

And excerpt from. . .

Sea of Lies

by
Linda Daly

Chapter Six

On the flight to Bush International Airport, Jordan gazed out the window of her first-class seat, sipping her second drink and admiring the white billowy clouds off to the horizon. As the plane sped closer to Texas, the memories of the past twenty-four hours in Detroit slowly drifted from her troubled mind, like the clouds she continued to admire. At last, she felt at ease and she allowed herself to dreamily think of her life, and just how blessed she actually was.

Viewing her life as perfect—she as the princess and Grant as her knight in shining armor—Jordan knew how truly fortunate she was to have found the kind of love that young girls read about in fairy tales. She had it all: she was an heiress with a successful career and a husband who was not only sexy and charming, but most importantly, she knew without a doubt that he loved her as much as she loved him. Saying a silent prayer of thanks, she smiled, thinking of Grant. *I'll be with you soon, darling.*

Upon disembarking at Bush International, Jordan headed directly to the car rental counter, suddenly feeling anxious again. Glancing around the crowded terminal and seeing armed guards walking among the passengers, she tried to convince herself that their presence was what was making her feel so apprehensive. She quickened her pace, taking her place in line, never noticing the other witness to the previous night's accident among the crowd, as she waited patiently for her turn to rent a car.

As the agent called, "Next," she maneuvered her luggage and stepped up to the counter, smiling warmly.

"Hello. My name is Jordan Hart and I've taken an early flight but completely forgotten to change my reservations for a car."

The agent began typing information into her keyboard. "Umm, Mrs. Hart, we don't have a car available right now." The agent paused to glance at Jordan, before continuing. "Let's see when the next car will be available." Striking a few more keys on the keyboard and reading the screen, she said reassuringly, "There's one due back in the next couple of hours."

Disappointed, Jordan said, "Oh, dear, that long!"

"That's when it's due to be returned, but the party might turn it in earlier; we never know. Tell you what. If you'd like, I could call your name over the PA if one becomes available before then."

"Thank you," Jordan said, nodding politely at the young woman. Gathering her personal belongings, she turned and noticed a woman wearing a dress similar to hers, waiting in line as well. Nodding to her, Jordan found her way to the nearest restroom. Once again overcome with a sense of being watched, she stepped inside the lounge and retrieved her cell phone from her purse. Dialing 611 and hearing an operator ask if she could be of assistance, she immediately responded, "Yes, a limousine service at Bush International, please."

As her call was being placed, Jordan absentmindedly glanced over to the door as it opened. The woman she had seen in line only moments earlier entered the restroom, and Jordan smiled warmly at her, cupping the phone with one hand.

"Looks like we're in the same boat. No car for you, either?"

"No. This was a last minute trip and I forgot to reserve a car. You'd think they'd have more cars," she said, mildly annoyed.

Nodding in agreement, Jordan turned back to her phone and spoke into the receiver. "Hello, I was wondering if you have a driver available who could take me to Galveston this evening..."

After successfully securing transportation to the island, Jordan picked up her luggage and started heading toward the door as the woman from the line exited the stall. Jordan paused, looking back at the stranger.

"As luck would have it, I've just made other arrangements. Tell you what, my name is Jordan Hart and they're supposed to call me when a car is available. If my name's called before yours, then take mine."

"Why, thank you. That's very nice of you."

"No problem. I'm Jordan Hart, from Canton, Michigan," Jordan said, stepping closer to the door, holding it open with her foot as other passengers passed by them.

"Nice to meet you, Jordan, I'm Julie. Julie Black from Yorba Linda, California. Thanks a lot, I really appreciate this."

Jordan nodded and smiled again, and then hearing her name being called over the loud speaker to return to the car rental counter, she turned back to Julie. "Looks like you won't have a long wait after all."

Excited, Julie picked up her bags and rushed through the restroom door which Jordan still had propped open with her foot. She called over the heads of the other women entering and exiting the restroom, "Thanks again!" and hurried off in the direction of the car rental counter.

Fifty yards down the corridor, the witness from Detroit rose from the chair he'd been sitting patiently in, eyes glued to the women's restroom door, as he heard Jordan's name being called over the PA. Upon seeing a woman with long, chestnut hair, wearing a cream-colored dress exiting the restroom and heading to the car rental counter, he followed at a discreet distance. Stopping far enough away so as not to be noticed, he waited until Julie stepped up to the counter, then casually exited the terminal.

"Hello, do you remember me?"

"Yes. You were waiting to rent a car. I'm sure another will be in shortly."

Julie smiled politely at the agent. "This may sound weird, but Mrs. Hart of Canton, Michigan, told me to take her car since she rented a limousine."

"Hmm." Frowning slightly, the agent looked at Julie and asked, "Can you verify what limousine service she used?"

~

Riding along Interstate 45 to Galveston Island, Jordan poured herself a Jack and Coke from the limousine bar and leaned back in her seat, brushing her hair from her shoulder. Straightening her dress to prevent creases, she thought of Julie Black, and how similar their dresses were. *What a small world this is. In the past two days I've crossed paths with two women who not only looked like me, but were similar in age, as well.* Recalling the first, Elizabeth Miller, and how she'd been slumped over in her seat, her hair blood-soaked, and her face disfigured from the gunshot wound, Jordan quivered and took a sip of her cocktail.

It really is ironic just how many people look alike, she thought, recalling the woman from the casino who had thought Grant looked like her dead fiancé. With all the strange similarities she

had experienced in the past twenty-four hours, Jordan, who had never before believed in coincidence, was now open to the idea that anything was possible. Raising her glass in silence, she toasted Julie. *Here's hoping you got a car.*

~

A rental car headed south on Interstate 45, toward the coast. Just after passing through Bayou Vista, it was forced off the road in an isolated area and was driven full-speed into a steep ditch, killing the driver instantly. Her neck was broken by the impact as her head went through the driver's side window.

A white Cadillac Seville pulled slowly up to the accident scene and a man cautiously stepped from the Seville, climbed down into the ditch, and opened the driver's door. Reaching in, his leather-gloved hands pulled the lifeless body from the car, letting it drop to the ground. He reached in once more, turned off the headlights, and moved the ignition key to the off position.

Climbing out of the ditch and looking down the road, he signaled to the man who'd remained in the passenger seat of the Seville that another car was approaching. His accomplice slid out of sight as the gloved man turned and faced the shoulder of the road, appearing as if he were relieving himself.

When all that remained of the car was a cloud of exhaust and road dust, he again motioned to his accomplice. As if well choreographed, his accomplice stepped out of the Seville and walked to the back of the car, opening the trunk. The gloved man picked up the lifeless body, carried it up the slope and dumped it unceremoniously into the trunk, slamming the lid shut.

The men climbed back into the Seville and without exchanging a single word, continued south on Interstate 45 toward Galveston Island, Julie Black's battered corpse stashed casually in the trunk like a child's forgotten rag doll.