



The Couple who Fooled the World

By Maisey Yates

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The true meaning of keep your enemies close...

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The only way to seal a major deal is for these two rivals to play nicely...*together*. Yet neither expected the media to soak up their ruse so quickly or so publicly! But when the deal is won, is the world's hottest new couple beginning to believe their own lie?

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The Couple who Fooled the World By Maisey Yates Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2185475 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Harlequin
- Published on: 2013-06-18
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.57" h x .50" w x 4.13" l, .21 pounds
- Binding: Mass Market Paperback
- 192 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Maisey Yates knew she wanted to be a writer, even before she knew what it was she wanted to write. But after selling her first book to Harlequin, she still can't quite believe she's blessed enough to see her name on, not just any book, but her favorite books. Maisey lives with her supportive, handsome, wonderful, diaper-changing husband and three small children across the street from her parents, and the home she grew up in, in the wilds of Southern Oregon.

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"In terms of design and usability, the new operating system is leagues above the competition." Julia Anderson turned and gestured to the high definition monitor behind her, the one that was currently projecting the interface of her computer screen to thousands in the audience, and millions watching on television and the internet worldwide. "It's sleek, user friendly and aesthetically pleasing which, as we know, matters. Technology is not just about wires, it's about people."

She smiled for the cameras, knowing she looked good. Thank God she had a personal stylist, along with a hair and makeup team these days. On her own she was hopeless. She'd been told so many, many times. But with a legion of people making sure she looked presentable, she could face the world—and it was literally the world—with confidence.

"However, design isn't everything." She took another breath and looked down at her computer. "It has to be secure. The new firewall we have in place is more secure than anything else on the market. It's able to identify and block even the most sophisticated threats so that your most sensitive data is protected."

The screen in front of her flickered and a video popped up in the center, then enlarged to take up the entire monitor. She froze, all eyes on her, and on the gigantic display behind her that was showing the exact same thing she was currently looking down at.

"Secure? I don't find it all that secure, Ms. Anderson. Maybe secure against the rare hacker who bothers to use An-falas. Anyone running Datasphere software would be able to get right in."

Heat prickled on her neck. Her face. Ferro Calvaresi was a pain in her butt that would not quit. Though, in fairness, she was also a pain in his. And they were a mutual pain in Scott Hamlin's. Basically they were a circle of techie annoyances to each other, but this, this was going way too far.

His face, his gorgeous, infuriating, chiseled face, had effectively taken over her presentation, his smug smile a gigantic display of a weakness in her firewalls she hadn't known about.

"Hardly just *anyone* running Datasphere, Mr. Calvaresi," she said, trying to keep calm, aware that her humiliation was being broadcast everywhere. The launch of her new OS was the news of the day. The launch of every Anfalas product was the news of the day. And Ferro had just hijacked it. "You practically need a masters in technology to run Datasphere. On the other hand, Anfalas computers focus on the user."

"And your user just got hacked. I wonder if you have any banking information on here I might access?"

She made an axing motion toward the guy running the feed between her computer and the screen and the

screen behind her went dark, at the same time the audio for Ferro was cut. His voice was still coming out of her laptop, and his face was still visible to her.

"And you're done here," she said, glaring daggers at the computer screen.

She looked back up. "I apologize for the theatrics. You know how my competition can be. It's entirely possible he's trying to compensate for some shortcomings." There was a wave of nervous laughter through the room.

The press were jostling in the front row, but they knew better than to start flinging questions at her before the designated time. She was strict about that. She liked to make her presentations uninterrupted.

Grrrrr.

A new computer was supplied for her and she continued on with her demonstration. Of course, the wind had been taken out of the sails of the security portion of her speech, so she opted to skip on to the ultra high definition features of her new monitors, and to demonstrate the music and photo editing software, the things that hit really bit with her target market.

And when she was done, she opted to dodge the press. She dashed off the stage, cursing and taking a water bottle from the cooler in the back, then jammed her sunglasses onto her face and took her black leather bag from her assistant.

"Car?" she asked.

"Out back. Press is being baited by a fake car out front." Thad picked something off the shoulder of her black T-shirt. "Stray hair," he said.

"Thanks." For everything. She wanted to cling to her assistant and cry right then, but Thad would scold her for smudging her makeup, and she shouldn't show that kind of weakness anyway. Because the weak were unceremoniously devoured, in life and in business, and she didn't show vulnerability anymore for that very reason. She knew that all too well.

What she would do was go home to her mansion on the seaside, look out the window at the view and eat a gallon of ice cream. Oh, yes, calories, here she came. And then...oh and then she was going to plot her revenge against Ferro Freaking Calvaresi.

She pushed open the back door and got into the limo that was waiting, closing the door tightly behind her.

"Hi."

Her head whipped to the side and her jaw went slack. There was Ferro and his mocking smile, in the very male flesh.

"What the—? What are you doing in my car?"

"It's my car. These limos all look alike."

"Well, what did you do with *my* car?"

"I sent your driver on. Told him you had a ride. And a meeting. With me."

"Was that a meeting for me to punch you in the face for that stunt you just pulled?"

"Are we suddenly forgetting about what happened at my last product launch?"

Julia bit the inside of her cheek. "What?"

"All of the swag bags at the product reveal for Datasphere's new smartphone had your OnePhone in it. And then you had that slogan projected on the wall..."

"OnePhone to rule them all." She laughed. "It never gets old."

"It's old."

"Disagree. But anyway, the fact is, your presentation wasn't nearly as high profile as mine. A bunch of tech heads getting their specs fix. My presentations are events."

"Only because you make a spectacle about every product you unveil."

"It's my signature, okay? People like it. It caters to my clientele. I'm a trend, Calvaresi. You should try it sometime."

"A trend, huh? Why don't you ask acid-washed jeans how that worked out?"

"I'm an evolving trend," she bit out. "My products stay relevant." She leaned back in the seat and the car started moving. "Where are we going?"

"My office."

"I'm done working for the day," she said.

"No, Julia, you aren't. Not unless you want to miss out on the chance of a lifetime."

"I just had the chance of a lifetime in there." She looked down at her manicure. Her hands didn't even look like hers anymore. No more chips and glitter. Her rough edges were being polished away nicely. Well, the rough edges of her looks. The social thing was a bit harder. She could cover the geek girl up with paint and cool clothes, but she was still there. She could just never show that poor, weak vulnerable girl to the world. Never again. "I get chances of a lifetime all the time." She looked back up at him. "Chances most people never get. Why? Because I work hard. Because I'm a genius, yes. But the hard work, too. That means, if I pass up *this* chance of a lifetime, another one will happen before dinner."

"I wouldn't bet on it."

"You seem so sure."

Ferro leveled his dark gaze at her, a smile curving his lips. "You've been contacted by Barrows."

"How did you know that?"

His smile widened. "I wasn't sure until just now. But so have I. And so has Hamlin. We've all been tapped to design the new navigation system for their fleet of luxury cars."

"Have we?" she asked, keeping her voice monotone. This offer had been about the biggest thing to hit since her One-Phone had become the bestselling mobile device in the United States. A chance to have her devices in cars all over the world? A huge deal. Massive. And she was apparently dealing with stiff competition if she hoped to get it.

"We have. And if you want it, I can help you get it."

"I don't need your help."

His expression didn't falter. "You do. I've made you look incredibly vulnerable. A bit inexperienced and unprepared, even. You may need my help more than you realize."

She gritted her teeth. It was the *v* word she hated most.

"Catch."

"What?"

"Catch, Calvaresi, what's the catch?"

"You'll be seeing a lot more of me," he said, winning smile firmly in place. Ugh. He was so annoying. And hot. Which was even more annoying.

"Why? Because if you intend to pull more stuff like this, you can bet I won't be happy about seeing more of you."

"Most women are very happy to see more of me."

"Most women don't rival you for net worth and the position as head of the most profitable tech company in the world. Boom. Headshot."

"Most women are also not such a spectacular pain in my ass. But I'm willing to let it go for the greater good."

"Greater good?"

"I'll be straight with you. I can't land this account. Neither can you. I lack the...simplicity that your technology has."

"You aren't user friendly."

"I haven't dumbed anything down to create mass appeal unless necessary."

"Snob."

"Anyway," he continued. "I lack the tech necessary to make the navigational devices simple and smooth for the average driver. You lack the sheer power I possess. You know my processors are superior to yours and

they last longer. Hamlin, well, he can provide a mediocre version of my processor and your interface. Not as good on either end, but his processor is better than yours and his interface is better than mine."

"And you know this how?"

"Corporate espionage, how else?"

"That's not right."

"As if you've never done it to me."

She feigned a sneeze and looked out the window at the California scenery scrolling by. Rolling hills dotted with stucco walled-houses with red roofs and the jewel bright sea beyond. Even after seven years of living on the coast, the view took her breath away. It had been her new start to her brand-new life. A true reboot.

Thankfully it never got old since she needed a nice breathtaking view to distract her from Ferro and all of his questions and smiles and that spicy, masculine way he smelled.

Which was hard to ignore in the enclosed space of the limo. A lot of tech guys had a smell a bit like they'd been living in a cave. And some of them even had a permanent hunch from bending over the keyboard. Had she not hired an image consultant, she very well might have ended up that way herself. Because frankly, in her life, she'd become much more concerned with coding than how she looked to the world. When she'd tried on her own, she'd always come out looking ridiculous. Without a consultant, she was hopeless.

But Ferro wasn't like that. He exuded a kind of easy charm and sex appeal that most people with his level of intelligence, including her, rarely bothered with.

Not that she could achieve sex appeal, even with professional help, even if she did bother, but it was a nice thought.

"I'll take your silence as affirmation and move on," he said, his tone dry. "I don't want Hamlin to get the account, mainly because *I* want it. I'm sure you feel the same way about both of us."

"Yes," she said, still scanning the shoreline, keeping herself distracted. The limo wound up the side of a hill and she whipped around to look at Ferro. "I thought we were going to your office?"

"My home office."

She frowned. "Why?"

"I'm not advertising any kind of alliance with you until I've had time to figure out how I want it to look."

"For a man proposing a partnership of some kind you used the word *I* a lot."

"Problem?" he asked, one dark eyebrow arched. "There's no *I* in team, Ferro, which you may have heard."

"I hate cliches."

"They're cliché for a reason. Because they're true."

"Not necessarily," he said.

The limo pulled around a corner and up to a security box with a facade in the same white stucco that was on the houses. It was shrouded by palm fronds and large, flowering plants so that it almost faded into the lush background.

Ferro leaned out the window of the limo and placed his thumb on a scanner. His driver did the same. "You, too," he said.

"It won't recognize me."

"I know," he said, "and you won't be given clearance to use your print to open the gate. But I keep records."

"Fingerprint records! Talk about paranoid."

"Don't I need to be?" he asked.

She shrugged and nodded in grudging agreement. Especially since she was one reason he should be paranoid. She wasn't above snooping for secrets. But he did it to her, too, dammit. Fair was fair. Or two unfairs made it fair...or something.

"Now, you. Print," he said.

She looked across the seat, across him and out the window. "You want me to just...lean over and do it?"

A flicker of amusement sparked in his eyes. "Yeah. Just lean over and do it."

Her cheeks heated and she did her best not to make eye contact or show him that he'd disturbed her in any way. She was used to men. She worked with a lot of men, and she'd gotten to the point where their innuendos didn't really bother her. Especially not when she had her armor on. The face she showed the world. The leather clad, boot-wearing, tough chick who took no prisoners in the boardroom.

That's just who she would be now. Who she would remember she was now. He was trying to unnerve her. And she didn't back down. Ever. Not for any man.

She took a breath and leaned over, reaching past him. And came up short of the reader. She cleared her throat and edged a little closer, her arm skimming his chest. Her heart tripped and fell, sending a pang of something deeply disturbing through her body. Something that left her feeling a little breathless and shaky.

And there was the way he smelled again. Closer, she could identify the nuances to it. Spice from aftershave. Soap over skin. Clean, musky, masculine skin.

At least, that was her assumption of what the smell was. She wasn't overly familiar with the scent of men's skin, but that was not anything she should be thinking about. And she way shouldn't be thinking about the way Ferro Calvaresi's skin smelled.

Scan your thumb and run, you're regressing!

Regressing to that sad, longing teenage girl she'd once been. Failing to fit in until she'd stopped trying. And

then her parents had started trying for her and things had gotten really bad. And then she'd found out what could happen when you tried. When you were vulnerable and soft and trusting.

She shook off the memory, leaned in a bit more and tried to ignore it when the edge of her breast touched his biceps. She tried, also, to ignore the fact that her breath was jammed in her throat and she couldn't inhale or exhale anymore.

She extended her hand and placed her thumb over the scanner, the trapped breath exiting in a gust when it beeped and she could get herself back over to her side of the limo, with a bit of healthy distance between Ferro and herself.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

John Bennett:

Now a day individuals who Living in the era where everything reachable by connect to the internet and the resources inside it can be true or not need people to be aware of each facts they get. How a lot more to be smart in having any information nowadays? Of course the reply is reading a book. Examining a book can help individuals out of this uncertainty Information especially this The Couple who Fooled the World book because this book offers you rich information and knowledge. Of course the details in this book hundred pct guarantees there is no doubt in it as you know.

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