

## **Temporary Wife Temptation by Jayci Lee, Excerpt #1**

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What the hell kind of boy band medley is this?

A handful of young women—much younger than Adelaide Song’s twenty-six years—were spinning around in a circle on the dance floor at Pendulum, screaming along to some bubblegum pop song. It was early in the evening, and they were sloppy drunk.

Adelaide was most definitely not in the mood to play Ring Around the Rosie at her cousin Colin’s nightclub. After the face-off she’d just had with her grandmother, she needed to lose herself in good music and dance off her frustration.

What was the Tuesday DJ doing up there on a Friday night anyway? She hunted down Tucker, the top DJ and manager-in-training, to remedy the situation.

“Hi, Tucker.”

“Hey, Adelaide. You haven’t been in for a while. How are you doing?”

“I’ve had better days.” She smiled wryly. “Why is Ethan up there? I can really do without the over-the-top pop tonight. It’s a Saturday night. Let’s get some real jam going.” Adelaide looked over her shoulder and out into the club. “By the way, where’s Colin?”

“He had a meeting and asked me to hold down the fort.” The heavily pierced and tattooed DJ stared at his shoes and fidgeted under her scrutiny. “Ethan begged me to let him play for an hour, and I felt bad for the guy. He’s a good kid.”

“A good kid who is playing Tuesday night pop on a Saturday night.”

“I got you. I’ll take over,” he said with a shy smile. “Thank you. You’re the best.”

And it was true. He was an immensely talented DJ, and he should be proud of his mad skills. Within minutes, the sensuous, liberating strains of Tucker’s magic filled the air and calmed the tremors of frustration quaking under Adelaide’s skin.

For the last two years since she’d finished her MBA, Adelaide had been begging her grandmother to let her take her place at Hansol Corporation—the family’s multibillion-dollar apparel empire—but her answer was always, “Maybe next year.” It broke Adelaide’s heart because those words really meant that Grandmother still hadn’t forgiven her for her wild years in college.

It had been a time of switching from boyfriend to boyfriend, partying too hard to care about classes and distancing herself from the family. It wasn’t until her last year in college that she’d rediscovered her thirst for knowledge. She had cleaned up her act and learned to balance her responsibilities and recreations. That was nearly six years ago. But to her family, she was still an irresponsible wild child incapable of contributing anything of worth to Hansol. She felt a twinge of shame at her desperate plea to her grandmother. I’m not that kid anymore.

Refusing to let herself drown in sadness, Adelaide strode to the dance floor with sharp clicks of her stilettos and headed for a corner stage raised three feet from the floor. She gripped the railing when she reached the top and exhaled through pursed lips. Then she closed her eyes and let the music flow through her. The rhythm always grew in the pit of her gut and spread to her hips, legs, then the rest of her body. When it filled her to the brim, she danced.

Everything disappeared as it always did. Her loneliness. Her insecurities. Her grandmother with her dismissive words and disappointed eyes. They all shrank and blurred as she moved her body, carried away by the music and its beat.

Her song came on. The bass in the music shook the dance floor and pounded in her blood. Primal and raw. She closed her eyes and lifted her arms above her head, tracing the outlines of the song with her body. She no longer existed. There was the song and she was its instrument. Adelaide wasn’t there anymore. She just danced. Danced until she was erased.

She heard a rough growl from beside her. The sound merged with the music in its feral possessiveness. It wasn't until a pair of strong hands grasped her upper arms that she realized a person had emitted the sound. A very tall, blazingly furious man person.

"Goddammit, Addy. What are you doing here?"

"Good to see you, too," she said with cool detachment.

Inside, she shivered with awareness and need that refused to be stilled. Michael Reynolds. Her older brother's best friend, and her first love. Unrequited, of course. He treated her like she was his kid sister for the most part. In the meantime, she was burning up from his innocuous touch.

"Let me take you home," he said. "Your grandmother's worried about you."

Damn it. She wasn't finished flushing out the anger and melancholy from her system. Her insecurities were rampaging in her mind, and she couldn't handle any more heartache tonight. So she closed her eyes again and danced to make Michael disappear, as well.

Since he still held her arms, she placed her hands on his broad chest and assumed the junior high slow dance position. But rather than shift awkwardly from foot to foot, she swerved her body in languid waves in time with the music. Michael stood frozen for a few beats, then expelled a sound between a cough and curse.

"I'm taking you home. Now." He abruptly picked her up off the floor with an arm under her thighs and the other cradling her back, frowning down at her with the same look everyone bestowed on her. Disappointment.

*Enough.*

"Stop with the Kevin Costner impersonation, and put me down," she said, pushing against his shoulder.

"No way." A hint of humor sparked in his eyes. "I remember how fast you can run. I'm not in the mood to chase you."

Adelaide spied movement from the corner of her eyes. The club bouncers were heading toward them with fists clenched. They knew she was Colin's cousin and were a protective lot, and Michael was carrying her out of the club, looking angry as hell.

"Oh, for God's sake. I'm not a ten-year-old, Michael." She struggled in earnest. If the idiot didn't put her down, he would get beaten to a pulp by the bouncers before she could de-escalate the situation. "You need to put me down. I'll walk out with you."

"Adelaide? You all right?" Too late. Four of the loyal bouncers had surrounded them. "I suggest you get your hands off of her, buddy."

"I suggest you go back to your posts, gentlemen." Michael's arms tightened around her, and a dark, recklessness entered his eyes. Why was he acting like this? "I'm escorting Ms. Song home."

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