

## **Excerpts from the Book**

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*The*

# *Scandal Clause*

## **Can \$700,000 Buy a Life?**

*Sydney Stern*

 Bridgeland Books

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**Excerpt: Chapter 1**

The computer screen lit.

Damn. That ad again.

\$700,000.

Black bordered numbers bold and real.

Not one comma had been shifted, not one number removed.

Shit.

She read it again.

*\$700,000/year.*

*Nurse with Master's Degree. Surgical skills.  
Prominent neurosurgeon practice.*

*Passport. Ability to travel at a moment's notice  
and work under pressure. Psychological testing  
required at interview.*

*Two-year commitment. \$50,000 bonus at  
completion.*

*Cover letter, resume, recommendations. Apply to  
address below*

The “below” was a New York City P.O. Box. The \$700,000 too enormous to ignore.

**Excerpt: Chapter 1**

“We have our most intimate room reserved for you,” continued the maître-d, and bid them follow to the end of the hall. “This chamber has the only private restroom. No need to disturb for any reason.” The maître-d winked, then inquired, “May I bring you wine, sir, before the dinner menu?”

Laura choked.

Dinner, wine, bathrooms, intimate? He was married with children. And they had to face each other every day at work.

“Listen, Laura,” Morris explained, “We’re working on the weekend—I thought a private, comfortable place...”

A familiar sick feeling came creeping over her. She couldn’t stay here—not in the room, not in the restaurant.

“Yeah, right,” she’d interrupted. “Why not the office?”

*I can’t do one more minute of this*, she thought. The job was bad enough. Morris had just made it a fucking mess. *Why does it have to be such a mess*, she wondered, *this men, work and sex thing?*

#### Excerpt: Chapter 2

They fell into a routine, he as doctor, she as nurse. Brutally tiring surgeries, drinks to relax, dinner out, and then back to the convenience of her close by apartment. Until one afternoon, after a particularly difficult operation, he simply said, “Laura, my wife and kids are coming home tomorrow.”

Her mouth dropped. She stared, without moving, unbelieving. She’d fallen in love with him, this magnificent doctor. He’d never spoken of a wife or children, and she’d never guessed—or never wanted to. She’d been a jerk to imagine he’d be interested in her. A convenience, that’s all she’d been. A supplier of necessities, a provider of comforts, the new kid on the block who didn’t know his story, who could be taken and used.

His next words jolted even more. “You can’t stay here.”

“What the hell do you mean by that?” she flung at him.

“It’s too awkward. It won’t work.”

“Awkward? You want me out of your life because it’s awkward? You should’ve thought of that before this, you bastard!” She didn’t know what else to say, how else to feel except consumed by hot, unreasoning rage.

"What happened between you and me—it just happened. It shouldn’t have gotten this far.”

“Well, it did. You think I’m going to disappear?”

“You need to transfer out.” He said without hesitation, without a blink. As if he were God.

“Well, think again!”

**Excerpt: Chapter 28**

“Saudi Arabia,” he said blandly.

“What?” She crossed her arms. “That’s where we’re going? Saudi Arabia? In two days? I don’t have a visa. You need one, right? They don’t let just anybody in. It…”

He crossed his arms. “You’ve got one.”

“How did that happen?”

“You sound like a petulant three-year-old.”

“Answer my question.” She stuck her chin forward.

“We applied for you.”

“But don’t I have to sign something?”

“We had some help with expediting.”

“Oh.” His range of influence kept annoying her.

“Readiness—part of the job. You have two days. That’s generous. It’ll be shorter in the future.”

She opened her mouth with another question. “Ok, how long are we staying?”

“Undetermined.”

“A day, a month, a week? You must have *some* idea.”

“Depends on what happens.”

“How am I supposed to pack for that?”

He shrugged. “I thought we discussed your packing issues. This is part of the learning curve.”

*This is definitely annoying.* “Never mind.” She paused, then turned and said sourly, “No wonder this job pays so much.”

#### **Excerpt: Chapter 28**

A deafening silence thundered inside the cab.

Their Saudi host sat exquisitely still—except for a twitch he could not control below his left eye. Dr. Russell, unmoved and rigid, continued his crossed-arms stare out the window. Laura closed her eyes and counted heartbeats, now up to 110 and rising. She bit her lip, kept her hands clasped, eyes on the floor and said to herself, *I'm not taking back what I said. He wanted a fuckin' conclusion so I gave him one.*

The limousine dragged through three traffic-filled blocks in the Saudi Arabian capitol. In the middle of the fourth their host spoke. “I apologize to you, Dr. John Russell.”

John uncrossed his arms, turned toward the man sitting across on the other side of the limousine and smiled. “I told you, Khalid. She’s good at what she does. And she tells it like it is. She won’t slant an opinion because it’s nicer. We knew that before we hired her.”

#### **Excerpt: Chapter 32**

The three-hour luncheon with the Queen and Prince created a mini-history of British food with cultish names: Bubble and Squeak cakes, crumpets, Scottish lobster tail, black truffles, candied beet root, herbed Yorkshire pudding, pork pies, piccalilli, and desserts of Eton Mess pudding and berry trifle.

Table conversations filled the room with secrets not again to be revealed. The Queen honored Alexandros Stephanopoulos for his service to the United Kingdom. His gifts included a three-week European river cruise, 100,000 British pounds and an invitation to return for a week at Holyrood Palace in Scotland whenever the Queen would be in residence.

“He stopped a takeover of the British electrical grid,” whispered Arlo about his father, “just by fiddling around on his time off.”

“Oh,” said Laura, nibbling on blueberry trifle.

“Even better, Dad’s invitation to visit the Queen in Scotland includes guests.”

“Oh.” She sat up straighter. Sudden visions of wild moors, Scottish Highlands, and British royalty flooded her mind. Vivid images brushed aside a creeping tiredness from the night’s plane ride.

#### **Excerpt: Chapter 52**

Laura checked her watch. *Almost noon.*

She knew John’s schedule by heart—he always started and ended consults at exactly thirty minutes. Lunch always at noon. She headed to Dr. Russell’s office and waited outside the door, opening the purse hanging over one arm. It took a few seconds to rearrange the contents.

“Thank you so much, Doctor,” said the man exiting the office. He saw Laura in the hallway and held the door for her to enter.

“It’s always a pleasure,” said John’s disembodied voice from inside the room.

“It may not be this time.” Laura stood in the doorway.

“Laura.” He rose from his chair, his hands just shutting the desktop drawer.

*John never could tolerate being one down.*

“What are you doing here?”

“I thought we could discuss that.”

Laura felt nausea grapple upward as she spoke. *I will not throw up. I’ve got nothing to be afraid of.*

“There’s nothing to discuss,” he said. John relaxed and broadened his stance. “Or,” he continued “we could discuss the consequences of breaching your contract.”

In an instant, her anger exploded. It came from behind her eyes, cauterizing every nerve cell still spewing anxiety, incinerating every last shred of nausea. *I’m going to skewer him. How dare he try that ‘you’ve been a bad girl tone’ with me.*