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Chased by Moonlight



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Par Nancy Gideon : Chased by Moonlight before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Chased by Moonlight:

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Description :

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Max. HES DESPERATE TO UNCOVER HIS PAST. Left in charge of a criminal empire and protector of a clan of shadowy shape-shifters, Max walks a precarious line. Can he believe the cunning stranger who claims he can teach Max the things he needs to know to stay alive? A con man who would betray anyone to make a profit, who may be a ruthless killer? TOGETHER, THEYRE TEMPTING FATE. The harder Cee Cee fights to clear Max's name, the more he pushes her away. Hes protecting a dark truth that could blow the top off her investigation. And that means hiding his motives and lying to a woman who values truth above all. The woman who can save him . . . if hell let her.

Extrait One THE RING OF HER cell phone dragged Charlotte Caissie from a very delicious dream. She scowled, trying to ignore the unwelcome summons intruding into her private world. Go away. Leave a message. Finally the ringing stopped. Concentrate. The breath sighed from her as she was skillfully coaxed back into the moment. Oh, thats it, baby. Right there. Thats the spot. Chills of sensation skimmed across her flushed skin and the phone began to ring again with shrill impatience. While her flesh was more than willing to ignore it, her well-trained mind was already lured to distraction. Oh, for fucks sake! As her hand unfisted from sleek dark hair, a low voice came from under the covers. Dont answer it. The request was punctuated by her bodys greedy shuddering, but her hand was already on the phone. Caissie. Cee Cee, I need you to meet me on the Moonwalk. Babineau, Im right in the middle of something. Her testy, breathless tone resulted in a long silence on the other end. But having had to suffer through the details of her partners new marriage ad nauseam for the last eight months, she didnt care if he was shocked. And if you dont let me get back to it right now, Im going to have to injure you badly. I am officially off the clock and unavailable. Got it? Sorry, but the chief asked for you in particular. She groaned, both in objection and delight as a chain of hot kisses moved slowly up her belly. Where? It was hard to hear his answer over the roar of her blood. Her back arched into a sensuous bow, then slumped to the mattress again. Im on my way. She threw the phone and then said gruffly, Ive got to go. Her clever and oh-so-generous lover came up on his elbows, annoyance ill-concealed. I thought we were already on our way to a very different destination. Being dragged from his bed, particularly at this suspenseful juncture, was the last thing shed envisioned for the morning, too. Her tone clipped tight, her manner all-business. Duty calls. And its not like we havent been on this particular journey all day yesterday and most of last night. A cool distance seeped into his expression, and his voice grew brittle. Excuse me, detective. I thought you were enjoying the ride. My mistake. She returned his fierce, unblinking glower for a long minute, then with a laugh toppled him over onto his back, coming up astride him. I love it when you pout, she murmured against the firm set of his mouth. Im not pouting. Im being indignant. But his lips relaxed too quickly under hers to be convincing. All right, Im pouting. And in a minute, Ill be begging. I have no shame where youre concerned, sha. Dont go. Please. She brushed her fingertips over the sharp angles of his face, adoring the strong, compelling lines. How easily shed become addicted to him, to this. Once shed surrendered to the drugging pleasures of his touch, she found it difficult to remember why shed resisted him for so long. She did a mental balancing now. Sex or murder? How was a girl to choose? He wasnt making it any easier, with that slow drag of his fingertips over the curve of her torso. Dont make this harder than it has to be, she warned shakily. His eyes crinkled with wicked amusement. It couldnt be much harder than it already is. Are you sure you cant show pity for my unfortunate state and spare a few more minutes? Im surprised you can still muster up a . . . complaint, let alone move. She grinned. You are an insatiable beast. You say that like its a bad thing. She pressed a quick kiss on the tip of his nose, then rolled out of bed while she still had the willpower. She heard his heavy moan of resignation as she said, Ive got to swing by my apartment to feed the pigs, shower, and grab some clean clothes. You can shower here. The temptation was almost irresistible, just as he intended. Picturing suds and steam and more hot sex, she smiled wryly. Im afraid that would be counterproductive. It would save time if youd leave some clothes here. At her sudden look of panic, he added silkily, I promise not to wear them. They hadnt discussed that step. Actually, they hadnt discussed much of anything. Theyd only ventured from their den of lustful pleasures to forage for food. Caught up in the right-now, instead of the week later where the rest of the world waited, she hadnt felt words were too important. Not when he possessed so many other delectable, nonverbal communication skills. Bringing clothes over sounded suspiciously like setting up housekeeping, and alarms and whistles protecting her personal space rang. She said carefully, Well talk about that later. Whenever you have the time, detective. What happened to your weeks vacation? I had plans for every minute of it. A warm tingle spread through some very well-satisfied places as she imagined what else he might have had in mind. A long, X-rated, clothing-unnecessary week of sensation and relaxation with the only person shed ever wanted to share such things with. Didnt he realize she was as angry about losing any of that precious time together as he was? But one of them had to be

reasonable, and he was too busy pouting. A dark, smoldery pout that had her heartbeat kicking up a notch. She was too new at the complexities of a relationship to know when it was better to run like hell rather than to attempt an explanation. Apparently the department cannot continue without me for more than one day. She started pulling on her crumpled clothes with rapid efficiency under his brooding regard. Neither can I. The deeply pitched sentiment gripped her emotions like a fist. It took a phenomenal amount of determination to continue buttoning her shirt. Seeing that he wasn't going to sway her, he said mildly, Tell your partner I'll be making good on your threat. What threat is that? she asked, strapping on her weapon. To injure him badly. She glanced over at the long, powerful figure stretched out beneath well-rumpled Egyptian cotton sheets. His black hair was endearingly mussed and spiky, his unshaven cheeks smudged with morning shadow, but his stare was level, still and unblinking. For a moment, a reminder of who he was, what he was, and what he was capable of, shocked through her with a nasty little jolt. Dangerous. Deadly. A predator no longer answering to anyone. She hesitated. Was he serious? He showed his teeth in a wide, possible smile. Just kidding. Was he? You'd better be. She released a cautious breath. I don't want to break in a new partner any more than I want to break in a new boyfriend. I'll see you later? Oh, you can count on that. He stretched, arms over head and toes reaching for the opposite wall, the movement strong and as lazily sinuous as that of some big, powerful animal. Which, technically, was exactly what he was. I might as well go to work, too, he grumbled, since you've managed to suck the illicit enjoyment out of my day. I'll stop by your apartment so you can tell me what was more important than sharing this bed with me. She couldn't imagine anything running even a close second to him, so in a moment of tangled vulnerability, she let down her guard. That was the best one-day vacation I've ever had in my life. You're amazing. Thank you. His mouth curved, his smile smug, his gaze warming. My pleasure. She took one step toward him, then caught herself. It was madness to want him so much. A nearly uncontrollable madness. Time to run like hell. I'll see you soon.

SANDRA CUMMINGS, TWENTY-TWO, single, a business student at Tulane. Apparently she went to a club off the Square with a group of friends. She left about one thirty and walked to her car alone. She should have known better. Charlotte looked at the plastic-draped form, frustration roiling. Why hadn't she known better? One too many drinks? The invulnerability of youth? How could her friends let her just walk out into the night by herself? What had they been thinking? Unfortunately she had a pretty good idea what they'd be thinking when they heard the news. They'd be thinking it was all their fault. And then they'd have to learn to live with it. Lesson learned too damn late, and now just another grim statistic. Stupid kids, she muttered almost angrily. She glanced around, her cool, dark eyes efficiently detailing the scene, imagining it the way it would look late at night not the way it did now, skirted by police tape and obscenely visible to those beginning to crowd behind it. After midnight it would be isolated, empty in favor of the jazz and dance-club party scene closer to the Square. A lonely, shadowed place to die. No place for a twenty-two-year-old student to be lying under plastic. What was so special about her that the chief called me back in? She glanced at her partner, alerted by his edgy evasiveness. Not much made Alain Babineau fidget. He was the epitome of cool and calm under even the most grisly circumstances. Together they'd seen all the ugly, shocking reminders of what man was willing to do to his fellow man in the name of anger, jealousy, madness, or just plain business. She's Simon Cummings's youngest daughter. Cummings? She'd met the aggressively proactive mayoral hopeful at several professional functions. She'd liked his firm, hard line against crime. A coincidence? Something uneasy moved in Babineau's face as he bent and pulled back the plastic. I don't think so. She stared down at the partially nude and viciously mutilated body of Sandra Cummings, seeing the signature MO. She didn't need to wait for the pronouncement of cause from the medical examiner, Devlin Dovion. She recognized the work. Fangs and claws. Do you want to drive or shall I? Babineau asked softly.

LEGERE ENTERPRISES INTERNATIONAL had its business office in a renovated warehouse along the wharf, close to the pulse of its many interests. And many of those interests had been under attack by Simon Cummings. His campaign had stepped up considerably since Jimmy Legeres death and the assumption of power by his long-time bodyguard, Max Savoie. Savoie was an unknown quantity. Despite his highly visible stance at Legeres back, he'd stayed in the shadows as a silent, simmering threat to any who would dare cross his mentor. He literally hadn't existed on paper until Legeres high-priced lawyer arranged for the necessary documents to allow him to take control. How he would run LE International, and his ability to retain his hold on the far-flung and allegedly illegal ventures, was the topic of much debate. Dangerous debate. And though the head that wore the new crown was uneasy, one wouldn't know it when looking at the sleek businessman seated behind a huge teak desk. Detectives, what can I do for you this morning? In unspoken agreement, Cee Cee remained quiet while her partner, Alain Babineau, squared up to ask

questions. From the backup position she could study the elegant Savoie, looking beyond his beautifully tailored gray Armani suit and immaculate grooming to the sharp-edged killer he'd been until a few months ago. The aura of potential violence still shimmered about him, despite the careful composition of his ruggedly compelling features. Knowing how much more was hidden behind the steady arrogance of his stare had Cee Cee dreading the confrontation to come. That, and the fact that she was sleeping with him. Were investigating a murder, Mr. Savoie. A young woman was attacked at her car, chased down the Moonwalk, overpowered, raped, and killed. Max never blinked. How unfortunate. And this relates to me how? Do I know her? Does she work for me? Her father was Simon Cummings. Get the picture now? Still out of focus. Fine-tune, please. Her throat was torn out. It appears as if some of her internal organs were . . . eaten. Ah. Are you asking if I suddenly got a craving for young coed and decided to go out for a snack? Did you? A cool smile. No. I'm afraid my girlfriend doesn't approve of me assaulting and devouring other women. She's funny that way. I try my best not to irritate her unnecessarily, even though she doesn't seem to have a problem irritating me. Nor do you, apparently, Detective Babineau. So you won't mind telling me for the record where you were between one and two this morning. I was at my home. In bed. Handling an urgent personal matter. I was not alone. His stony stare never deviated from Babineau's. Did you need proof, detective? I'm afraid I don't have any Polaroids or video for documentation. Is that something you think I should consider doing, for future reference? Alain Babineau was a straight shooter, a good cop, and a tough one without being a hard-ass. His unspoiled good looks could have sold anything from toothpaste to boxers with his blue eyes, dimples, and compact athletic build. He was protective of his partner in a way that made Savoie grateful and uneasy at the same time. They would never like each other, because of the woman and the badge that stood between them. And your time can be vouched for all night? Yes. Every delectable minute of it. Cee Cee frowned. Max's gaze flickered to her for an instant, registering puzzlement, before returning to his interrogator. Any other questions, detective, or would you like to gut me right here to see if any pieces of Ms. Cummings come spilling out on my carpet? I don't think I could get a warrant for that. But his scowl said he wouldn't be above asking for a sample of his stomach contents. Can you deny that Simon Cummings has been causing you and your organization a considerable amount of trouble lately? No. He's a tolerable nuisance. But then again, so are you, detective, and I haven't killed and eaten you. They locked testosterone-fueled stares for a long moment, until a clearly irritated Cee Cee stepped between them. Her demand held a crisp neutrality. Did anyone in your employ, with or without your knowledge, undertake the intimidation of Ms. Cummings in order to dissuade her father from continuing his vendetta against your businesses? Cold green eyes slashed over to meet hers. Are you asking if I authorized the rape and murder of an innocent young girl because her father was annoying me? Is that what you're asking, Detective Caissie? When she refused to clarify the question, his mood grew glacial. The answer is no. This interview is over. If you have any other questions you can contact my attorney. I'm sure you know your way out. I'll say this for you, Savoie, Babineau stated in a parting shot. You certainly are a quick study. You've gotten comfortable real fast behind that desk. Just remember where fast and clever got Jimmy Legere. Without moving a muscle, fury vibrated through the new top thug on the block. I'll remember. Detective Caissie, a word. Charlotte wasn't fooled by his smooth manner. He was in a dangerous coil of temper, ready to strike. Still, she nodded to her reluctant partner and remained behind. She began with cautious impartiality, hoping to quickly defuse the situation. I'm sorry for that, Max. You know it's just part of the drill. I can't help that you top our list of the usual, or rather the unusual, suspects. But that wasn't what concerned him. What was that look for, Charlotte? Her competent cop expression puckered with confusion. What look? When Babineau asked about us being together all night, you made a peculiar face. I don't understand. Explain it to me. She confronted him directly. I woke up about quarter to two. You weren't with me. What do you mean? You were gone. I didn't think anything of it at the time. I went back to sleep. But you're thinking something of it now. Of course not. She was lying; he could practically hear the wheels in her cop brain whirring. His features registered the shock of it briefly before the impenetrable glaze returned. You think I climbed out of the bed I was sharing with you, came into town to have forced sex with someone else after you'd been supplying it so generously for the previous thirty-six hours, killed her, made a meal of her, came back, washed up, and was all warm and ready to make love to you again? How awful he made her sound. It was awful. She felt awful, but trying to defend herself would have only made things worse. She couldn't help remembering the past bodies she'd seen. She couldn't change the fact that she knew what had torn them into pieces. Who had torn them into pieces. He came toward her with a purposeful stride. She held her ground, her heart pounding. She'd never been truly afraid of him, of what he was and what he could do, yet subconscious caution shivered through

her soul. He came as close as he could without actually touching her, until she could feel his heat, his strength, his intensity. There was no man alive that she would let do that without thrusting up barriers to protect her space. But then, Max Savoie was no man. He asked softly against her ear, How could you let me put my hands on you if you believed that for even an instant? His fingertips rested on the backs of her arms.

And she flinched. With a low oath, he turned away. Leave, Charlotte. Just go. The toneless quality of his voice scared her. Max? she asked softly, plaintively. What a monster you must think I am. How can you stand me? Max. She reached for him but he shied away, returning to the other side of his desk. When he looked at her again, his face was without expression. Dont keep your partner waiting, detective. Im sure you have more important places you need to be. Charlotte returned his gaze for a long, controlled moment, her stare flat and unyielding. He knew she wouldnt just slink away. Not with all that fierce, prideful arrogance that

both fascinated and infuriated him. Didnt she realize she could destroy him with just a subtle shift of her expression, a betraying flicker he always prepared for that would plunge from desire to disgust? But she kept her features neutral those bold, exotically beautiful features that could crush a mans courage with purposeful viciousness or conceal a vulnerable world of pain behind hard onyx eyes. She abruptly broke her rigid stance and strode to the door the way she did everything, with a take-no-prisoners certainty. After the door closed behind her, he let his breath out in a shaky spasm. He quickly took another one, deep and strong, to get on top of all the turmoil writhing around inside him. Hed deal with that later. For now, he had to take care of business. He pressed the intercom on his desk. Francis, come in here, please. Francis Petitjohn was Jimmy Legeres cousin and had supposed himself the heir apparent to the fortune hed helped make. Finding out that

Jimmy had passed his vast holdings to the dangerous enigma hed taken in as an orphaned child created a difficult tension between the two of them. Difficult and nearly deadly. Whatchu need, Max? The truth would be nice. Max sank back into the big leather chair that had been Petitjohns up until a month ago. The chair hed sat in to calmly watch Max twist on the floor in the grip of the poison T-John had used to try to kill him.

When Max decided to take the disputed job and the chair instead of T-Johns life, Petitjohn had no objections. But he didnt have to like the situation. Truth about what? Simon Cummings. Someone killed his daughter last night in a way that was rather telling. Like a gruesome finger pointing in my direction.

Whatchu know about it? Petitjohn shrugged, looking properly clueless. But then he wasnt exactly the soul of sincerity. Max knew exactly what he was: lying, sneaking, devious, and for the moment, a necessary evil acting as liaison between him and the cautious factions of their criminal world. The fact that he resembled Jimmy might have had something to do with Maxs reluctance to simply dispose of him. He had Legeres wiry build and sharp, cunning features. His voice held that same casual drawl of indifferent contempt for anything that wasnt making him money. He could be charming when he chose to be, or he could be

merciless. Both sides made Max wary. I dont know anything about it, Max. First I heard. Max tented his hands, resting his chin on his fingertips. His gaze was still, unnervingly unnatural. Really? And thats the truth? Yeah. Have you been leaning on Cummings? Of course. Hes a pain in the ass, like a boil that bothers you every time you try to sit down. If hed answered any differently, Max would have known he was lying.

As it was, he couldnt be certain. Ask around. Find out who did this thing and why. Let them know I dont like it. Its not how I want to do business. Have Marissa send two sizable checks in the daughters name one to whatever department she was in at the university, and one to St. Barts for their womens shelter. Have her reach out very lightly to the family with our condolences. Thats not how Jimmy would have handled it.

Jimmy would have used their grief to apply a little more pressure. He would have considered it a good business opportunity. Max regarded him narrowly. Im not Jimmy. And I will not condone anyone ever harming a woman or child in my name or in my employ. Not ever. Dont make me have to repeat that to you.

I shouldnt have had to say it in the first place, and you know why. T-John said nothing. Max sighed heavily and sagged back into the leather cushions. I dont need this right now, Francis. Im trying to establish a sense of trust here on the docks, and its like trying to reach under a virgins skirt while convincing her your intentions are honorable. Petitjohn smiled slightly and Max realized he was talking too much and to the wrong person. If he needed a confidant, the man on the other side of the desk was not the one to choose.

Unfortunately the person he wanted to unburden himself to was equally unacceptable. And that chewed on him like a wharf rat. Ive got some people to see. I should be back in a couple of hours. Dont talk to the police; dont make any statements to anyone. Deny everything. Make us sound like the aggrieved party.

Youre good at that. As Max moved toward the door, Petitjohn drawled, Whatever you want, Max. Happy to take care of it for you, echoing words Max had said in all sincerity to Jimmy Legere, twisting them with a touch of a sneer. Max turned slowly to regard him. His voice was low, almost pleasant. Just because I let you

go on breathing, dont think that implies any sentimentality or stupidity. I know exactly what you are and the second you cease to serve a purpose on my behalf, I will rip out your heart and swallow it whole while its still beating. I never doubted that for a minute, Max. Max paused, gauging Petitjohns response. The other mans pulse was racing. He was sweating, breathing in shallow fear-laced snatches. Terror was something Jimmy had taught Max to ply ruthlessly, and as long as T-John was afraid, hed have a degree of control. For emphasis, he let his stare turn hot and gold while a bloody red swamped the whites of his eyes. With a blink, that look was back to normal. Good. Then we understand each other. Something else occurred to him. And if anything happens to Charlotte Caissie, if a car runs over her, a safe falls from a second-story window on her, if she contracts some fatal disease, or gets shot in the course of a robbery I will hold you, and only you, personally responsible. And, Francis, he added almost conversationally, youll beg me to eat your heart raw just so you can die. Got it? Got it, Max. He left the office, shutting the door softly behind him, then lingered to hear Francis Petitjohn mutter on the other side. And youll get it, too, you smug son of a bitch. So dont get

too comfortable in that chair. 2010 NANCY GIDEON Presentation de l'auteur IN NANCY GIDEONS SEDUCTIVE NEW NOVEL, A TOUGH-AS-NAAILS NEW ORLEANS COP MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN THE CAREER SHES DEDICATED TO AND THE DANGEROUS SHAPE-SHIFTING LOVER SHE CANT RESIST. SHES SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY. Mixing business with pleasure gets more complicated for Detective Charlotte Caissie when her sexy preternatural lover, Max Savoie, is accused of a high-profile murder. To prove him innocent she must distance herself, but her tangled emotions dont make it easy for her to stay away from him. And neither does Max. HES DESPERATE TO UNCOVER HIS PAST.

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