

Pacing around Crescent Park in moonlight trimmed with stars, Mark breathed fresh air and slowed his erratic heartbeats from the shock of Tessa's invitation. Apparently, the woman who directed the class with the precision of an air-traffic controller could flex...at least, a little. She wanted to spend extra time with him, and he couldn't refuse.

"I didn't think we'd bump into other participants at this late hour." She hugged tighter her windbreaker against the cool breeze. "We won't mix business and pleasure. I'm strictly off duty, and so are you."

"Okay, Tessa, whatever you say." Zipping higher his jacket, he strode and sniffed moisture riding the wind. Guilt tiptoed around his collar, and he couldn't escape the feeling this outing was a bad idea. He should avoid her, except in class, yet he accepted her invitation. But why did she break her own rule and contact him?

"If I can't discuss work, can I ask you a personal question?" He admired her profile with pert nose tipped to the sky, breathing the fresh night air.

"I guess so since I'm the woman who persuades everyone else to dish." She laughed and brushed a curl from her cheek.

Streetlights alternated with a full moon to light the pathway. Their footsteps crunched on gravel, and their murmured voices broke the peaceful silence.

"Ready." She tucked her hands in her jacket pockets.

"Is Mr. Shore waiting at home?" He winced at his forward question. No sense beating around the bush. He shouldn't pine for someone else's wife.