



What Happens in Vegas... (Inconveniently Wed!)

By Kimberly Lang

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Evie's scandalous baby bombshell and the dangerously attractive billionaire Nick Rocco are tantalizing gossip-column fodder that could ruin the Harrison family—even a shotgun marriage is better than an illegitimate heir. So Evie says "I do," preparing herself for a wedding night more explosive than she dares imagine....

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Kimberly Lang hid romance novels behind her textbooks in junior high, and even a masters program in English couldn't break her obsession with dashing heroes and Happily Ever After. A ballet dancer turned English teacher, Kimberly married an electrical engineer. She and her husband live in North Alabama with their one amazing child who, unfortunately, shows an aptitude to sports! Visit Kimberly at: www.booksbykimberly.com

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That was an actual mirrored disco ball spinning over a lighted dance floor. Hundreds of sweaty bodies crowded the dance floor, moving to a techno dance mix, and the bass line thumped like a heartbeat. This club—The Zoo—had strobe lights, LED-lit jungle vines hanging from the ceiling and zebra-striped furniture. This place took tacky to a whole new level.

And Evie Harrison loved it. In fact, she loved everything about Las Vegas: the neon lights, the over-the-top, let-it-all-hang-out attitude, the sheer unapologetic gaudiness of the entire city.

Las Vegas wasn't Dallas, that was for sure, and *that* made Evie love Vegas all the more. "Wanna dance, gorgeous?"

Evie's eyes watered at the alcohol exhaled in her face as the offer was made. "No, but thanks. I'm waiting on someone."

Thankfully, her would-be dance partner was still in the "happy drunk" stage, and he only shrugged as he moved one table over, presumably with the same question.

The truth was, she *would* like to dance. But hitting the dance floor alone wasn't an option. Not that she cared who saw her or what they thought—the joy of anonymity was part of what brought her to Vegas in the first place—but a woman dancing alone would bring every drunk guy in the bar immediately into her personal space, and she couldn't guarantee they'd all be as easily rebuffed as the last one.

A cocktail waitress with tiger ears on her head and whiskers painted across her cheeks picked up the empty glass off the table. "Can I get you something?" she shouted over the music.

"A vodka tonic," Evie replied, as her tiny silver purse began to dance across the table from the vibration of the cell phone inside. She pulled out the phone and looked at the number displayed on the screen.

Will.

There was no way in hell she was answering that. The phone quit vibrating as the call went to voice mail, and Evie noted it wasn't the first time her brother had called tonight. A quick scroll through the missed-call log showed this was the fourth time in the last two hours Will had called. She was busted.

She'd left Will a message at his office telling him she was leaving town. He wasn't supposed to get it until Monday morning. The workaholic butthead must've checked his messages already.

She would not feel guilty. She was twenty-five years old—even if Will still thought she was a wayward

teenager—and she didn't need her brother's permission to leave town for the weekend.

Her drink arrived at the same time as a text from Sabine. *Going to casino @ Bellagio with Toby. Don't wait up.* The last sentence was unnecessary; she'd recognized the look in Bennie's eyes when she'd left thirty minutes ago and known their girls' night out was officially over.

She was a little disappointed, but at least Bennie had dropped everything to come to Vegas with her last night when she asked. And honestly, being alone in Vegas sure beat being in Dallas at the moment. Being *anywhere* beat being at home right now.

So she lost her patience and said a few things at that brunch she shouldn't have. Evie frowned into her drink. If that witch from the *Dallas Lifestyles* gossip column hadn't been standing right there minding everyone *else's* business, no one would have ever known. But *no*, the whole embarrassing thing got prime treatment on page three yesterday morning.

She'd apologized to the Dallas Beautification Committee's president *and* doubled the amount of the company's donation to make up for implying that new benches in the city's parks weren't equally as important as curing cancer or feeding the hungry.

No one reported *that* in the paper. No, they were too busy getting as much ink as possible out of her big mouth. Again. Then Will had jumped on her case about it, and she'd gotten a nice long talking-to from Uncle Marcus—*again*—about not embarrassing the family—*again*—but neither of *them* was sitting through endless brunches and endless speeches just to be the smiling face that presented a check on behalf of HarCorp International.

Why had she even bothered going to college? A trained monkey could do her job. Hell, a well-trained monkey might manage not to make the paper while doing so.

So what if Will was all bent out of shape that she was AWOL? It wouldn't be the first time he'd wanted to strangle her, and it probably wouldn't be the last time, either.

Her phone vibrated again. This time it was Gwen's number. Did Will honestly think she'd answer a call from his wife's phone when she wasn't taking calls from him? How dumb did he think she was?

She made a face at the phone before she tucked it back into her purse. With Bennie off with her new friend, Evie reassessed her options for the rest of the evening. She could be good and go back to the hotel, but that defeated the entire purpose of running away from home in the first place. She just needed a time-out from her life, the chance to have some fun without worrying everything she did would end up in the papers.

That ad campaign for Las Vegas claimed *What Happens in Vegas, Stays in Vegas*. That sounded fantastic.

It was time to go find something to do.

Whoever designed this club should be shot. It was possible to take a theme too far. And if they were aiming for a zoo theme, why on earth were jungle vines hanging from the ceiling?

Nick rocco mentally tallied up how much it would cost to completely gut and refurbish the interior of The Zoo and added it to the total cost.

If he bought The Zoo—and that was still an if—he'd have to close it completely during renovations. But it was in a prime location, and a big, splashy, grand reopening might give the club a boost and added publicity. Any loss from the closure *could* be recouped if he handled the reopening properly.

Even with the added cost and delay, adding The Zoo to his collection of properties made good business sense. He'd also readily admit it gave him no small sense of satisfaction to purchase a place where he'd once mopped floors and tended bar. Even if it hadn't been called The Zoo back then.

Nick made a practice of visiting any potential purchases during business hours before making firm offers to get a true feel for their potential. And any potential problems. That's why he was here on a Friday night, trying to blend in with the clientele.

The dance floor heaved with bodies, most of the low sofas and chairs were occupied, and the waitresses and bartenders were moving at a fast clip. It wasn't packed, but it wasn't dead, either. If The Zoo could pull in this much business as is, a makeover and a fresh launch could turn it into a gold mine.

Kevin O'Brian, who handled much of the day-to-day business and promotions at all of Nick's clubs, returned from his reconnaissance mission and joined him at the bar.

"Well?" Nick shouted over the thumping bass line.

"Other than the occasional drunk-and-disorderly, the cops aren't required to come by very often. I asked around, and no one seems to be picking up tricks or selling anything this place isn't licensed for." Kevin had the kind of friendly, good-ol'-boy personality that made gathering that kind of behind-the-scenes information easy. People opened up to Kevin without any effort on his part, but Nick himself didn't have the patience—or Kevin's unassuming frat-boy looks—at his disposal. The ability to play good cop/bad cop was one of the secret weapons in their business arsenal. Kevin was a valuable asset to Nick's business—as well as his oldest friend. "You'll need to fire that DJ, though."

That got his attention; Kevin rarely weighed in on staffing issues. "Why? You think he's—"

"No. His taste in music sucks." Kevin grinned and motioned for the bartender to bring him another beer. The blonde delivered it with a smile and winked at Kevin as she pocketed the tip. "Keep her, though. I like her."

"You're assuming I'm going to make the deal."

"You know you are. I'd bet this beer you've already figured how much it's going to cost you to expand the dance floor and pull down those god-awful vines."

Nick shrugged, acknowledging nothing, but Kevin knew him too well. They'd grown up together in one of the toughest parts of Las Vegas, yet unlike so many other of their childhood friends, they'd managed to get out of the circular grind of poverty and drugs. Luck *had* been involved—he'd helped fund his first major club purchase with poker winnings—but it was their common desire to escape that past that bonded them together in the hard work of the climb out of the Vegas projects to uNLV and finally to the top of the food chain.

"So, we're done now?" In the old days, Kevin would just be gearing up, but Lottie had put a stop to his partying ways.

"Go home to your wife. I'm going to stay a little longer and see how the crowd changes after the shows let out."

"You could *try* to have some fun, you know. It wouldn't kill you. You know what they say about 'All work and no play...'"

"Keeps us in the black?" Nick challenged.

"I know the books as well as you do. You don't need another club to stay in the black. You're just buying this one because you *can*."

"And that, my friend, *is* fun."

"You're twisted. Look around—there's a lot of pretty girls here tonight...." Kevin raised his eyebrows suggestively. "I'm sure any of them would love to help you rediscover the meaning of fun."

Nick hadn't picked up a woman in a bar in years. Hooking up with a party girl out for a good time was just asking for trouble he didn't need. "Go home."

"Gone." And he was.

Nightclubs weren't Nick's ...

Users Review

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