

ASPEN GOLD SERIES
STAY A LITTLE LONGER



Bernadette Jones

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Chapter 1

Dec 21, Spencer, Colorado

Would tonight be the night he died? Would he finally pay his debt?

Gage Ewing knew from the itchy feeling crawling up his spine that he wasn't alone. The person behind him was sloppy, yet managed to stay well enough out of sight that Gage couldn't get a good sense of size or gender. With little moonlight to aid him, the image was more a hint of a shadow.

Still, he knew someone followed him.

Fat snowflakes fell in a light lacy sheet, dusting the earth, but not thick enough to leave discernible footprints. The air was cool, yet his breath didn't leave a cloud.

Keeping a steady pace, he continued toward home. Would his life end here in Spencer? Would the years of looking over his shoulder, moving repeatedly to protect those he cared about finally be over? A gentle breeze of relief whispered over him.

He fingered the knife in his pocket. Subtly, he arched his back affirming the holster wedged into his jeans at his spine. Years of experience had taught him to always listen to his instincts. Tonight, danger followed him.

Reflexes would demand he defend himself. Perhaps, not too quickly this time.

A missed opportunity at a life flitted across his mind. A woman he hungered for, desired.

Maybe another time. Another life.

Two blocks from home the shadow disappeared down a side street. The sense of danger dissipated. Disappointment filled the void.

He paused and looked back at his path. Hunter and Ruby's engagement party had made him melancholy. That, a blonde and one too many beers.

Shaking his head to clear his thoughts, he rolled his shoulders and quickened his pace. Maybe it was time to move on again.

Arriving at his front door, he glanced behind him once more. His tail hadn't returned. Regrets from the past filled his chest. He was tired of regret. Tired of the guilt. Tired of waiting.

He exhaled a heavy breath. Hitting the button on his phone disarmed his security system and simultaneously turned on his porch light. Pushing the door open, he walked inside, shut the door and rearmed the system.

Shrugging out of his sheepskin bomber jacket, he hooked the coat on the wall-mounted coat rack and paused. Something in the air seemed different.

Turning toward the open room a lithe body barreled into him slamming him back against the wall.

He recognized the scent. The blonde. The woman he'd watched and hungered for since the first time he'd seen her at the Wild Card.

She shimmied up his body wrapping her legs around his torso and spearing her fingers through his hair. "Hungry?"

He spun, instinctively cupping her denim-clad butt cheeks in his broad palms, crushing her against the solid oak door. He crashed his lips against hers, dueling with her thrusting tongue. Licking, sipping, sweeping, they fought for control of the kiss.

Was she the one? Had she been sent to take him out? his rational mind questioned. God, he hoped not. His need for her burned like a raging forest fire. Hell, maybe that was the way to go. In a burst of flames.

She grabbed the front of his flannel western shirt, popping the snaps as she pulled the two sides apart. Laying her hands on his shoulders, she pressed her breast against his chest, rubbing and writhing against his T-shirt covered torso like a cat stretching. Her lips shifted to his left ear, her tongue toying with the gold loop that pierced his lobe. Sucking and laving, she nipped and tugged the ring.

"Yes," he groaned. Cupping her head in his hands, he shifted her lips to plunder her mouth before nipping her plump lower lip.

Her gasp instantly turned to a chuckle. Quickly her hands shifted back to his shirt, shoving the garment off his shoulders. She reached between them tugging his T-shirt from his jeans. Sliding her hands along his waist, she slipped her fingertips beneath the

waistband at his back, accidentally brushing the weapon at his waist. The action snapped him back to reality.

Glaring at her, Gage reached behind him and grabbed her wrist.

She raised her other hand in surrender and met his gaze head on. "It was in my way. I don't want anything important to get damaged."

Time slowly ticked past as he contemplated the wisdom of what he was doing. Adrenaline rushed through him in a hot wave. "Why are you here?"

"The way you watched me tonight at the Wild Card seemed like an invitation."

At Hunter's engagement party, he'd struggled to keep his desire for her in check. Usually, he was careful to not want anything too much. But she was temptation personified.

She met his gaze. A sassy smirk tilted her lips. She wiggled her mound against his hard-on, and lifted an eyebrow in question. "Was I wrong?"

He pressed his hips into her, using his weight to hold her against the door. Reaching over to the table under the coat rack he opened the drawer. He removed his Sig from the back of his jeans, and placed his weapon in the drawer. "And yours?"

She smiled and pulled her weapon from the back of her waistband placing the Glock in the drawer with his.

"And your blade," he stated.

She hesitated for an instant, and then slipping her knife from the leg sheath hidden inside the leg of her pants, she placed the blade in the drawer as well. He followed suit with his own.

"Better?" she asked.

"Much. Now where were we?" Sliding his palms up her sides, he dragged the soft cotton shirt up and over her head. She shifted her arms and shoulders, shrugging out of the top with his assistance. Her beautiful unbound breasts filled his view. He tossed the garment on the floor.

With her legs wrapped around his waist, Gage leaned his shoulders back while keeping her pinned to the door with his hips. He pulled off his T-shirt and dropped the cloth on top of hers. He looked down and studied her toned body. His gaze feasted on her

pert full breasts large enough to fill his hands, her nipples dark-rose and pebbled, begging for his attention. He forced his gaze back to hers. “Why?”

“Does it matter?” She slid her palms over his abs, following the ridges and valleys. Flicking a nail over the bar piercing his right nipple, she leaned forward and licked the post with her tongue. “Yumm.”

He covered her hands with his, stilling her movements and pulling her gaze to his. “Why?”

“I felt like it.”

“Did you follow me?”

She frowned. “I left before you. I already knew where you lived.”

His mind slipped back to the Wild Card and the last time he’d seen her. She stood by the hall leading to the back door. She’d been talking with Ruby, her jacket hooked on her finger at her shoulder. Later, he’d looked for her, then finished his beer and stood to leave. He couldn’t help it. When she was in town, he always looked for her.

He rubbed a thumb over her wrist, gently searching for her pulse. “How’d you get in?”

“Your system is good, but you should have sensors in your attic windows. They’re big enough for me to get through.”

“I thought someone followed me.”

She snorted. “You wouldn’t have known if I’d followed you.”

Her breath quickened slightly. She hesitated before meeting his gaze. “The talk at the Wild Card is you don’t have a girlfriend?”

“I don’t. I don’t do relationships. I don’t do repeats.”

“God, you can do IT, right?”

He grinned. “One night. All night.”

Releasing her hands, he slid his palms up her sides cupping her breasts and flicking his thumb over her nipples.

She groaned and arched into his touch.

He met her sultry gaze. “I’ll ask again. Why?”

Sliding her hands up his chest to his shoulders, she hesitated. “The way you watch me. The way you look at me like you want to eat me like your favorite dessert. I’ve never been looked at like that. You scare me a little.”

“I wouldn’t hurt you.”

She laughed. “You couldn’t, even if you tried.”

“Pretty cocky, aren’t you?”

Another smile crossed her lips and she rubbed herself against the bulge in his jeans again. “That would be you, cowboy. I’m merely well trained.”

“You broke in for the rush of danger?”

“No.”

“Then why?”

Her smile faltered. Her gaze wavered. “When you look at me, I think you see— me.”

“I see what you do. Or should I say, don’t do. You don’t drink. Not really. Never more than one beer. Although you order mixed drinks, you never drink them. When you’re at a table with others, you play a shell game with their drinks.

“You were working for Jakob Spencer that night you partied at the bar, weren’t you? Are you a hired gun?” he asked.

He let her slide her hands out from under his and cradle his face.

“I don’t work for Mr. Spencer. I was helping out. And I didn’t come here to talk. Your eyes said you wanted something else. Did I read you wrong?”

Cupping her butt with both hands he rubbed against her core. “I’ve wanted you since the first time I saw you. And the wanting got stronger every time our eyes locked. Every time, I saw the same hunger in you.”

She leaned forward and kissed him. Her tongue brushed his lips before slipping inside to tangle with his, meeting his thrusts with her own. Slowly she pulled back, sucking his lip, then nipping. Her eyes met his, fire blazing in their depths. “Then stop talking and show me.”

He lost touch with everything except her strong, supple body. The need exploded.

“I need to taste you.” He carried her to the breakfast bar and sat her on the edge. “Lean back so I can get to your sweet nipple.”

With her legs hooked over his thighs, she leaned back on her forearms. He studied her in the soft glow of the kitchen nightlight. She was beautiful. Perfect. The swell of her plump breast with dark berries at their peak called to him like a siren.

He pulled back, keeping his hands on her hips. Leaning forward, he dipped the tip of his tongue into the valley of her belly button that was visible above her jeans. Her moan pleased him. He intended to hear that earthy sound a hundred times tonight.

Slowly, he grazed his palms up her sides and continued to tease her. Reaching his destination, he cupped and molded her breasts, tweaking her nipples with his thumb and forefinger until they were taut and ripe. With one last dip into her perfect little belly button, he slid his tongue up the center of her torso to the hollow between her breasts. He sucked one nubbin into his mouth while fondling the other.

She lay back on the counter. “Yes. Oh yes. Like that.”

He gave her what she asked for again and again. Pleasuring one breast and then the other.

Her moans and breathless gasps were burning him alive. Her hips thrusting against his swollen length had him on fire.

“Hold onto the counter.” He unzipped her jeans and slid them off of her. Pulling his wallet from his pocket, he removed a condom pack and tossed the money holder aside. He shoved his jeans to the floor and kicked them away.

She sat up and reached for him, sliding her warm palm up and down his shaft while sucking the bar on his nipple. He closed his eyes and savored her attention. He’d wanted her for so long. His hunger was almost out of control. “Oh yeah, sweetheart. Your touch feels so good.”

She smiled up at him. “I like the way you feel. My turn.”

He slid his hand over hers. “You’d better let me drive this time. A couple more strokes and I could be done. Next time, I’m all yours.”

He urged her back and sheathed himself. Leaning forward, he slid his arm along her side and cupped her left shoulder with his palm. Licking and sucking her breast, he cradled her mound with his other hand, gently rubbing and fondling until her moans told him of her rising need. Slipping one, then two fingers into her sheath, he stroked her until her hips thrust against his hand.

“Now, Gage.”

Gripping her hips, he slowly entered her warmth. He closed his eyes and savored the rightness. Absorbed her sensual gasp.

He opened his eyes and looked down into hers, sharing the perfect moment. With a gentle nudge of her hips, he started to move. The heat grew to an explosive peak, both of them gasping and grasping, holding each other, struggling to breath. Harder. Deeper. Stronger.

His name whispered from her lips as they both ignited.

La petite mort.

[END OF EXCERPT]

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Bernadette.