

## **Psychic Lara Wakefield is tasked by a murdered young girl to find her killer.**

### **A GIFT... OR A CURSE?**

Lara Wakefield receives messages from the dead. Her latest "client" is a murdered young girl who wants to be put to rest. The girl's killer, however, objects. Can Lara find the girl's body without becoming the next victim?

### **MONEY OR LOVE?**

Private investigator Stuart Manning wants nothing to do with supernatural phenomena. A retainer of \$50,000 overcomes his reluctance. Lara's innate ability, integrity, and beauty cause him to have second thoughts about psychics, while deadly occurrences cause him to believe the little girl's murderer is still hanging around. How can Stuart protect Lara when the killer is always one step ahead?

## **EXCERPT**

Lara groaned. It was official; this was the worst headache she'd ever suffered because of her gift. In all the years she'd served as messenger girl to the dead, she never, ever felt as totally wiped as she did this very minute.

Exhaling her frustration, she lay limply on what she assumed was a bed. She didn't even have energy to open her eyes, plus her memory had holes large enough to walk through. Where was this bed located? Where was she? Why did her head feel two sizes too large?

Flitting images teased her. She saw herself in a mirror; a drugged out zombie peered back at her. She recalled taking a moon walk to a truck. The taste of a sandwich laced with spicy mustard stung her mouth. More walking, and more eating but where to and what kind of food eluded her. The cold chill of floor tile had iced her bare feet, and she felt the pull of a shirt over her head with some trouble sticking her arms through the large armholes.

A masculine fragrance drifted over to her, too. The rugged face of the man she'd met yesterday--was it just yesterday?--popped into her mind. In all these memories, Stuart Manning had helped her. She heard his deep voice. He'd told her that she wanted to accompany him.

Why couldn't she remember?

Lara lifted her bent arms up then out, brushing the back of her left hand against her forehead. The hard surface of a ring hit her left temple.

Whoa. Her eyelids flew open and in the dark, she stared at her ring finger. A slim gold band encircled it--a band signifying marriage.

She immediately sat up. There was no way she could forget getting married. No way at all. She glanced to her right and her stomach dropped. On the pillow next to her was Stuart Manning's head, then came his neck, his broad shoulders, and part of his well-defined chest, generously delineated with hair. The bed sheets hid whether he was completely naked.

"Omigosh!" She stuffed her fist into her mouth. That he still slept was a blessing. That she so wantonly slept next to him was a catastrophe.

But was it so wanton if they were married?

*This can't be. This just can't be!* Not wanting to wake him, Lara slipped from the bed. As she'd remembered, she wore an oversized tee shirt--his, most likely. When she patted herself down, she cringed. She had nothing on underneath.

*Oh, God. How could this get any worse?*

Her imagination supplied several answers. *Well, you could've gotten pregnant, could've contracted a social disease, he could be a mass murderer--*

*Stop it!* Useless conjecture didn't help this situation. She had to pull herself together and try to remember. Thankfully, her head wasn't quite so fuzzy as before so she took stock of her surroundings as best as she could in the dark. One bed, two night tables, dresser, table and chairs equaled standard hotel/motel room fare.

She cautiously made her way to the window and peeked out from behind the heavy drapes. Early morning's murky haze bathed a crowded row of vehicles parked near the building. A partial view of a neon sign near the road proclaimed "Bismarck" and "No Vacancy."

Dropping the drapery, she leaned against the wall. Her legs didn't want to support her anymore. North Dakota? How could she suddenly wake up in North Dakota?

Or, the more important question, how could she suddenly wake up married?

She narrowed her gaze at her supposed husband. It was time she learned more about Mr. Stuart Manning.

After locating his vacant blue jeans lying atop the dresser, she tiptoed over to them, glanced at their owner, then carefully removed what was in the pocket--keys and a comb on one side, and a billfold and pen on the other. She placed

everything back except the billfold. She took it with her to the bathroom, closed the door, then switched on the light.

That the billfold was thick with money and credit cards didn't interest her. She studied the picture showing through the clear section on the left. It was Stuart, all right, in one of the very few flattering driver license photos that she'd ever seen. The name matched, too, which took her anxiety level down a tiny notch. The license was for the state of California, and he lived in Santa Barbara. That agreed with what he'd told her, too. Sex, male; height, 6-05; weight, 210; eyes, brown. His date of birth made him thirty four and an Aries.

She had no reason to doubt any of the information. The credit cards were all in his name but revealed little else except that he liked to use plastic. Then she came across a card of interest: a private investigator license, also issued in California, due to expire next year.

Private investigator. She sat on the toilet and thought back to their earlier conversation. He'd said he did research and made inquiries on a variety of topics. His current job was what? Something about a hidden resource that might provide communications in previously untapped areas.

Communications. Untapped areas.

She shivered. Could he possibly mean her? With her ability to get messages from the dead? Was someone paying Stuart to abduct her?



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