

Unhinged

By Lois Greiman

Chapter 1

If it wasn't for weird I'd be bored out of my mind.

—*Christina McMullen, who is rarely bored*

“You look well,” I said and kept my tone clipped, my wayward hands strictly to myself.

He smiled, just a tilt of those swoon-worthy lips. “As do you,” he said but his eyes, those burning sapphire flames, said so much more.

I felt heat sear my cheeks then zip off to less humdrum parts. But I resisted fidgeting though I had dreamt of this moment on a hundred less...conscious...occasions. I put my hand on my countertop, making certain I was still in the here and now. The newly installed granite felt cool, smooth, and simultaneously sticky. Sure enough, I was home.

“So your business in Callatis went well?” I asked.

He shrugged. The gesture would have been oh so casual if he had not been sans one shirt. And his chest, that lightly oiled work of art, was, in a word, spectacular. “Well enough.” His voice was sexy low and slightly accented. He took a step toward me.

I lifted my chin to maintain eye contact. At 5' 9' plus, I'm no wilting dandelion, but no part of him appeared to be droopy. His pecs were bulging, his arms corded, his chiseled face shadowed with bristly scruff.

"Rahim was satisfied?" I asked.

He stepped closer, crowding my personal space, filling my senses. He looked like a wet dream, smelled like chocolate Bundt cake. "When have I failed to satisfy?"

I ignored the steamy suggestiveness as best I could, but honest to Pete, he was shedding sexual innuendoes like a molting bird of paradise. "I'm glad—" I began and turned away, but he grabbed my arm, yanking me toward him.

"Admit it!" he snarled.

His hand was steely around my biceps. My heart was pounding. I should have never agreed to meet him. But he was here now, up close and personal. While my cell phone, my most reliable means of obtaining help, seemed a million miles away, orbiting somewhere in a galaxy far far away.

"Admit what?" My voice was raspy.

"You want me." He breathed the words into the air between us, setting it afire. "Say it."

But I couldn't. Didn't dare. Too much had happened. I straightened my spine. Raised my chin. "No. You're—" I began, but then he kissed me.

His lips seared mine but I held strong, held steady...for two endless seconds, then I twisted my fingers in his hair and jumped him like a hyena on a hapless hare. He stumbled a little under my weight

but managed to maintain his balance. Then he grabbed my ass, holding me astride as I wrapped my legs around his waist and dove in.

“Cut.”

His torso was hard and rippled against mine, his lips full and warm and—

“Cut!”

His heart was pounding like a kick drum. Other parts throbbed in concert. My own answered lustily. I fumbled with his belt, but his sword...the plastic one suspended from his hips, kept impeding my progress.

“Mac,” Laney called.

“Ms. McMullen,” he murmured.

“Christina Mary McMullen!” Laney scolded, perhaps thinking that using my full name, as the Holy Name sisters had done on a thousand ill-disciplined occasions, would somehow penetrate the fog in my brain.

Sadly, it worked. I felt reality seep in like battery acid. I unsuctioned my lips, blinked, and turned groggily to the right.

Brainy Laney Butterfield, aka the Amazon Queen, stood ten feet away, baby to her shoulder, TV script held loosely in one hand. “That’s the end of the scene.”

Sergio, more commonly known as Morab to the viewing public, stared at me, brows raised. There might have been a little WTF in his gaze.

“That was...” Laney paused, patted the baby. “An interesting interpretation.”

“Oh...” I cleared my throat, carefully avoiding Sergio’s questioning

gaze. "Thank you."

"You can probably..." She sighed but resisted rolling her eyes. Laney's kick-ass disciplined that way. "Dismount now."

"Oh, right. Right!" I said and yet my legs failed to comply, while my fingers, nasty little sluts that they are, remained curled in his waistband like eagle's claws gone rogue.

That's when someone knocked on the door.

I gasped and jerked my attention to my foyer. Perhaps because the arrival of visitors is generally followed by screaming, running, and subsequent death threats.

Don't ask me why people keep trying to murder me. Mysteries abound. Even for a psychologist, a PhD and a really dynamite kisser, such as myself.

Sergio, in fact, still looked a little dazed.

"Should I get that?" Laney asked and nodded toward the door.

"What?" I was having a little trouble dragging myself from the just-interrupted scene and back into the here and now. Some might say I'd been employing the Meisner technique. Others could argue that I was just really really horny.

Laney shook her head, gave me one more hopeless glance and pattered toward my front door.

"*Apaixonado*," Sergio said.

"What?" I repeated. It was the best I could do. My blood, it seems, can either supply my brain or my reproductive system. Both is beyond my scope.

"It is what we call women such as yourself in my country,"

Our mouths were still inches apart and our chests even closer. My nipples, those damn little bullets of destruction, were aimed directly at his heart. "Women..." Good God, he had fantastic lips, made to suck and be sucked. "...like myself?"

"Women with..." He shook his head as if searching his memory banks for a politically acceptable term. "...verve." His sparkling-heaven eyes still bore into mine. "Women who are aflame with..."

"Should I call the fire department?"

The voice ripped my attention from Sergio's suckable lips. I snapped my head to the left, and there, sure as that fucker, Murphy, with his deplorable law would demand, stood Lieutenant Jack Rivera, nemesis, protector and ex-lover.