information on the item listed. *Ugh*. Whoever wrote the description was clueless. Run-on sentences, spelling errors—what a mess. She shook her head and dug in, relieved to be absorbed in something other than illness and death and screams of pain in the middle of the night. The screen blurred as tears filled her eyes. She missed her grandmother, Sissy, like crazy, but at least her suffering was over. Claire took a deep, shuddering breath. It was time to move on. As soon as that life insurance money hit her bank account, she was out of here and off to finally see the part of the world she'd studied and fantasized about her whole life. Then she'd begin living out the rest of her dream as an intern at the Cairo Museum under her favorite professor, Dr. Jahi. If things went as planned, she'd never come back to New York. Ever.

Glancing up, she caught sight of Will Anderson emerging from the double doors across the enormous lobby. Before he'd made more than six long, confident strides, Higgins the Hag headed him off and turned over a stack of files. He then disappeared back through the double doors. At least she knew where to find him to return his coat.

An hour or so later, movement drew her eye to the set of doors across the lobby again. Will backed through the threshold, his attention held by something or someone inside.

Mmm. What a fantastic view. Wide shoulders, trim waist, *and yum*, the way those pants fit over his tight...

He turned suddenly, and piercing blue eyes met hers as if he'd read her thoughts or something. One dark eyebrow arched and he smiled, confirming he knew she'd been

checking him out.

Well, shit. Totally busted. She returned his smile in a failed attempt at nonchalance, then pretended to go back to work, eyes glued to her monitor. The words on the screen might as well have been in Greek, as her body responded to the man who'd smiled from across the lobby with a jolt of adrenaline that made her clothes feel too heavy and tight. What on earth was going on? Maybe being on her own for the first time was affecting her sense of reason—or jump-starting her hormones. “Do not look at him,” she muttered under her breath.

“Why not?”

Shit, shit, shit. How had he sneaked up so silently? A big man like that should lumber like a bear, not slink soundlessly.

She took a deep breath, eyes still fixed on the screen. This was embarrassing, not fatal. Since Claire-isms were a constant of her everyday life, she'd grown a thick skin and tended to simply own her mistakes outright. “Because, Mr. Anderson, I need to be looking at the computer monitor, not you. This description has to be edited by lunch.”

He leaned against her doorframe, seeming surprised by her honesty. And intrigued. He studied her for a beat, as though making up his mind about something, and then nodded slightly. “Well, I have the perfect solution. Look at your monitor until lunch, then look at *me* during lunch.”

Had he just asked her out? He was her boss or something. Surely there was a rule against this. And that alone made her want to accept—to finally break a rule and do something irresponsible, unexpected, or forbidden.

Her pulse stuttered. *Yes.* She wanted to say yes, and he knew it. A satisfied smile stretched his mouth, and Claire

realized she was way out of her depth. Why would he want to go out to lunch with *her*? He could have anyone he crooked his finger at...

No. She needed to say no. She must have heard him wrong or was reading too much into his offer. Maybe he planned to meet in the lunchroom where most of the employees ate together, and he hadn't meant that the way it sounded. Besides, he didn't strike her as a total loser, and that's pretty much all she seemed to attract.

The photo of the urn she was staring at was reduced to a blur as every molecule in her screamed for her to meet his gaze. *Dammit! Pull yourself together, Claire. This is not the time and place to begin crushing on someone—and certainly not him.* Still, she couldn't help meeting his eyes. Her heart beat faster and her whole body tightened under his intense stare.

"I'll take that as a yes to my lunch offer." At her sharp intake of air, his smile broadened. "The jacket is a nice look for you," he said.

She slid it off her shoulders. "Oh, yeah. Thanks for the loan. I fixed the tear in my skirt, so I don't need it anymore." Carefully, she folded it in half and held it out to him.

He stepped closer and her pulse stuttered like a pinball machine. He reached out and took the coat from her, brushing her arm in the process. "My job for years was to cover people's asses. Never before has the job been so pleasant."

Blood rushed to her face in a hot wave. Yeah. Way out of her depth. "Listen, about lunch. I don't think it's a good idea, but thanks anyway, Mr. Anderson."

"Please call me Will, and I think it's a great idea. The

best idea I've had in a long time.”

She shook her head, not knowing what to say. He terrified her—not in a bad way, but just from the unnatural pull she felt toward him. He seemed too good to be true, and Claire had learned a long time ago—that kind of luck wasn't meant for her.

“Are you married?” he asked.

She shook her head again and continued shaking it as he ran through several more options.

“Engaged? Attached? Committed to? Living with? ... No?” He snapped his fingers. “Ah! Living *without*. Perhaps men aren't your thing?”

That caused her to gasp, and the blush burned all the way over her scalp. “No, no. It's—”

“Good.” He folded the jacket over the back of a chair facing her desk, the hint of a smile teasing the corners of his eyes again. “Because in all my years of covering people's asses, yours is by far the best I've ever covered. And I want to take the both of you out for lunch.”

How could she say no to that? *Um. Like this.* “Thanks. Both my backside and I are flattered, but we can't.”

“Perhaps you should let it speak for itself.”

God, his grin was gorgeous. And he was funny. She needed funny. She needed a lot of things, but this had disaster written all over it. Temp job or not, she was placed here by her best friend and he was her boss, for Pete's sake. “Sorry. It's shy.”

“That's a shame. I was hoping to get to know both of you much better. Maybe get on a first-name basis.”

Holy crap, he had a dirty mouth and mind. She fought the urge to shift in her chair and relieve the ache traveling

through her body. She'd never encountered a man this straightforward. She loved it.

Her eyes traveled from her monitor and landed on a vee of tanned skin exposed by his partially opened dress shirt. He'd seemed out of his element in a coat and tie. This, though still not quite right, was much better. Her eyes paused momentarily on his lips, and when his smile broadened, her gaze jerked to his eyes. *Busted again.*

"You want to say yes," he whispered and leaned closer from across her desk. "Both of you do. Both of you *should.*"

Holy freaking shit. She remained stone-still as he placed his palms on her desk and leaned even closer, sending shivers down her spine. There was that smell again—mint and man. And breathing it in made her a little dizzy. She held her breath as he spoke. "I survived against all odds for two tours because of my uncanny instinct to read people. I'm pretty sure I read this correctly, Claire Maddox. I certainly hope I did."

And right before she turned into a puddle of mush, he backed away. "I'm across the lobby if you get hungry."

"I already have lunch plans," she muttered halfheartedly, hoping Heather was free so she wouldn't get caught in a total lie.

"You could always cancel and join me instead," he said with a wink.

Claire was sure she'd used up half of her heart's lifetime quota of beats by the time he sauntered out of her office and across the lobby, disappearing behind the mahogany double doors. He'd known her name. She was sure she hadn't introduced herself on the elevator—perhaps her backside had. She chuckled at his silly sense of humor, then noticed

he'd left the jacket. God, how she wanted to go slip it back on and surround herself with his intoxicating scent, but she took a deep, calming breath instead.

It was a good thing he left when he did or one of two things would have happened: one, Claire would have died on the spot from sheer lust overload, or two, she would have climbed over the desk to see if the seam on his pants was as easy to rip as the one on her skirt had been.

She leaned back in her chair and sighed, unsure if she should curse her friend Heather for placing her in this job, or thank her.