

Don't Fall For Mr. Hart

C 1- That One Night Novel by MadlainQ

That One Night

Countless all-nighters spent by the books, countless hours spent on learning law, economy, and politics, and here I was—sitting on a freaking tree in the middle of the night. After years of dreaming of becoming an investigative journalist, I—Charlotte Madison—was now forced to turn into a pervert while hunting for scandalous pictures of the new-rising actress Angelica Butterfly.

She was suspected of dating congressmen, and getting a picture of her and any known politician was my current assignment. It was the hot stuff that my editor-in-chief would kill for, and he would definitely kill me if I didn't get him what he wanted. Certainly, this so-called assignment was wrong in more ways than I could count, not to mention that I was violating close to a dozen legal rules. Unfortunately, for my bosses at the Bombshell News—one of the worst New York tabloids—the law was meaningless while sales meant everything.

Since I sucked at invading other people's privacy, this crappy task was my final chance. I could either get the pictures or happily welcome the state of unemployment. I spent some time digging and asking around, and I finally got a tip from a friend who knew a friend who knew Angelica's bodyguard that something was up. The hot little actress went to a certain VIP party, and everyone knew she would not be alone when she returned to her luxurious villa on Pleasure Drive.

I felt ridiculous and pathetic. I spent three hours hidden among the branches of the thick tree right outside the fence of her residence. I was wearing black sweatpants and a black hoodie resembling some creep, and I certainly felt like one. Unfortunately, keeping my dignity and pride intact was not going to help me pay my rent and bills. And so, I held my old Nikon with a camera lens the size of a small riffle and prayed that the paparazzo gods would bless me tonight with at least one good shot.

When the lights finally illuminated Angelica's mansion, I almost fell off that damn tree. Shifting toward the thickest branch, I lowered myself to my knees and aimed my camera at the upper floor, where Angelica's bedroom was. God, I sincerely hoped that I would get my shot before witnessing something highly indecent.

The whole length of Angelica's bedroom was covered by a smooth row of floor-to-ceiling windows. Several heartbeats later, Angelica entered the room accompanied by a black-haired man in a perfectly tailored suit. My anxious heart began to thunder. The golden-haired star glided to the center of the room, elegantly turning around in her red sequin dress as if she were playing a scene. The man who came with her smoothed the lapels

of his expensive jacket and stepped toward her slowly. Biting my lower lip, I focused my camera on the man in the suit.

God, that was it! All I needed was to catch that man's face, take one decent shot of him and her together, and I would keep my job!

"Show me your face, gorgeous," I muttered, trying to spot anything that would help me identify him. I had no such luck. The man kept his face away from the window but left me the chance to admire the well-packed rest of him.

The custom-made, high-end black suit ideally enveloped his broad shoulders but barely contained his arm muscles. I bit my lip again as I studied his large chest and the reversed triangle shape of his upper body. Angelica ended my moment of admiration as she pulled him by the tie, bringing his lips to hers.

Shit. Now, spotting his face had become even harder than before. A few more curses escaped me as I reluctantly watched Miss Celebrity kiss the mystery man. It felt more embarrassing by the second. "For the love of God! Could you stand by the window so I could see who you are and get this over with?!"

My frustration rose beyond limits. The black-haired man wrapped his arms around Angelica, pushing them away from the window and toward the bed. I groaned and rolled my eyes. I was NOT into watching live porn!

"Please don't undress her, please don't undress her, please—" A second later, Angelica's perfect boobs presented themselves in the well-lit part of the room, along with the rest of her naked body.

"God! Why are you doing this to me?! All I wanted was to see who that guy is..." I trailed off as the man in the suit began getting rid of his clothes.

His jacket was already lying on the floor, and his white shirt was coming off next. I might have stopped breathing as the white fabric fell off his chiseled shoulders, exposing the most perfectly carved abdomen I had ever seen. Heat flooded my cheeks, a wicked shiver stroked my lady bits, and, for a moment, I forgot where I was and what I was doing. Focusing my camera on his deliciously rippled stomach, I almost reached out my hand as if I could touch him. God help me, I wanted to touch him—badly.

Then something happened. He walked away from the bed and moved toward the window, staring directly at the tree I was sitting on! I gulped and froze. It felt like our eyes met. His were a mesmerizing shade of ocean blue. His features were sharp, almost intimidating, and madly alluring. This man was not a congressman, and I would know since I had them all memorized. I had no idea who he was, but since his whole look screamed VIP, I decided to snap a picture first and research later. I placed my fingers on the focus rings and turned them slightly when I saw one side of his sensual, full lips curving into a smirk.

Chills ran down my spine. He couldn't have spotted me sitting on that tree, could he? My heart stopped. His gaze darkened while his smirk became more devilish. Like in slow motion, I watched him raise his hand, pointing at my tree. A heartbeat passed, and the wrapped-in-sheets actress was standing by the window next to him, following his line of sight. When her mouth opened to shout a single word, I knew what it was even without hearing her: she called for the guards.

My heart restarted, triple the force, but my muscles froze instead. "Move, Charlie! Move!" I screamed at myself, seeing the fully-armed security team run in my direction. Fuck! I was royally screwed!

The shirtless mystery man was still standing by the window, as if he were more interested in catching the pervert on the tree than fucking the hot actress. I forced air into my lungs, and with the new breath, some of my common sense returned. I grabbed my bag and camera and jumped off the tree, throwing myself into a dead run.

"That creep is getting away! Catch him!" I heard behind my back.

"Over my dead body!" I growled, speeding up and running toward the grove in front of me.

I looked over my shoulder and registered four guards running toward me with flashlights. I reached the trees, where I could blend in with the shadows of the night. Drawing a deep breath, I tried my luck and kept running forward, moving all but blindly in the dark density of the trees. After a few minutes, I stopped and leaned my back against the tree. The guards' voices seemed to fade. Did I lose them?

As soon as I thought about it, the most annoying old-school ringtone sounded from my bag. Idiot! How could I forget to silence my damn phone?! It rang for only a moment, but it was enough to let the guards know where I was...

"Over there!" one of them yelled.

Cursing under my breath, I forced my feet to run again. I made a quick mental note to call my Dad and thank him for making me run three to five miles a day since I was a kid. He taught me to keep my body in good shape, and as I sprinted forward, I knew that his teaching was probably going to save my life today.

Finally, I ran out of the grove, reaching the spot where I parked the car. Heart hammering against my chest, I darted inside and drove away as if the road was on fire. My body began to relax only once I was certain that no cars were following me. I pulled over at the gas station and dragged my hands down my face.

What I did was incredibly risky and stupid, and I would love to forget this night ever happened... Unfortunately, the sight of that mystery man shirtless had already been

engraved in my mind. Slapping my cheeks, I chased away the sudden rush of lewd thoughts and reached inside my backpack, searching for my phone.

Losing all my patience, I threw everything out on the front seat. I grabbed the phone I normally used, only to find it turned off. Confused, I stared at it for a moment before my gaze shifted to my other, "emergency" phone. This one was old, and only three people knew its number. Those people were my Dad and two of my friends from high school, and an emergency call from any of them couldn't mean anything good.

Sucking a deep breath, I looked at the screen and saw a missed call from Bastian. I swallowed a lump in my throat and called him back. "Hello?" I started hesitantly.

"Charlie, something happened." His voice trembled as if he was about to cry. "It's about Julianne."

Air escaped my lungs at the sound of my dear friend's name. "What happened?" I muttered.

"She's dead," he strained, barely managing to even his tone. "They say it was a suicide."