



# INTERVIEW WITH AN ACCIDENTAL

NATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

# DAKOTA CASSIDY

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## Author Note

It's been seven (seven!) years since the release of book one in my Accidentals series, dear readers, and now, on the cusp of releasing book ten (hold me!), I figured it was high time I put together something that would not only help new readers jump into the fray several books in, but also help me remember what I wrote way back when. (Hey, I ain't gettin' any younger, and my brain is stuffed full of makeup tips and reality TV trivia.)

So I called up my pals Nina, Marty and Wanda, who schlepped all the way out to my home in Oregon—with a few other fan-fave characters in tow, for an *Interview With an Accidental*. During an intimate interview by moi, you can meet the ladies who have been mainstays in all of my Accidental books—if Nina lets anyone get a word in between all her, um...colorful commentary.

Grab a cocktail and enjoy a gabfest with the girls, as well as a bonus chapter from my next book, *Accidentally Aphrodite*—for the low, low price of free! That's right. FREE! Consider it my way of saying thanks for keeping me company on these crazy Accidental adventures. May you join me for many more!

## Blurb

“Sweet Baby Jesus in booty shorts! Marty, Wanda, and Nina are back!” *New York Times* bestselling author, Robyn Peterman.

National bestselling author of *The Accidental Dragon*, Dakota Cassidy is puttin' on her tiara, sharpening her fav hot pink pen, and kicking her feet up on the desk to ask the hard questions. Get the inside scoop on all the hot, sexy cast members in this free, uproariously funny interview with the girls of her Accidental series. Find out who's doing what to whom and more, as Dakota hosts the interview of the decade!

## Acknowledgements

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## Interview With an Accidental

First, hello! I'm Dakota Cassidy, and since my first traditionally published book in 2008, I've written a series for a New York publisher titled *The Accidentals*. Think heroine or hero in every kind of accidental situation you could possibly find to turn a poor soul into one type of paranormal species or another (werewolf, vampire, demon, etc). In fact, I've written so many accidents, I was *this close* to writing the *Accidental Iguana*—no, I'm joking...

Mostly.

Then think *The Accidental Fill in the Blank*—or *Accidentally Fill in the Blank*—as the standard prefix for each title in the series. Next, add a hero and heroine thrust into a very, very (very!) dangerous situation while trying to adjust to swapping their mortal lives for immortality and fangs or fur or, yes, even scales. But in the midst of all that chaos and insanity, each hero or heroine somehow manages to find love while surviving some seemingly insurmountable hurdles.

Thus, every *Accidental* up to this point has the same type of formula, in that the lead protagonist becomes a paranormal due to accidental circumstances. However, they all go on very different journeys.

The series is set in New York (with one or two exceptions, like *The Accidental Dragon*, set in Vermont) because that's my home state, and I missed it terribly, but I actually wrote the better part of the series when I lived in Texas (where I swear I lived two feet from the sun).

Writing a series set in New York made me feel closer to the things I loved and longed for the most (think amazing Chinese food, pizza, Broadway!).

Anyway, I'm out here in the publishing world as an Indie now, and with the series nine books deep, as I considered publishing these on my own, I thought, how in the ever-lovin' hell would you awesome, new-to-the-series readers be able to pick up this next batch of books and understand who three of the main series characters were without having to invest your trust funds to do it?

Because again, the series is nine books deep. Ninenineniiiiinnne!

Now, while each book in the series has a stand-alone HEA (happily ever after), the three characters who began this crazy, amazing ride for me, and some of their closest friends they've adopted into the *Accidental* family along the way, are the heart and soul of the series. They've been in every book since the start and are also who this new string of self-published books will continue to be driven by.

My girls from the first three books, Marty, Nina, and Wanda, own a company called OOPS—which I'll explain later—and it's how they keep finding others like them and what really allows the series to grow.

Anyway, as I considered writing more of this world, I pondered how to publish these from a traditional standpoint...

And then I thought, "Hey, Dakota! You can do whateverthefluff you want now that you're self-publishing. Why not just introduce the important players from the series interview-style? Let new readers get to know them, and then jump right into book number ten?"

But *then* I thought, “Jesus and a Powerpuff Girl, there’s a lot of back story in nine books and many, many relationships have developed and grown deeper as a result.”

You know, like when you have a group of friends and you have jokes only the group of you understand and laugh about? Or you have a favorite experience you’ve all shared and you recall it with a catchphrase, or sometimes even just a facial expression? There are some nuances that just can’t be explained unless you’ve been along for the ride.

But I’ll do my best to give you a brief overview of how each of the three original characters became paranormal without any spoilers about their actual stories, and you can decide whether you want to jump on into the Accidental pool with the rest of us or not—but I so hope you will!

Also to note, I’ve included a bonus chapter of the next Accidental I’m writing, titled *Accidentally Aphrodite*, at the end of this introduction and it’s a completely risk-free endeavor because it’s TOTALLY FREE!

Did I mention the sample chapter is FREE? YAY!

So here we go—and please keep in mind, the three women who began this journey way back in 2008 can be...well, never mind. You’ll see (insert evil music).

Let me set the scene for you. In the infamous words of Prince, dig if you will the picture of me with my messy ponytail and chip-clip on top of my head (hate when my hair is in my eyes), wearing ratty sweats (comfortable and they hide stains and crumbs well, just in case the UPS man drops by), no makeup (because it smears when I cry as I’m trying to find my way out of one crazy plot or another), and probably a glazed-over, almost shell-shocked expression.

That’s my “writing wear”. Don’t let it scare you. I’m actually quite tame when let out of my writing cage, if not a little mussed and squinty-eyed during daylight hours.

Now add in the three paranormal women, Nina, Marty, and Wanda, who are the lifeblood of *The Accidentals* (and also BFFs), all sitting around in my office with my puppies and my cat, just chatting. Okay, one of them is complaining.

Let me explain. Since the hubby and I empty-nested, we moved from Texas to Oregon, and I will warn you, Nina the vampire (the one complaining) is a little cranky about having to drive here for this interview instead of flying (not on a plane. Yep. She flies) because Wanda and Marty wanted to sightsee, visit the mountains, and sample some of the awesome food trucks we specialize in here in Portland, all without getting windburn.

Also, Nina flat-out refused to carry their eleventy-billion suitcases.

But here’s the real source of Nina’s upset today. Nina, being a vampire, can’t eat the way the girls can. It’s been seven years since she was turned, and still it’s a bone of serious contention for her. No one loved chicken wings and beer more than Nina. She also complains a lot about girl time—even though she secretly loves it much the way she loved chicken wings, so don’t let her fool you. But do brace yourself.

So grab a cup of coffee, or beverage of your choice (straight up, I’m gonna suggest booze, because when I say the girls all in one room are a lot? I’m not kidding), get comfortable in your favorite chair, put your feet up and meet *The Accidentals*.

Onward ho!

Dakota: “First up, let me introduce you to Marty Andrews-Flaherty from book one, *The Accidental Werewolf*. Once a door-to-door cosmetics saleswoman for Bobbie-Sue Cosmetics (totally made up and yes, a bit of a play on Mary-Kay), she’s a cute, curvy

blonde who loves clothes, shoes, and makeup and thinks everyone else should, too.”

*She waves and smiles as if you can all see her.*

Marty: “Helllooo, lovely readers, new and returning! Welcome to the madness.”

Dakota: “So tell everyone how you ended up with teeth and fur?”

*Marty sighs long, loud, and put-upon.*

*That’s her way of letting me know, for the umpteenth time, it was a very trying time for her (#writereyeroll).*

Marty: “Okay, here we go. So like Dakota said, I was a door-to-door cosmetics saleswoman, working my way up the slippery, sometimes dirty ladder of lip gloss and cold cream to cosmetic success, when—”

*Nina snorts out loud. Like really loud, and of course, sarcastically.*

Nina: “And dragging our sorry asses with you to places like the damn IHOP, where people couldn’t even eat a GD Rooty Tooty Fresh ’N Fruity in flippin’ peace without you offering up your unwanted assessments about what’s in their color wheels.”

*Marty and I both narrow our eyes at Nina in warning.*

*Then Wanda leans over and swats her with one of her gloves.*

Dakota: “Nina, I’m begging you. Just this once, wait your turn. It’s not nice to interrupt. Marty, please continue.”

Marty: “As I was saying before Elvira threw her two cents in, one night, after a particularly trying Bobbie-Sue convention gathering, I was out walking my toy poodle Muffin next to an alleyway in New York with my fellow, very reluctant cosmetics saleswomen, Nina and Wanda. Nina was, as always, complaining about how much she hated doing door-to-door sales, and I was distracted because I was just trying to keep Nina motivated to sell, sell, sell. Though, if you knew Nina, you’d know she always carries a pin with her. The one she uses to burst your bubble at regular intervals.”

Nina: “Oh, bubble-schmubble, Miss Clairol number two-twenty-six. I just like to keep shit real. The reality was, I sucked at selling goop to chicks. You, on the other hand, woulda sold that crap to a dead broad in the morgue if you could sneak past the coroner.”

*Marty visibly grinds her teeth then puckers her lips while she attempts to keep from rising to Nina’s bait and I attempt to soothe her.*

Dakota: “Inhale, exhale, Marty. We can do this, just like we talked about. Go Team Accidental!”

*Marty takes a deep breath while Wanda uses her glove as a pom-pom to silently cheer on her bestie.*

Marty: “Anyway, there was the typical chaos, like always when the three of us are together, and while I was trying to inspire my reps, Muffin spotted another dog. Muff can be really territorial, and in one of her finer displays of fur and teeth, she attacked what we all thought was a very large dog.”

Dakota: “Who wasn’t really a dog.”

*Marty laughs out loud. Of course, at the time there was a whole lot less laughter.*

Marty: “Exactly! We just *thought* he was another dog. Turns out, he wasn’t the biggest German shepherd we’d ever seen but an actual werewolf named Keegan. When I tried to detach Muffin from the alleged canine, because I really began to fear for the other dog’s life (Muffin can be such a beast. She’s sometimes referred to as Killer), I was accidentally nicked on the hand, and voila! Insta-werewolf. Jesus’s underpants, that was a batch of crazy, wasn’t it, Dakota? But long story short, I’m now happily married to that

dog...er, werewolf. Who knew the beast in that alleyway would turn out to be the love of my life?”

*Marty giggles in her light, girlie way and smiles at the recollection, the highlights of her blonde hair shimmering under the dim lighting in my writing cave...Er, office.*

Dakota: “Well, I did, Marty. Because, you know, I wrote you?”

Marty: “Right. Anyway, I’m Marty Flaherty, now very happily married to Keegan for seven years and we have a precocious daughter named Hollis. I now own Bobbie-Sue Cosmetics, thanks to my nutbag—”

*I press two fingers together in Marty’s direction, using the universal sign to zip it.*

Dakota: “Marty! Shhh! No spoilers. You promised to let me do most of the talking just in case people want to read your story. Less is more, Queen of the Color Wheel.”

*Marty rolls her big baby blues at me and pouts her perfectly glossed lips.*

Marty: “But you *always* do all the talking. We never get a say in what you’re going to do to us. I mean, how much do you think I loved that trip to Hell in...what was it, book four? Um, not. But I went because, for the love of all that’s hot and sweaty, you *made* me go, with all your late-night pecking on that stupid keyboard! It’s unfair! I say we all—”

*I give Marty the look. You know the one.*

Dakota: “Marty! Hush.”

*Marty hangs her head in shame and sighs, folding her hands in her lap after smoothing them over her trendy skirt.*

Marty: “Right. I keep forgetting. Less is more. So how’s you? The boys? How’s Oregon and that adorable DH of yours?”

Dakota: “We’re all good, and enjoying empty-nesting.”

Nina: “Yeah, that empty nest gives a hack like you way too much time to concoct more crazy.”

*Marty reaches across Wanda and yanks the string on Nina’s hoodie. I’d put Wanda in the middle of them for a reason. You’ll see why in three, two, one...*

Marty: “Knock it off, Mouthy McMouth, and let Dakota do what she invited us here to do.”

Wanda: “Nina! I’m almost at my wits end with you. Now, keep your mean, insensitive thoughts to yourself or I’m going to put my foot square up your derriere!”

Dakota: “Girls...”

*But Nina instantly pipes down and returns to glowering at me.*

*Marty repositions herself in her seat and gives me the Thumper look.*

Marty: “Sorry, Dakota.”

*I smile my acceptance of her apology and cross my fingers that Nina will keep her introduction and complaining short and sweet. But I’ll warn you in advance, it likely won’t matter if a million people cross their fingers because as you’ve already witnessed, my next character is un-shushable.*

*But wish me luck, okay?*

Dakota: “Okay, so next up is Nina Blackman-Statleon from book two, titled *Accidentally Dead*. A gorgeous brunette who shuns all things girlie and wears hoodies and work boots, much to her BFFs’s dismay. Once a court stenographer, she took a job as one of Marty’s Bobbie-Sue reps out of sheer desperation when she was laid-off, which is originally how the girls all met. So, Nina, tell everyone how you became one with the darkness.”

*I sit back and hold my breath—because here it comes, people.*

*Nina cracks her knuckles and grins.*

Nina: “Where to start? Oh, wait, I know. One day, probably while you were filing your nails or some such shallow, ex-beauty-queen shiz, you thought, wouldn’t it be funny if I turned Marty’s unsuspecting friend Nina from book one into a vampire? And then you thought, let’s really do this up right. Let’s finally have some damn mercy and give her a real job that doesn’t involve selling stupid lip gloss with names like Slaughterhouse Sienna—”

Marty: “That’s Sunset Sienna, Nina, and you know it!”

Nina: “Whathelhellver. Anyway, in all your wisdom, *Author*, you decided to give me a job as a dental hygienist because you thought, wouldn’t it be rolling-on-the-floor, laughing-your-ass-off funny if, after all that time I was out of work, hawking greasy moisturizer, you finally give me a decent job with bennies only to snatch that shit right out from under me and turn me into a vampire?”

*Now I hang my head in shame. Okay, so I did laugh. But I never rolled on the floor. Swear it on my Sunset Sienna lip gloss.*

Dakota: “We’ve discussed the grudging, haven’t we, Nina? C’mon, pal. Don’t be like that. And we promised we’d just stick to the facts. So continue, please. Minus the pokes at Marty.”

Nina: “Fine. Anyway, book two opens with me at a new job as a dental hygienist, one I really liked except for that dink of a receptionist. I was accidentally bitten when my now husband/life mate, Greg Statleon, came in to have a tooth fixed. He had an allergic reaction to the anesthesia, clamped his mouth shut, and took a chunk out of my hand. Also, because Miss Rhodes Scholar here made a mistake, there was speculation by one or two readers about my position, and whether I should have been the one putting that sucky thing into my man’s mouth as an assistant/hygienist. Which technically means none of this ever had to happen and I could still be eating chicken wings from the Cluck-Cluck Palace by the bucket, but whatever.”

*I roll my eyes at Nina and how quickly she forgets all the awesome things she has in her life now because it did happen. But whatever.*

Dakota: “That’s true. I chalked it up to literary license and fiction. So roll with me, if you will. But forget that; let’s talk about why you hated Bobbie-Sue so much. You know, so people get a really in-depth feel for your brand of cranky.”

*And we’re off!*

Nina: “I flippin’ hated selling makeup. Hated it. I answered Marty’s stupid ad out of desperation because I was broke and they were gonna turn off my cable. She made it sound like the road to Fort Knox was paved with Bobbie-Sue, and I fell for it. Which it was *not*, people. It sucked more ass than a good cleanse, and *I* sucked at it because I don’t give a ripe shit *what’s* in your color wheel.”

*I snicker, because if you could see the picture in my mind of someone like Nina asking people about their color palettes, you’d bust a gut, too.*

Dakota: “Ah, yes. A sure way to make my Nina cringe is to have someone ask ‘What’s In Your Color Wheel?’ one of the quirkiest catchphrases from *The Accidentals*. But as much as Nina hates it, fans of the series turned it into a way to greet me at conventions and in emails. She also has a rather strange, intense loathing for the color yellow. This, too, is also something fans of the series have derived much pleasure in



calling me to task about—all in good fun, of course.

“Anyway, if I’m honest, Nina despises most everything and everyone—or at least she pretends to.”

*Nina glowers at me some more.*

Nina: “Who said anything about pretending?”

*I reach over my desk and pinch her cheeks because I know she hates it.*

Dakota: “You totally know that’s not true. Just finish the story, Crabby Patty. Tell everyone where you are now in your life after nine books.”

Nina: “I’m mated to Greg now and have a baby girl named Charlie.”

*Nina’s face is wreathed in smiles. It isn’t often she smiles, unless it’s when she’s leering maniacally at you, but if we’re talking about her baby and her husband, well, nothing makes her happier.*

Dakota: “Oh, and as an aside, Charlie is a vampini—half genie, half vampire.”

Nina: “That she is. Thanks for that, Crazy pants. Don’t get me wrong, I’d rip your intestines out through your belly button if you tried to hurt my kid, because I’m fekkin’ nuts about her. But not only is she perpetually teething because she’s half vampire and she ages slowly, she can also GD make things disappear. Any idea what it’s like trying to find that kid’s binky in a castle the size of mine?”

*I snort right along with Marty and Wanda, who are trying to hide their snickers behind their hands. My only justification for Charlie is that it was a long night of writing and I couldn’t just give Nina a human baby, right?*

Dakota: “Sorrysorrysorry. I’ll try to fix the teething thing in the next book. Carry on.”

Nina: “So, Greg, Charlie, and I live in a kooky castle on Staten Island. Yeah, I said castle. Cliché much, Writer? Anyway, it’s got a hedge maze. I don’t like to give you props, Boss, but that was definitely one of the cooler-ish additions to my story.”

Dakota: “Did you just give me my due, Nina? I feel faint.”

*I blow her a kiss, one she snatches up with a fist and pretends to lob into the trash can in my office like it’s a basketball.*

Nina: “Faint this. Anyway, we also have a zombie named Carl, who was living with a jacked-up witch doctor named Guido in a filthy shack when I found him. I saved my little buddy from a life of solitude and misery because Guido didn’t know what the hell to do with him.”

Dakota: “A sweet, sweet, non-*Walking-Dead* kind of zombie.”

*Nina reaches into her hoodie pocket and pulls out a roll of duct-tape she always keeps on hand for Carl, in case he loses a body part, but she’s smiling again. Carl’s awesome. She knows it, and I know it.*

*But then she frowns, because how Carl came to be stems from one of my whims, and she thinks I spend entirely too much time being whimsical.*

Nina: “Carl’s a product of another one of those moments Mark Twain here had. Somehow, in that head full of air of hers, she had another one of those stupid-ass ideas she’s always having. ‘Wouldn’t it be funny if I wrote a zombie named Carl who no one can keep track of and give him to Nina so she’s always freaking out and wondering where the hell he is? Ha. Ha.’”

*I sigh because it’s true. Much of what I write is born out of a “Wouldn’t it be funny if” factor.*

Dakota: “I wrote him because often on my Facebook page, after watching *The Walking Dead*, I do updates, and we joked about our wish to have the character Carl turned into a zombie so the rest of the *Walking Dead* crew didn’t have to keep wondering, ‘Where’s Carl?’, or continually ask ‘Have you seen Carl?’

“He was my homage to all the fabulous people who participate in our discussions every Sunday night after the show airs, and you know that, Nina.”

*I look out the window of my office, fighting a cringe because just the mention of Carl always makes me wonder exactly where he is...*

Dakota: “Where is Carl, anyway?”

Nina: “He’s plenty fine. He’s in the car with Darnell and Arch. They’re teaching him duct-tape origami. So relax and let’s get this over with, huh? I’ll let you tell the readers all about what an uncensored, straightforward bitch I can be, but on the inside I really have a soft, goey center when it comes to animals and kids and anyone who’s in need of some muscle—which is a load of shite. But go for it.”

*She rolls her hand, ordering me to carry on.*

*But I point to her lap, where she has not one, but two of my furbabies, Pebbles and Milo, cuddling with her while Tallulah, my longhaired Chi, snuggles between Marty and Wanda.*

Dakota: “Uh, case in point, Marshmallow.”

Nina: “Oh, blow me, Hemingway. Milo’s my good, good boy, aren’t you, buddy? Don’t listen to your nutbag mom.”

*Milo’s my one-eyed, runt-of-the-litter Shi Tzu. A rescue from a parking lot where some guy was selling puppies. He was the last little dude standing, and no one was going to pay eight hundred dollars to take him home because his one eye is defective. So they were going to...well, you know. I swung a deal with this man and snatched up Milo. But truth be told, he’s the orneriest, most ungrateful, defensive little Napoleon ever.*

*Yet, here he sits with Nina, docile and as complacent as a newborn kitten. Huh.*

Nina: “And look at this face on Princess Pebbles. Who’s the prettiest girl ever-ever? Tell your nutjob mother to hurry her ass up so Auntie Nina can get away from her before she gives me a rhinoceros with hemorrhoids or something.”

*I rest my case. But I wink at Nina and bat my eyelashes. I had to soften her edges somehow. She had to have some kind of kryptonite, right? With all her bad language and unfiltered jabs at anyone with a pulse, she had to have a weakness. Animals, kids, and anyone in need or in trouble are her breaking points.*

Dakota: “Where was I? Oh, muscle, yes. Nina is indeed the muscle of the group, and has helped me out of many a skirmish. That’s not to say Marty and Wanda aren’t equally as strong, but Nina’s the one most willing to put her dukes up first. However, my Nina, as dreadful as she can be, is the first person to defend you—especially if you’re a child or an animal or even Marty, who, whether she’ll admit it or not, is one of her best friends ever. She’s loyal to the bitter end and gets the job done, and when you become a part of her life, she’s on your side *forever*.”

*Nina grates out a sigh of exasperation because I’ve pulled off her wolf’s clothing to reveal a little lamb and it makes her stabby.*

Nina: “Oh, whatever. Just get on with it.”

*Marty grabs Nina’s chin and gives her a big smooch on the cheek while Nina squirms in discomfort. But Marty just laughs it off and tweaks the tip of Nina’s nose.*

Marty: “She’s the most disagreeable pain in the ass I know, but I love my bloodsucker like a hooker loves a roomful of college frats.”

Nina: “Shut the fuck up, ass-sniffer, and stop slobbering all over me.”

*Marty rustles in her chair and winces, wrinkling her nose in distaste.*

Marty: “Nina! Your language, please! Don’t forget to mention her potty mouth, Dakota. The readers should know she’s a creative swearer with a horrifying penchant for using the foulest language.”

*Oh, dear. And here we go again, folks...*

*Nina throws up her middle finger at Marty in typical Nina fashion. But trust me, there’s a lot of love between these two. Swear it.*

Nina: “Zip it, Marty Flaherty, or I’ll pluck you right out of those damn Spanx so fast your eyeballs will bang into each other on the way out of your head—”

*I give Nina the eye from across my desk and shake a finger at her—for all the good it does me.*

Dakota: “Nina...I’m warning you. We had an agreement. I promised to write you a long vacation on some snow-covered mountaintop sans Marty’s big, annoying yap—your words, not mine—and absolutely no paranormal crises in sight if you behaved during this very important introduction. And as I recall, via that crass email you sent me, where I think you called me the Un-Shakespeare, you agreed. Now, I’ll remind you again, I wrote you. I can and *will* un-write you. Capice?”

*Nina grits her teeth, clearly calling upon her very minimal anger management skills in light of our bargain. And trust when I tell you, there’ve been plenty of readers who’ve suggested Nina needs a muzzle due to her outspokenness and lack of filter.*

Nina: “Fine. I guess you hold all the GD cards, don’t you, *Ms. Author?*”

*I mock a curtsy and smile.*

Dakota: “I do. And you have a trip you want to go on. So can it. Now, where was I? Oh, yes...brash, absolutely no filter, creative swearer blah, blah, blah. Wait! I forgot impatient as a toddler, and she totally shuns all things girly even though she’s absolutely gorgeous. In a word, she’s polarizing. Either you love her or hate her.

“Thankfully, enough people loved her so much, she’s become an integral part of the books (you can read all about the people who hated her *and* her swearing in reviews—believe that). But please note: She’s also been working on her swearing, now that she has an impressionable little girl.”

*Nina grumbles at me and makes a face.*

Nina: “Eff you and your stupid bullshit threats, Dakota Cassidy. I’m sick and damn well tired of you holding shit over my head. How the fuck did you get a book published anyway, you tiara-wearin’ hack? What were you, like, Miss Mesozoic BC? It’s a miracle someone hasn’t stolen that keyboard right out from under your manicured fingertips and beat the shit out of you with it.”

*Okay, so she’s a work in progress...*

*A loud gasp resonates in my office. Obviously, Wanda’s level of patience for all things decorum-less has reached its limit. Enter my gentle, kind, always-a-lady-but-will-kick-your-ass-if-need-be Wanda.*

Wanda: “Nina! How dare you be so ungrateful! If not for Dakota, you wouldn’t have a husband who’s a bloody saint for putting up with you, *or* our precious Charlie. Now you sit back, hush your endlessly flapping gums, and like it!”

*I snicker and clear my throat. You can always count on Wanda to rein in Nina. Wanda's like Nina's Beast Whisperer. She rarely argues with Wanda, and I attribute that to the mother figure Wanda has grown into since the series began. Both Marty and Nina are motherless, and Wanda fills a need in them no one else quite can.*

*Anyway...*

Dakota: "This, lovely readers, is Wanda Schwartz-Jefferson. Also, at one point, a Bobbie-Sue rep along with Nina and Marty, and she's what the girls fondly call a halvesie."

*Nina snorts.*

Nina: "Sometimes you gotta laugh at the shit I come up with, huh, Dakota?"

Marty: "You didn't come up with it, Mistress of the Dark. Dakota did."

*Nina gears up to rise from her chair and loom threateningly over Marty. She does this a lot. You'll get used to it. I know I keep saying this, but really, to know her is to love her.*

*I stop her by tapping my desk impatiently with a stray bottle of nail polish and giving everyone a scowl—which means shut it and knock off the arguing.*

Dakota: "Wanda from book three, *The Accidental Human*, is a halvesie because she's half vampire, half werewolf thanks to her mate, Heath. Tell everyone how you ended up where you are today, Wanda."

*Wanda smiles at me as she strokes my dog Tallulah's head, tucking her cute purse under her chair with her conservatively heeled shoe.*

Wanda: "First, helllllooooo, lovely readers! I hope you'll join us on our adventures. Now, here's my story. I continued my career with Bobbie-Sue even after Marty moved to Buffalo and married Keegan, and Nina left the company to marry Greg. I met my mate, Heath Jefferson, and his ever-faithful manservant Archibald, when Heath was down on his luck after losing his vampire sire and was forcibly returned to human form.

"He answered my ad in the newspaper to sell Bobbie-Sue Cosmetics because he was broke after all his money disappeared, much like his vampirism. And he was an amazing salesperson. The women he sold to *loved* him, much to my dismay. But when we met, I was dying of ovarian cancer. However, Heath saved the day—"

*Wanda throws a ladylike hand in the air and shakes her head.*

Wanda: "Oops. Sorry, Dakota, I almost over-explained it. Stick to the plan. Just the facts, please, right? We've already had enough outbursts for one day. Really, Nina, the Un-Shakespeare? Could you be any ruder? There's just no teaching you, is there?"

*Wanda shoots Nina a look of utter disapproval.*

*But I just laugh and nod. While Nina is censor-less, Wanda is incredibly sensitive and calm.*

Dakota: "My bad. I was so grateful for an easier introduction than you-know-whose, I almost let you. So tell us a little about your life now, Wanda. Are you happy?"

Wanda: "I'm sick with joy. As I said, I'm now mated to Heath, we live with Archibald, who's still human and handles our household matters, has a penchant for the Food Network, loves a good mystery, and is very British."

*I clap my hands in delight.*

Dakota: "Well done, Wanda! But because she's so modest and selfless, she forgot to mention she's just as elegant and coiffed as beautifully as Grace Kelly, and possesses amazing manners. Sometimes she can be a little uptight, but who wouldn't be uptight

when they're the only thing standing between Marty and Nina chewing each other's faces off? She's the peacemaker and the nurturer of the group."

*Wanda nods and graces me with a beaming smile.*

Wanda: "Thank you, Dakota, and thank you for being so fair with me when you write me in times of utter distress. Oh, and for my Heath. I can't thank you enough for my Heath."

Nina: "Oh, please, suck up. Could you be any more kissy-ass? Jesus, Wanda—"

Dakota: "Remember mountains, Nina, and no Marty. Tread lightly, Vampire."

*Nina makes a face at me, but begrudgingly as always, zips her lip.*

Dakota: "So, I think it's fair to say the girls have been through a lot together in nine books. Add in Darnell the demon, Archibald the manservant who's now, nine books later, like a grandfather to all the paranormal offspring born since the series began, and Carl the zombie, and that about rounds out the cast of the most frequent visitors to The Accidentals. Right, ladies?"

*Marty, Nina, and Wanda nod as I blow out a long-overdue breath and prepare to wrap up this batch of crazy while I still have all my hair.*

Dakota: "So we're good here, yes, girls? Because I need a drink. Wait, maybe I need a vat full of booze after dealing with my crabby vampire."

*Marty leans forward and tugs the sleeve of my sweatshirt.*

Marty: "You're forgetting OOPS."

*Nina rolls her eyes in typical exasperation.*

Nina: "If only it was that damn easy to forget."

*I'm choosing to ignore Nina because for all the complaining she does about OOPS, she truly loves working with her friends and helping other folks who've had an accidental paranormal crisis make their way in their crazy new worlds.*

Dakota: "Oh, yes! OOPS. OOPS is an acronym for Out in the Open Paranormal Support. My husband Rob thought that up—you know, as sort of a snark on 'Oops, I turned you into a vampire? My supreme bad?' He's sooo clever."

*Nina rolls her dark eyes even harder, making sure I see her discontent. Because if Nina's unhappy, ain't nobody supposed to be happy, and as you've witnessed, you can count on her sharing that with you.*

Nina: "Yeah, he's a real dreamboat. Get on with this shit, would you? My Marty-less mountain retreat awaits."

*I smile and wink at Nina because I know it makes her crazy. I'd pinch her cheeks again, too, but it's probably the surest way to lose a finger at this stage of the game.*

Dakota: "Okay so, OOPS is the group the girls founded after book four (I think), when they realized they might not be the only accidental paranormals out there. They wanted to offer support to folks who might have encountered the same kind of terror they each experienced when they were turned. They figured not only could they utilize and share their experiences, having each suffered a supernatural trauma, but possibly help with any adjustments a new paranormal might encounter.

"They started up a fancy website and social media accounts on both Twitter and Facebook, and they've handled many paranormal crises since. And that's where they are as of today—running OOPS in a small basement Marty rented in the middle of Manhattan. Which is also what they're doing when *Accidentally Aphrodite* opens."

Nina: "You forgot the part about how we're always handling all those stupid crank

calls you think up, *Writer*.”

*I know Nina hates the crank calls, but here's the thing, it's realistic, I tell you!*

Dakota: “Well, it wouldn’t be at least a little realistic if I didn’t shoot a crank call or two at you, now would it, Nina? I mean, c’mon. A hotline for people who’ve been accidentally turned into a demon screams ‘crank calls’ for days.”

*Nina snorts and makes yet another face.*

Nina: “Right. How could I forget your artsy-farsty desire to steep vampires and werewolves in realism? What the eff was I thinking?”

*Marty gasps, something both she and Wanda do often when Nina's frank take on life spews from her pretty mouth.*

Marty: “What is wrong with you lately, Elvira? I didn’t think it was possible, but you’ve been snappish and crabbier than usual. Is it because you’ve toned down all that swearing? Are you frustrated? Spit out the problem so we can get on with this story. Oh, and Dakota? Can you please write me a little taller this next book? You know, so when Nina looms over me like Frankenvamp, I can pop her in the mouth and not get a crick in my neck?”

Dakota: “Don’t you think that would stretch the boundaries of credibility, Marty? I mean, if you grew four inches suddenly—”

*Nina snorts—loud and dripping with derision. I know, I know, I keep saying this. She's impossible, but you have to trust me and just wait to see her in action.*

Nina: “Credibility? Listen, Gandhi, who do you think you are? You write stupid fluffy books about the supernatural—”

*A loud knock on my office door interrupts us. Thank God. I hope it's my husband bearing something in a bottle that reads one hundred proof. But it's not. It's my favorite demon, Darnell, whom I simply adore. I hope you will, too.*

Dakota: “Darnell! I’m so glad to see you! How’s life?”

*Darnell, a big, rap-loving, high-top-wearing gentle giant, hesitates by the door but it's clear he has something on his mind.*

Darnell: “I’m just wonderin’ if you got a minute to spare?”

*I pat the edge of my desk and give Darnell the warmest smile I have.*

Dakota: “You bet, buddy. I always have time for you. What’s on your mind?”

*He sighs and looks me straight in the eye.*

Darnell: “Why is it you didn’t feel I was important ’nuff to introduce me, too? I mean, I done a lotta savin’ in my time with y’all.”

*I grab Darnell's big hand and squeeze it, because if Darnell's unhappy, I'm unhappy. He's one of the most beloved characters in the series, and I never want to mess that up.*

Dakota: “Of course you have, Darnell. You’ve gotten the girls out of some sticky situations. I just thought it might be too much at once, you know? I didn’t want to overwhelm people. I mean, you have to admit, the girls are a lot on their own. But you’re right. You deserve an introduction because you’re awesomeness.”

*Darnell nods and smiles his infectious grin—a grin that can light up an entire room and make your heart glow.*

Darnell: “Appreciated.”

Dakota: “Darnell is a demon rolled in teddy bear who was first featured in *Accidentally Demonic*, book four in the series. He was turned into a demon with trickery

and deceit after trying to help his family financially. He flies low under the radar of Hell and consistently lives a life of redemption, despite knowing he'll be a demon for eternity. He's helped me out of more writing corners than I can count, too. He's fond of high-top sneakers and wears thick gold chains around his neck, and his very southern drawl/slang was based on a friend of my son's who really exists and really has this exact accent and cadence to his speech patterns.

"He loves children and animals and he helps Nina take care of Carl the zombie. He became so popular with readers of the series, he's been with us ever since. Right, bud?"

*I grin at Darnell and he tips an imaginary hat at me with a chuckle.*

Darnell: "You bet, DC. That felt a little like bein' on the *Datin' Game*. But I think we all good now."

*A very British clearing of the throat sounds from just outside my door. Ah. Archibald. I look to Darnell in question.*

Dakota: "Is that Arch outside, clearing his throat so he's noticed while not visibly breaking the manservant code of always being available but not heard?"

*Darnell grins and nods his head.*

Darnell: "You know Arch, always puttin' on the ritz. He didn't want to be rude, but I think his feelin's are all hurt that he wasn't invited to the party."

*I lean over my desk and shout out to my favorite manservant.*

Dakota: "Archibald, did I hurt your feelings, too?"

*Archibald shuffles in; his gait is still spry, his suit and ascot pristine, his wrinkled face warm and kind.*

Archibald: "Well, if you don't mind my speaking out of turn, miss, yes. Yes, my feelings were ever so hurt. Certainly I've been of some value to all of you? I couldn't go on if I didn't think I was an asset to the team."

*Nina reaches out and rubs Archibald's arm in sympathy.*

*See? Puppies and people in need. She really is nice on the inside.*

Nina: "Look, Arch, my man, what'd I tell you about having all those girlie feelings? Keep them on the inside. Especially today, when all I want to do is get the hell away from this woman who won't quit writing books about us."

*Okay, so she can be gruff when she's attempting nice.*

*Archibald's eyes go wide in disbelief at Nina's forward words, but then he just chuckles.*

Archibald: "I'll attempt to make this as quick and painless as possible. Miss Dakota, please carry on before our out-of-sorts vampire takes exception. Oh, and a most respectful wave to new and returning readers alike!"

Dakota: "So as I said earlier on, Archibald was introduced in book three as Heath's manservant, who, along with Heath, was turned back into a human when their sire was killed. His manners are impeccable, as is his record for manservant-ing, and I love his warmth and his all-are-welcome attitude.

"He played an integral part in helping Wanda and Heath on their romantic journey, and he's a whiz at legend and folklore because he's been alive for ages, and he's also helped me out of a pickle or two with his knowledge of such. He's an amazing cook, and lovingly referred to as "Grammpa" by all of the Accidental children who have been born since the series began. A role he takes great pride in."

*Archibald beams at me. He loves being Grammpa, even though there's no biology*

*involved. The one thing you can count on with The Accidentals is their love of family. Once they've helped you out of a jam, you're in their circle of friends forever, and if you're ever in dire straits, all you have to do is call.*

*And now I'm going to wrap things up because I can see Nina's antsy, and Marty's filing her nails.*

Dakota: "Okay so, is that everything, girls? Is everyone satisfied with their introductions?"

*Nina all but knocks her chair over trying to get out of it, sets Milo and Pebbles in their beds and flicks my shoulder. This is a sign of affection in Nina-Land...*

Nina: "I'm golden. Good seein' ya, Boss. Can't wait to see what you've cooked up in *Aphrodite*. I hope it's another stupid girl who cries and whines about having some supernatural power she doesn't know what to do with. Those are my fucking favorite."

*I sigh at Nina, but there's no point in defending what's going to happen in this next book—because she's not going to like it. I decide to save myself the hassle of her angry, colorful protests.*

Dakota: "Yep. We're good, Vampire. Glad we had this chat. Off you go."

*Marty rises and leans in to give me a vanilla-scented hug.*

Marty: "It was so lovely to see you again, Dakota. Unlike our Nina here, I can't wait to see what crazy ideas you have for *Aphrodite*. I mean, the Goddess of Love? It's so romantic!"

*Nina gives Marty a nudge in the back, right between the shoulder blades.*

Nina: "Hey, ass-kisser supremo—move it. I want out and you're my damn ride."

*Wanda bats at Nina's hands with her gloves.*

Wanda: "Nina, by all that's holy, knock it off! Now, you take your surly attitude right out of this office this instant, get in that car, and you will sit quietly the entire ride to that food truck with the deep-fried ribs or so help me, I'll make you wear yellow for a week. Now march!"

Dakota: "Byyyye, Vampire! Give my Charlie hugs and kisses, meanie-butt!"

*Nina makes a face at Wanda and me but stomps out of my office behind Marty, her work boots echoing her discontent on my hardwood floors.*

*Wanda turns to me and smiles, lovely and sweet, and gives my hand a quick squeeze.*

Wanda: "Dakota, as always, it's been lovely to see you. Oregon is gorgeous—all these mountains and the clean air. Love! It almost makes me want to leave New York. And I'm with Marty. I can't wait for *Aphrodite*. I just know we're going to have our hands full with this case, but you know me. I love a good adventure. So whatever you have in store for me, I'm ready."

*I smile at Wanda. Thank God for Wanda.*

Dakota: "It was great seeing you, too, Wanda. My love to Heath, okay? And thanks for your support. I can always count on you to keep everything together with a modicum of sanity."

*Wanda wiggles her fingers at me, heading out the door with Archibald and Darnell in tow.*

So, darling readers, that's everything you need to know about The Accidentals if you're just now jumping in at book ten. I hope you'll join me, Nina, Marty, Wanda, and my hero and heroine, Quinn and Khristos, on our next adventure in *Accidentally Aphrodite*—



“Dakotaaaaa!”

Aw hell. Nina’s back. I hear scuffling outside my office door and then my favorite vampire’s head appears. Her pale, beautiful face full of concern. “Have you seen Carl?”

Oh jeez. Carl. Did I also mention he’s sweet and kind and wants to be friends with everyone (and, ironically, a vegetarian? See *The Accidental Werewolf 2: Something About Harry* for an explanation) who has a penchant for giving Nina a nervous breakdown when he disappears because something shiny caught his eye? Nina adopted him after book eight, and if I didn’t say so before, he, too, is a big fan favorite.

But he can be a little flighty. I mean, I had to work in the “Where’s Carl?” factor somehow, right?

I scurry out of my office chair and reluctantly leave the thought of an entire bottle of Jack behind. “I haven’t seen him, Nina.” Fear strikes deep in my heart. “Oh my God. Did you lose Carl? We can’t have him running around in broad daylight in my neighborhood, Nina! He’s a zombie, for crap’s sake!”

Nina gives me the finger. “Like I don’t know that, Wordsmith? You damn well wrote him. Wasn’t it *you* who thought it was a total LOL to have him up and disappear all the time so you could give a shout-out to your readers? You did giggle when you wrote it, didn’t you?”

I hang my head in shame. Yes, yes, yes! I admit I giggled.

I give Nina a sheepish look. “Okay, I giggled, all right? But c’mon, it’s funny, right? Vegetarian zombie who loves broccoli is saved by a crusty vampire from a witch doctor who screwed up bringing him back to life and has to have his hand duct-taped in place from time to time is kinda LOL. Right?”

Nina squints at me like I’m the one without marbles in my head just before she flicks my messy ponytail. “What the hell goes on in that big nest of fake blonde hair you got piled on that empty head of yours?”

Marty skids back into my office, her heels clacking on the floor as she grabs the doorframe, clearly winded. Her face is flushed and her perfect hair is mussed from the wind and rain. “Nina! *Where’s Carl?*”

Wanda runs smack into Marty’s back, jolting her forward before grabbing her shoulders and giving Nina the evil eye. “Have you seen Carl? Oh, good gravy. We’ve lost Carl!”

The stumbling, tripping over each other, and blame-game about who lost Carl as they curse their way out of my office in search of our wayward zombie before he gives my neighbors a heart attack makes me pause and smile—it’s like music to my ears.

Because this, my dear readers, is *The Accidentals!*

*Accidentally Aphrodite*

The long-awaited trip to Greece should have been the epitome of romance, where Quinn Morris had planned to propose to her boyfriend—before he turned out to be a cheating sac of ’nads. Now she’s in Greece with her friend/study partner Ingrid, a bunch of flowy clothes more suited to an eighteenth-century poet, and a bitter chip on her shoulder the size of the entire continent. Worst. Vacation. Ever.

Until she learns the story of a golden apple at the Parthenon...and finds it...and accidentally bites it...

In the blink of an eye, everything Quinn knows changes—literally. So what’s an ex-romantic to do when she suddenly becomes the goddess of love? With a walking, talking

sex god shadowing her every move, Quinn's sure she can come up with something.

## The End

### Accidentally Aphrodite

#### Chapter 1

"Jesus in a flippin' mumu, Quinn! What the hell happened?"

Quinn Morris's stunned eyes flew to her college study partner and much younger friend Ingrid Lawson's face, crimson from the heat of the Grecian day.

Hysteria threatened to take over, forcing Quinn put a hand to her chest to catch her breath before mumbling, "Something?"

Quinn winced when Ingrid lifted a finger and pointed it directly at her. The digit trembled a little as it silently circled Quinn's chest area. Her mouth opened then snapped shut, as though she couldn't quite put into words what she was seeing.

Quinn nodded in agreement because, yeah. Holy, holy shit! Plucking at the front of her billowy white blouse, the one she'd specifically picked for this trip because it looked like it was straight from an Audrey Hepburn movie, she looked down into it again, gazed upon her nearly shredded bra, and gasped. The sound of her shock echoed off the Parthenon columns and reverberated in her ears.

Then she looked again and gulped.

Oh, dear.

Ingrid fisted her hands and brought them to her forehead, shaking her head as though she were trying to shake off some terrible memory.

Which was odd...

When she looked back up at Quinn, her eyes, hidden beneath the dark gothic makeup she favored, bulged from her head. Her words burst out of her mouth like a ball from a cannon. "OhmyGodohmyGodohmyGod! *Boobs! Big, big boobies!*" she shrieked.

Quinn nodded numbly, a hot wind swishing her flirty skirt around her ankles. "So, so big..."

Ingrid clutched the straps on her backpack, her voice shaky. "*How* did this happen?"

"Um, I don't exactly know. But I can tell you one thing for sure. They're no longer the size of crab apples. In fact, they're a lot more like Shawna Sutter's cantaloupes now, don't you think?"

Even in her horror, Ingrid managed to scrunch her face up in distaste. "Don't even mention that woman's name at a time like this. No one, and I mean no one, wants to be like Shawna Sutter, even with her stupid cantaloupes!"

Quinn shrugged a little, because even in their shared horror, the truth was the truth. "But you have to admit, she has really nice cantaloupes. Igor seems to think so anyway."

Igor—her cheating, lying, bottom-feeding almost-fiancé, and the very reason she was here on her dream trip to Greece with Ingrid instead of him—now belonged to Shawna "Cantaloupes" Sutter. Lock, stock, and brainless banter.

"Igor is a bag of dicks!" Ingrid yelped. "Forget about him and that stupid, vapid,

silicone-sporting Shawna and explain why you're literally sparkling like a bunch of rhinestones on some cheap, homemade beauty contestant's dress?"

Quinn's eyes flew to her hands and forearms, but she paused. "Do you think it looks cheap? As sparkling goes, I think it's sort of glowy and ethereal." Sort of.

Ingrid scoffed her impatience, letting her hands slap her thighs. "Is that really the point here, Quinn?"

She took another deep breath, inhaling the hot air and realizing, no, that wasn't the point at all. She backtracked in her mind, trying to remember how this had all gone down. "Remember that little old lady on the tour bus on the way here?"

Ingrid nodded and wrinkled her nose. "The one who smelled like a goat?"

"Uh-huh. Did you hear the story she told me about there being a golden apple etched in one of the Parthenon's columns?"

Ingrid's breathing hitched, her lower lip, glossed to the max, curled inward. "Was that before or after the asshole called you to ask where his nostril clippers were? I can't even believe the size of that dick's clangers."

Enormous. Igor's clangers were enormous. "I know, right? Especially seeing as he was doing it from between the very sheets we used our Bed Bath and Beyond fifty-percent off coupon for."

Ingrid's eyes narrowed, the crinkle of her leather, spike-studded vest crackling when she threw her arms up in the air. "Did he actually tell you he was in *bed* with that cantalouped trollop?"

Quinn shook her head, letting her straw bag fall to the ground. Suddenly, everything felt very heavy. "Not exactly. I heard Shawna in the background, attempting to pronounce the color *fuchsia* from the package. I know the word was on the package of sheets because it's hard to find sheets in fuchsia. Or fuck-see-a, as per Shawna's interpretation. Igor, in all his kindly professor-ness, helped her sound it out."

Ingrid's eyes grew glittery with outrage. "Ohhh, I *told* you when you packed all the things you had in his apartment you should have taken the sheets, Quinn. I don't care if the fifty-percent off coupon came from a sale circular addressed to *him*. He deserves sheets made out of burlap—not Egyptian cotton."

Quinn's arms sagged forward a little, but only a little, because it was hard to relax them with her huge new knockers in the way. "You're absolutely right. I was just trying to be fair, but my regret is real."

Ingrid peered at her, rolling her hand for her to continue. "So the old lady on the tour bus. Before or after Igor called?"

Grabbing the length of her long braid, Quinn wound it around a finger and tried to remember. "I think it was after. It had to be after because then she heard you give me hell for even answering the phone, knowing he was on the other end of the line. So of course, she heard my pathetic story about how I'd saved a lifetime for this trip and thought Igor should be the one to take it with me because...well, you know the rest..."

The rest being Quinn's intention to propose to Igor in the place she considered one of the most romantic on earth.

Ingrid's head fell back on her shoulders, her pale throat exposed to the glaring ball of buttery Grecian sun. "Oh, you did not fall for that story she fed you, did you? She must've heard you going on about how Igor was a total jerk, and how you'd had it with romance and love for good."

“Well, I have,” she defended. She had, too. All her life she’d been told to knock off the daydreaming about her Prince Charming and find a man who was real.

If real meant finding a man who scratched his love sac and burped while watching the Playboy Channel, she’d rather keep daydreaming.

Until her ugly breakup with Igor, that is. Since the night she’d found out he’d been sleeping with a leggy redheaded waitress who worked at the Spotted Pig, two doors down from her bookstore, she’d thrown in the towel.

Ingrid’s ringed fingers flashed in the sun in protest. “Stop. Even with everything that’s gone down with that cheating slug, you *still* listened to that crazy woman on the bus. Which means you, in all your unicorns and cinnamon sticks, could manage to find romance at the urologist’s. You’re a diehard, Quinn. Your soul-mate take on life alone could feed a buffet of the love-starved. It’ll come back. Right now, you’re just butthurt. That aside, she was probably just trying to make you feel better. And you, an expert on all things Greek and mythological, fell for it? I don’t get it.”

She bit the inside of her cheek. She *had* fallen for it. Which meant her romantic bone still needed work if she was going to be more of a realist about love. “To be fair, it was a really compelling story...”

She loved a good story. Almost any story, in fact. As long as it was about love—tragic, happy, or anything in between. Until she’d decided no more romance. She’d promised herself from here on out it was sci-fi and cookbooks only.

“Quinn Morris, you know the ins and outs of Greece and all its rich history almost better than you know your own home country. You did *not* believe her, did you?”

Quinn crossed her arms over her chest in exasperation. Well, she almost crossed them. Her big, big balloons really prevented a lot of extracurricular activity. “Blame, blame, blame. How could I not investigate what she told us, Ingrid? I mean, you have to admit even *you* were a little curious about a mysterious golden apple no one’s ever heard about. It was pretty spectacular. How could I not at least take a peek? Seriously, I actually thought she’d probably go home and wet clear through her Depends laughing after feeding me such gibberish, but...”

Ingrid’s eyes rolled upward. “You did it anyway. Now, if you tell me that you actually confessed your heartbreak to a damn produce item in some marble column like she told you to do because she claims the gods can hear your love woes, I’m going to deflate your new cans one at a time. Ping-ping,” she said, making a gun with her forefinger and thumb

Quinn gave her a sheepish look. “But I *did* find the column with the apple. It looked just like it had been stamped there. So I thought, what the heck? Who better than Aphrodite’s shoulder to cry on, right? Goddess of love, blah, blah, blah. And before you say another word—I was just talking out my grief over my breakup, Ingrid. You know, kind of like one big, ugly purge, never really-really expecting anything to come of it, and then...”

“And then?” she asked in that tone she used when she became irritated with Quinn, who was usually much more cautious and less impulsive.

Except today, of course. Today she’d thrown caution to the wind like she was pitching for the Yankees.

The hot breeze whipped at Quinn’s flowing skirt, tugging at her sunhat with the silky pink tulle streams of ribbon tied around the brim—another piece of her “must haves”

wardrobe for this trip. Because it was romantic and frilly and she loved both of those things.

“Quinn?”

She gave Ingrid another embarrassed glance, her mouth dry. “And then I said something about Igor being a wolf in sheep’s clothing and how he was going to regret his infidelity so hard. And I swear to you on my beloved copy of Keats, I heard a deep rumble of laughter.”

Ingrid’s eyes grew suspicious, flying upward and then to the surrounding landscape, brilliant and white under the glare of the sun, clearly looking to see if anyone else was around. “Get to the big, big boobies, Quinn,” she ordered, pulling her phone from her backpack.

To not go all the way with this was just putting off the inevitable. “So then the wind picked up with a huge gust of hot air, all while I was going on and on about Igor being a cheat, and how ridiculous that must sound to someone like Aphrodite and a bunch of gods who aren’t exactly opposed to a good genital jamboree and...”

“And?”

Quinn swallowed hard, her gulp loud. “And then there was this weird, soothing vibration coming from the ground that rumbled my feet. It spread up my legs and worked its way all along my rib cage. It was incredibly peaceful...er, at first. But then the pillar shook with a god-awful heave, splitting the marble and shooting chips of rock at me in every direction—and it fell! I swear! It fell right out of the column. Just splat, hit me on the head and fell right at my feet.”

“The apple?” Ingrid squeaked.

“Yes! It was as if the column had given birth to it. I swear I’m telling the truth, Ingrid, because look!” She dug around in her straw bag and retrieved the apple, holding it up as it gleamed, gold and perfect in the sun.

Ingrid’s breath shuddered in and out, her voice skipping when she spoke. “*This* made your boobs bigger? An item from the produce section?”

Quinn whirled in a circle, letting her arms flap open wide. “I don’t know, Ingrid! I just know the second it fell from the column, my boobs inflated at least two cup sizes. How, I ask you, does Shawna even breathe with these things?”

Ingrid held up a hand and took a long breath, her eyes scanning the area surrounding the Parthenon. “First, put that thing down.”

Quinn obliged, setting the apple at her feet—feet she could no longer see past her poofy chest.

“Don’t touch it again. Now, I’m calling Nina. She’ll know what to do. So let’s just stay calm and breathe.”

Fear sped up Quinn’s spine as a mental picture of Nina Statleon formed. A brooding, hoodie-wearing, angry, foul-mouthed woman who was nuts with a capital Crazy pants. And though absolutely, breathtakingly gorgeous sans makeup and all manner of finery, she was, oddly, very, very pale.

Nina, along with Marty Flaherty and Wanda Jefferson, were Ingrid’s bosses at the office she worked in while studying to become a vet tech. The basement office in Manhattan Ingrid never allowed Quinn anywhere near when they had study dates. Which now, come to think of it, was pretty strange.

Nina evoked fear in her belly after their last encounter, when the woman had

discovered what Igor had done and how Quinn had considered not taking this trip to Greece. Nina had been full of *all* kinds of opinions about it. They'd been littered with colorful language and sometimes even threatening stances and the words "limp" and "dick". She was a little afraid of Nina

But it didn't make any sense that they'd call her for anything unless they needed a creative swear word or the eating of someone's face.

Quinn latched onto Ingrid's arm. "Nina? Why would you call her? How can she possibly help me with my huge lady lumps?"

Ingrid looked as though she was weighing her options and then she said, "There's some stuff you might need to know about Nina and my other bosses, Marty and Wanda. But not right now. I just need you to trust me right now, Quinn."

Trust. Sure. What else did she have but trust—and big boobs.

Holding up her phone, Ingrid grimaced. "Ugh! I can't get a damn signal. Stay right here and don't move. I'm just going to go over there and call her."

"But—"

"Not another word, Quinn. I know Nina scares you, but she's not just my boss, she's a good friend, and she *will* know what to do. She can help, and I promise to tell you why later."

Quinn couldn't imagine Nina as helpful. Maybe she'd be helpful if World War Three erupted, but in something as sensitive in nature as this?

Fat chance.

She watched as Ingrid stomped over the debris of the column, kicking up dust with her heavy, black work boots in search of a cell signal.

"Quinn Morris?" a deep, velvety voice asked.

Whirling around so fast she almost lost her hat, Quinn found the face that went with the voice.

Oh, and the body.

Yes—dear future soul mate and Jesus forgive her—*the body*.

She blinked in the glare of the bright sun. "Yes?"

A man with wavy hair like rich dark chocolate and sprinkled with golden highlights approached her. He took the strides separating them with confidence, on thighs that bulged and rippled beneath his tailored white trousers. When he stood before her, the apple resting in the gap between their feet, he smiled at her.

Winningly. Beamingly. His smile left deep grooves on either side of his mouth and flashed a set of brilliantly white teeth offset by a deep olive complexion. Yet, Quinn was able to note, even in her fear, his smile didn't quite reach his liquid amber eyes.

No. His eyes were cold and wary. And suspicious. Very suspicious.

"Who are you?" And hey. How did he know her name?

The upward tilt of his lips grew sly, and his burnt-orange knit shirt rippled against his broad chest when he said, "That's my apple. Excuse me, if you would."

In a matter of seconds, Quinn not only realized once more the enormity of what had just occurred with the pillar, but that possibly the apple could be some sort of rare Greek artifact, and this beautiful man was some kind of Indiana Jones in search of his Temple of Doom.

It wasn't every day an apple plopped from marble as if it had fallen off a tree. Which had to mean it must have some kind of value, and *she'd* found it.

The chiseled man eyed the apple. His expression flashed with apprehension so briefly, Quinn might not have caught it if she wasn't looking, but he instantly relaxed his utterly gorgeous face and covered up any trace of his worry with an arrogant gaze down at her.

Huh. Yeah. Something wasn't kosher here. Without thought, she gave him a blank look to distract him before swooping downward, using a deft hand to sweep the fruit off the ground.

"That's my apple," he repeated, low and easy.

"I beg to differ." She held it up, ignoring the fact that he could be dangerous, and waved the gleaming fruit at him. Just who the hell did he think he was? "I think it's *my* apple."

He edged closer, his spicy cologne lodging in her nose, his stance not quite one of menace but most definitely one of impatience. The sheer size of him made her knees waver.

"I assure you, it's my apple," he cooed in a silky-rich timbre.

Quinn's eyebrow cocked upward in haughty fashion. "By what authority?"

"My ancestors'."

"And who are your ancestors?"

"You'd never believe it."

"Try me. An apple—a shiny golden one I've never heard of in all my studies on Greek mythology—just fell out of a pillar in the Parthenon. *A. Pillar*. I'm game for just about anything."

His luscious lips thinned in obvious aggravation. "It's none of your business."

Quinn bristled. Hold on. Maybe this was an enormous archeological find and he was some bad guy who wanted to sell it to the highest bidder? What if this was a part of Greek history and he was going to cheat the people of this fine country out of something that was rightfully theirs and sell it for some ridiculous amount of money?

Briefly she thought of all the movies she'd seen and the idea that maybe she was going too far with the fantastical.

But how far was fantastical? Didn't an apple just fall out of some inanimate marble? Didn't she have boobs reminiscent of basketballs?

Planting her free hand on her hip, she used her best "I'm in charge of this rodeo" voice and said, "I guess it's my business if you hope to prove this is really your apple. If you don't want to share and give me a good reason for claiming ownership, I'm sure the Greek authorities would be pleased to hear all about this *apple falling from a pillar*, which is insane to begin with. But I bet they'd really like to hear all about how it's *yours*."

This time he didn't just edge closer, he loomed over her, his height, in her estimation, a good ten inches taller than her five foot four. "Give me the apple, Quinn," he demanded, his smooth jaw clenching.

When he spoke her name, it slid off his tongue like a dollop of warm caramel. And again, the romantic in her wanted to savor this moment and take the time to create a story for the piece of fruit and its connection to this walking, talking sex god. However, the big, albeit hot, goon obviously wasn't going to let her.

No. He glowered at her. Glowered so hard, were she a tea rose in an English garden, she'd have withered under his glare.

Quinn smiled, suddenly filled with adrenalin and totally fearless. Maybe it was the way Igor had so callously treated her, or maybe it was just more than past time, but suddenly she was a take-no-shit kind of girl.

Holding the apple closer, Quinn glared back at him in defiance and brought the gleaming fruit to her mouth, taking a long lick, ignoring the bitter taste of the skin on her tongue.

Hot Stuff planted his hands on his lean hips with a sigh of exasperation and rolled his beautiful eyes. “Now why would you do that, Quinn?”

“Five-second rule. Whoever licks it owns it.”

He waved an admonishing finger, shooting her a teasing, almost playful glance. “No. I think you’re confused. The five-second rule is only in play when you drop food on the ground. It means it’s safe to eat as long as it wasn’t on the ground longer than five seconds. And you forgot to kiss it up to God, thus blessing the five-second rule. *That’s* the five-second rule.”

Confusion furrowed her brow for a moment. Was that the rule? She’d never been very good at those sorts of playground games. While everyone else was jumping double Dutch or playing hopscotch, she’d been too busy making up stories about Jane and Dick running off together into the sunset with Spot as their trusty sidekick.

“I don’t care what the rule is. I licked it. That means it’s mine.”

“This conversation’s a little ridiculous, don’t you think? Please hand over the apple.”

“No. Not until you identify yourself and give me a good reason to hand it over. Otherwise, it goes to the authorities. And where did you come from, anyway? I didn’t see you get off the tour bus. In fact, I didn’t see you anywhere here in the Parthenon...”

His lean cheeks puffed out in a huff of frustration. “On the count of three or I’ll take it from you, Quinn.”

Was he threatening bodily harm? Right here in the Parthenon? She began to back away. “If you touch me, I’ll scream. A lot. Loudly. With vigor!”

His hand snaked out, his fingers wrapping around her wrist, capturing her in a tight grip. The contrast of their skin—hers pale and translucent, his deep and dark—fascinated rather than frightened her. “First, I don’t want to hurt you. Not at all. But I’ll be long gone by the time someone arrives to help you either way.”

She frowned up at him. “Hey. No fair. You said I had until the count of three.”

His grip loosened a little, his handsome face growing deceptively serene. And then he smiled gorgeously, as if in apology for breaking the rules of their game. “My bad. Onetwothree! Hand over the apple, Quinn!” he roared.

With all the strength she had in her, she jerked her wrist, bringing them eye-to-eye. “Not gonna happen.”

He sighed, visibly relaxing. Yet, there was a vein in his sun-browned temple that throbbed, giving away his impatience. “Quinn, Quinn, *Quinn*. Will you make me pry it from your pretty hands?”

Instead of heeding his words, which was certainly the smartest alternative to him roughing her up, she reacted by tightening her grip and shook her head. “Nope.”

By God and Greece, or whatever entity, she was going to get this apple to the proper authorities.

But he tightened his grip, steely and unmoving. “You’re making an enormous mistake, and you’ve been warned. Now, for the very last time, please hand over the



apple.”

Maybe it was his tone, all silky-sexy but so demanding, or maybe it was that she felt as if she was in some strange tug-of-war on behalf of Greece and all its lush history, but *the hell* she was giving him the apple.

The. Hell.

May the power of Indiana Jones compel her.

“And I said no!” With that, Quinn yanked with such force, her hand snapped back then forward, nicking the apple with her two front teeth.

Simultaneously, the tall, sexy man roared the word “Nooo!” so loudly her ears literally hurt before letting her wrist go and stumbling backward.

As the juice of the apple hit her tongue, Quinn gagged. For a piece of fruit that looked as if it should have its own display case in Tiffany’s, it was unbearably bitter, the juice running down the back of her throat like a trail of battery acid.

She ran her teeth over her tongue in a scraping motion. “Gak,” she spat, letting the remainder of the apple fall to the ground, where it trembled eerily then came to rest at her right heel.

His sigh of aggravation made the ground beneath her feet rumble and a warm wind stir to a frenzy. It whipped around her head, leaving behind the minty scent of his breath in her nostrils.

Which, if she wasn’t in some horrible nightmare, was impossible, wasn’t it?

“You’ve done it now, Quinn.” His tone rang with warning as he took another step back and crossed his arms over his chest.

She opened her mouth and made a clucking noise from the back of her throat to rid herself of the taste then wiped her knuckles over her tongue in repulsion, reaching into her bag for her bottle of water. “Tahth’s disgusting,” she said around her fingers.

His nod was sharp and all-knowing. “I’d bet it is, knowing my mother. But give this a second or two and you’ll see what you’ve done.”

Quinn pulled her fingers from her lips. His mother? “Your mother? And what exactly did I do but graze an apple that tastes like a Jersey landfill with my teeth?”

He glanced at his shiny gold watch with one raven eyebrow raised. “You’ll see in five, four, three, two, one.”

What was it with him and the counting?

But then Quinn’s body jolted forward, making her drop the water bottle as the earth began to crack beneath her and the skies darkened to a deep purple. She broadened her stance, leaning back against the stranger, who’d swiftly moved to stand behind her, tucking her into the shelter of his rock-hard chest.

And for about a half second, his chest was a very nice place to end up sheltered by—except for the fact that he was a traitorous, likely black-market dealer of stolen and exotic goods.

But she forgot all about that when images flashed in front of her eyes in a tornado-like funnel of Greek gods and goddesses sitting on thrones, shooting arrows and, oh my...Doing things she assumed only happened in the movies they ran on Cinemax in the wee hours of the morning.

And then there was silence—deafening and frighteningly still.

Dazed, Quinn’s hand went to her head to push back the wild tangle of her tattered braid from her eyes just as her chest heaved and her legs buckled, making her fall

forward.

Vibrations of warmth skirted her spine, slipping along every available surface of her skin.

Fear turned to panic when she began to experience a simmering heat on her flesh worse than the hottest fever she'd ever had. It came in waves, rushing and relenting, bending and twisting until it finally subsided, leaving behind a residual warmth she had no words for.

As Quinn fought to gather her senses, the man let her go and paced before her in short jaunts, the heels of his loafers scraping against the loose stones.

He stopped to stand in front of her. His glare was angry, his sharply angled face tight. "Did I or did I not say the apple was mine?"

Once more, her mouth fell open. Words eluded her. Fully formed thoughts, too.

"And now look. Do you see what's happened here, Quinn?" He grated out the question between clenched teeth.

"Wha..."

He shook his long finger at her. "Oh, I'll tell you what. You've gone and done it now. Really done the hell out of it. I bet you're wondering what exactly you've done the hell out of, aren't you?"

Out of nowhere, Ingrid flew into her line of vision, skidding to a halt in front of her, eyes bulging when she scanned Quinn's face. Her mouth formed an O then her jaw fell before snapping shut. "What in the ever-lovin' fuck?"

Quinn's gaze flew to the stranger's before latching onto Ingrid's, wide with surprise, in a plea for help.

"Oh. My. Hell!" Ingrid shouted, pulling at her backpack to dig out a compact with the name Bobbie-Sue on it and flipping it open. "Look!"

Quinn blinked at her reflection under the hot sun. Her hands flew to her eyes. Wow. If in the choosing, she would have had any say in her eye color upon birth, this amazing shade of bright, swirly purple would have been high on her list.

Much higher than her own dull, mousy brown. And they weren't just purple—they were purple with a capital P. As though someone had popped contacts from some Halloween costume store directly into her sockets.

"What did you do since I left you, Quinn?" Ingrid fairly seethed.

"I..." What had she done?

The man sauntered up to Ingrid, his bronzed arms crossed over his chest. "Here's what she's done. She's—"

But Ingrid halted his explanation by backing up, pushing Quinn behind her and reaching into her pocket for her cell. "Who the hell are you?" she spat, yanking her phone out and flipping open the keyboard. She began to type without letting the man out of her sight. Her fingers flew as she eyeballed him with a fierce stare.

"I'm Khristos with a K, for future reference—a descendant of Aphrodite and the man who's apple your friend Quinn here stole." He bowed regally at the waist before rising and glaring his obvious displeasure at Quinn.

Ingrid's head whipped over her shoulder. "You stole his apple? Wait. It was *his* apple that fell out of the pillar? An apple did all this?" She swished her finger around the vicinity of Quinn's breasts.

Khristos nodded, curt and clearly attempting to keep his anger in check. "It was

definitely the apple that did,” he swept his hand up and down, “this.”

When Quinn finally found her voice, it was raspy and thick. “What is *this*?” She plucked at her shirt in disbelief. “Is the apple really why my...my—”

“Her cans are the size of life rafts? Are you serious?”

Khristos chuckled fondly. “The gods, in all their antiquated, outdated beliefs, thought only women with,” he cleared his throat, “um, *fuller* figures appealed to men. I’ve tried and tried to convince them to jump into the year 2015 with me, but old habits die hard. We’re still working on diversity and all sorts of sensitivity training when it comes to body shaming. That’s a real bone of contention with me. My motto is, all women should be loved, no matter their size or shape.”

The gods?

Ingrid nodded her head with a rapid motion as though she understood diversity truly was important. Then she shook it off and glared at Khristos. “Okay, buddy, what the hell is happening here? And I warn you—I know people who’ll beat the information out of you if you’re not willing to give it up.”

He shook his dark head of thick hair. “You’ll never believe it.”

Ingrid snorted a scathing grunt. “Hah! I’ve only heard that a million times in the past couple of years. Try me, pal.”

“You’ve never heard anything like this,” he assured her in silken tones.

“Don’t tell me what I have and haven’t heard, Chiseled Man. In fact, I’d lay bets *you’d* never believe what *I’ve* heard. So get on with it, and while you’re at it, step off!” She waved a hand between them, shooing Khristos away.

Ingrid turned her gaze back to Quinn and gripped her arm before she returned her gaze to Khristos. “Okay, so let’s get it on here. Out with the explanation. What does this apple have to do with my friend and her sparkly bits, glowing like a diamond in a display case?”

“Well, had your friend left the apple be as I’d asked, those charming traits would have disappeared. They’re simply a product of touching the apple and they fade rather quickly, given a day or so.”

Quinn breathed a sigh of relief. Okay, so no big Shawna Sutter boobs forever? *Phew*. Because hell on fire, big, big boobies were more work than she was cut out for.

“But alas...” he said with a forlorn, almost comical sigh.

Her antennae went up. Oh, sure. Of course there was an “alas”...an “aside”...a “by the way, your stupid, stubborn friend is a halfwit who just wouldn’t listen”.

“Alas?” Ingrid asked with a demanding tone.

Quinn held her breath.

He gazed at each woman, driving his hands into his pockets and rocking back on the heels of his casual loafers. “Alas, she broke the skin of the apple with her teeth when we struggled for control.”

Ingrid’s eyes narrowed and her stance widened. “And that means what, Hard Body?”

Oh, damn. Now he was making that frowny face. That meant bad—so, so bad.

“The explanation’s simple. Your friend now has the powers of Aphrodite.”

“The goddess of love and beauty?” Quinn managed to squeak.

Khristos winked an arrogant eye. “And all that entails. Clearly, that entails a healthy glow. Know what else it means?”

Ingrid rounded on him, skirting his body in dodgy circles. “Okay, spit it out. What

does it mean, Khristos with a K, descendant of Aphrodite?” she asked with a tone of defiant skepticism, leading Quinn to think Ingrid didn’t entirely believe him.

But was there any denying what had happened to her?

He planted a deliciously tanned hand on Ingrid’s shoulder to prevent her from continuing her dizzying circles. “It means Quinn and I are going to be spending a lot of time together. Do you know why that is, quick-footed one?” he asked, sarcasm lacing his words.

Quinn watched while Ingrid tried to hide her alarm behind the Nina technique. The show-no-fear, take-no-prisoners technique. Ingrid jutted her chin upward and sneered, “Why is that?”

“Because that apple is my curse, and now, because your friend not only refused to return it, but she bit into it, it’s *hers*, too. So that means wherever she goes, *I* go. I am the keeper of the apple and all its power.”

Quinn’s mouth fell open.

This big hunk of a Greek man, with all his ripples of muscle and silky hair straight out of a shampoo commercial, had to go everywhere she went?

Shut up.

It was like hitting the romance Powerball.

If she were still a believer in romance, that is.

Which she was not.

Not, not, not.

But the old Quinn?

She’d find that totally swoon-worthy.

**(Stay tuned for more in *Accidentally Aphrodite*—coming soon!)**

### **Author’s Note**

If you enjoyed reading *Interview With an Accidental*, I’d so appreciate it if you’d help others enjoy this book, too.

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## About Dakota Cassidy



Dakota Cassidy is a national bestselling author with over thirty books. She writes laugh-out-loud romantic comedy, grab-some-ice erotic romance, hot and sexy alpha males, paranormal shifters, contemporary kick-ass women, and more.

Invited by Bravo TV, Dakota was the Bravoholic for a week, wherein she snarked the hell out of all the Bravo shows. She received a starred review from Publisher Weekly for *Talk Dirty to Me*, won an RT Reviewers Choice Award for *Kiss and Hell*, along with many review site recommended reads and reviewer top pick awards.

Dakota lives in the gorgeous state of Oregon with her real life hero and her dogs, and she loves hearing from readers!

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