
CONVINCING SARAH

Holiday House Book Three

MISTY MALONE



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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

Chapter 1

Clint leaned back in his couch and sighed, using his arm around Holly's shoulders to pull her in closer to him. "You told me a couple months ago you wish it was June 22nd. Well, now it is. Are you still happy about it?"

"Are you kidding me? Absolutely. I can't believe we're finally this close," she said as she cuddled up next to him. "Are you happy about it?"

"More than you know," he said sincerely, reaching down and kissing the top of her head. "I want to go over our plans again to make sure we haven't forgotten anything and we both know what's going to happen and when."

"Great idea. Hearing you talk about what's going to happen makes me even more excited, though, so I know this is going to be a long week."

"Actually, I think you're going to be busy enough that it will pass quicker than you think."

"I hope so. Okay, where do we start?"

"Well, Mom and Daniel have the Holiday House rented for everyone starting tomorrow, Sunday. That's when they're going.

Gabe and his family are going Tuesday or Wednesday, and Danielle and her family are going Friday afternoon. Do you know when Merry and Lance are going?"

"They're going tomorrow, too. She and Lance were kidding Dad that someone had to be there to play chaperon to him and Sarah so they didn't start a scandal."

Clint laughed out loud. "That might be a good idea. They may be my mom and your dad and we all know they're getting married over Labor Day, but other people that may not know that might be a bit shocked if they were to stay together there alone."

"Yeah, maybe. I'm just thrilled the two of them got together and have this second chance at love after their spouses died. Dad never dated anyone after Mom passed, and he never looked for anyone to date. I've never seen him this happy since she died, either, though, and I think it's great. He has a spark in his eyes that hasn't been there for a long time and it's like he has a new lease on life."

"Mom's the same way; not looking for anyone, but happy as a lark now that she found Daniel. I love knowing she has someone to go through life with. She always said her family, her three kids and their families are enough for her, but Gabe and Danielle and I agree, it's nicer knowing she has someone special to share everything with."

"I hear you. Merry and I feel the same way about Dad."

"Okay, enough about them. Their wedding's a few months away, so let's concentrate on us right now and our wedding, which is coming right up."

"Finally," she said with a smile. "I'm so excited."

"As am I," he said with a suggestive wriggle of his eyebrows.

"Clint," she said as she slapped his arm. "Behave yourself."

"I have been," he said in an exaggerated whiny tone. "But our wedding's almost here." She laughed at the big smile on his

face and cuddled in against him. “But now, back to the wedding plans. I’ll come over and get you and we’ll drive over to the Holiday House on Friday.”

“You’re sure you’ll be ready to leave then? I know this is right in the middle of your busy time and you’ve got several houses under construction.”

“True, but that’s why I have Al. He’s very capable of running things until we get back from our honeymoon. The houses are actually all at a good place now. The foundations are in, two of them are completely under roof, one is going to be roofed this week, and the other is coming along nicely. They should have the roof on it by the time we get back. Once they’re all under roof we don’t have to worry quite so much because we’re no longer at the mercy of the weather. Well, at least not until we’re about done and ready to do the final grading and landscaping.”

“I’m glad they’re good then, so you won’t have to worry as much about them.”

“I don’t plan on worrying about work at all, honey. The only thing I plan to have on my mind during our week with the family, then a week on our honeymoon is you.”

“I can handle that,” she said with a big grin. “Okay. So what else do we need to go over?”

“I know you have your wedding dress and I have my suit. How about what we’re going to change into for the reception; do you have that picked out and ready to go?”

“Of course.” She paused a moment or two before turning to face him with a serious expression. “Do you think it was a waste of money to get the dress and suit? I mean, we told everyone it’s a holiday and everyone’s there on vacation and we want them to wear their vacation clothes and be comfortable.”

“And I still think that’s a great idea. Once we convinced everyone we were serious about it, they love the idea. Since we’re having a big picnic there at the house for the reception and told

everyone we want them to enjoy the afternoon and evening with us, swim in the pool if they want, play horseshoes if they want, they all agreed to wear shorts and are looking forward to a great afternoon. That's what we wanted; everyone being comfortable and having fun; right?"

"Definitely. But do you think it was silly for us to get a wedding dress and suit, knowing we're only going to wear them for the ceremony, and will be changing out of them right away and into shorts like everyone else for the afternoon?"

"No, it's not silly at all. Like I said, this is your day. You're only getting married once, and I want it to be special for you, everything you've always dreamed of. You've dreamed of a beautiful white wedding gown, and I want you to have it."

"And I've always dreamed of the first person I see being my soon-to-be-husband waiting for me by the preacher in a suit and crisp white shirt, looking handsome and debonair."

Clint laughed again. "I'll definitely be waiting for you eagerly. I don't know if I can pull off the handsome and debonair, but I've got the suit and shirt taken care of."

"Oh, you've got the handsome and debonair down, too. You couldn't avoid that if you tried," she said with a giggle.

"Thank you, my dear," he said as his face flushed a bit, which she smiled at since it so seldom happened. "But I happen to agree with you about the pictures. Years from now when we show our kids pictures of our wedding it will be nice to show them photos of us dressed for a wedding. I'm sure we'll have pictures taken during the reception, as well, but having a couple nice photos of us in your lovely dress and my suit and tie will be nice."

She whirled around to look at him. "How do you know my dress is lovely? You haven't seen it somehow, have you?"

"Of course I haven't. I think you've been keeping it under lock and key to make sure I don't see it. I know how excited you

were when you said you found the perfect dress, just what you'd been looking for, and I know I have yet to see you wear something that you didn't look beautiful in. Therefore, how could your perfect dress be anything but lovely, especially with you in it?"

"Ah, you always say the sweetest thing," she said, reaching up to kiss his cheek. "But I'm glad you haven't seen it. The groom isn't supposed to see the dress at all, or the bride the day of the wedding before she walks down the aisle. Then he sees the whole package; the bride and the dress at the same time. I hope you aren't disappointed."

He had to laugh again. "Honey, I wouldn't be disappointed to see you walk down that aisle with your hair uncombed and flying everywhere, and you wearing a burlap sack, as long as you were coming down the aisle to become my wife. You'd still be the most beautiful lady there."

"I love you, Clint Calloway."

"And I love you, Holly Rudolph." He captured her face in his hands and held it gently while he gave her a kiss full of passion and promise.

It was several minutes later before he managed to pull away, take a few deep breaths, and lean back into the couch again, guiding her head again to his shoulder as he held her against him. "July 6 can't get here soon enough," he whispered in her ear. "I can't wait for you to become my wife."

"Me, either," she said, snuggling up against him again. "For now, though, is there anything else we need to go over?"

"Yes," he said with a sigh. "Let's do that before we get carried away here. "Okay, our families will be there, they're dressing in casual attire, as will we after the ceremony, and our clothes are picked out and ready to go. Next up, the food. You got a caterer, which I'm glad of. Are they taking care of everything, as far as the food and drinks?"

"Even more than that. Our families offered to do the cook-

ing, make all the food, but they're there for vacation. I didn't want them spending a couple of days at the house cooking. We should all be at the lake on the boat Gabe and Nina rented. So I hired a caterer. She's not only going to do all the food, but her company is bringing additional tables and chairs, and they're providing the tablecloths, as well as all the plates and cups and silverware."

"That sounds good. Our families won't have to worry about spending part of their vacation cooking." How about any decorations; are those under control, as well?"

"Yep. That's the check you wrote out the day we had the disagreement about who was going to pay."

"I told you I wanted to pay for our wedding," he said.

"I know, but I didn't think you should have to pay for all of it. It's my wedding, too."

"But like I said, what difference does it really make? Once we're married, everything that's mine will be in your name, as well."

"And what's mine will be yours."

"We'll see."

She turned to look at him. "What do you mean we'll see? If you're putting my name on all your bank accounts and your house, either your name will also go onto mine, or we'll sell my house and put that money and the money in my accounts into yours."

"Like I said, we'll see. Now, back to that check I wrote. You said it was for decorations?"

"It was for the person who is going to do the decorating for both the wedding and the reception. She's furnishing everything and doing the actual decorating. Again, we don't have to worry about doing a thing for it. But now, back up a minute. What do you mean we'll see?"

Clint sighed, knowing she wasn't about to let the subject drop. "I would have preferred to talk about this after our

marriage and honeymoon, but since I doubt you'll allow that, we may as well talk about it now. It's really not a big deal at all, but goes along with my need to protect you. I would like to see you keep at least some of your money in your name only."

Holly was obviously confused, but not surprised it had something to do with him trying to protect her. She sometimes wondered if he had dreams at night about new ways to protect or watch out for her. Everything he did along that line made her feel special, even cherished, but she couldn't help thinking sometimes he went a bit too far, and wondered if this wasn't one of those times.

She shook her head. "Okay, I'm going to have to hear more about that because right off, I'm not impressed with the idea. Why should I keep some money in my name only and not you? I want to share my whole life and all I have with you just as much as you've said you want to get everything that's yours put in my name, as well. And what do I need protected from, and how is that doing it?"

He gave her shoulders a little reassuring hug. "I'm not trying to protect you from anything specific, honey. I would feel better, though, knowing that if anything were to happen to me, you have some money in your own name that you would have access to immediately. I also don't want any question in your mind that I love you. I know you've worked hard and saved some money, but that's something you earned, and has nothing to do with my love for you."

Holly took some time before she responded. In fact, Clint was beginning to worry, when she finally spoke. "Clint, you've taught me many things, one of which is to take a few moments and think things through before I jump to conclusions and say something I may regret later. I just did that, and I'm glad I did. I think after taking a few moments to think about what you said I understand it from your perspective, but from my perspective, I'm a

little hurt. Maybe I'm missing something, and if so, I hope you can explain it to me.”

Clint pulled her onto his lap and hugged her close to him. “Honey, I'm sorry if I hurt you. I never meant to do that.”

“I know,” she assured him. “It's ironic, because you just told me you're trying to protect me. I guess I have a couple questions I have to ask. Why do I need money I can get to right away if something were to happen to you, but you don't need any if something were to happen to me? But more importantly, do you think I love you for your beautiful house and your checking accounts?”

“No, I don't,” he assured her, looking straight into her eyes. “I'm not even going to kid around about that because I certainly don't want you to think that. I'm sorry if you thought that's what I meant, because it certainly isn't.”

“Good. You've told me that trust is very important and that I need to trust you. I agree, but that goes two ways. Clint, I know you love me, and I trust you and that love. I feel as though you don't trust my love for you, though. I may not have as much as you, but I still have very strong feelings that when we get married we become one, and I want what is mine to become yours, as well.”

Clint was quiet for a few moments before he pulled her tighter for a hug. She could tell it was not a lighthearted, spur of the moment hug, but this hug had meaning. There was feeling behind it. “Again, I'm sorry, Holly. You're right. You're a very intelligent, very thoughtful woman, and I'm glad you are because you were able to think it through. You were right on in your assessment of the problem. From my perspective I was showing you how much I love you, hoping you saw that.”

“And I do see it, Clint,” she said, interrupting him. “I feel your love for me every single day. That's why I'm so eager to get married. But you need to see that my love for you is just as strong, and look at it from my perspective.”

“I have now. In fact, this has pointed out to me just how strong your love for me is. You wouldn't have said anything about this if your love wasn't as strong as it is. I'm a very lucky man, Holly. Can you find it in your heart to forgive me?”

“Of course I can,” she assured him. “You were trying to show me you love me, and I can never be upset about that. You just didn't look at this through my eyes. I do have a suggestion that might help you feel better, though.”

“What's that?”

“You said you want me to have some money in my name only. I have two suggestions. Either we both have an account in our name only just in case something terrible were to happen, or we keep our own IRA retirement accounts and keep growing them both.”

“We will definitely do that. We neither one have any kind of retirement benefits from a job, so we will absolutely be keeping our IRA accounts and adding to them yearly. When we're old enough to retire that income will be handy as we travel the world, or whatever we choose to do then.”

“Sounds nice.” She sighed, leaning back against him and relaxing again. “Is that what you want to do when we retire?”

“I don't know. Maybe we'll want to do some traveling overseas, I don't know. To be honest, I could be happy doing about anything, as long as we're doing it together.”

“So you'd be happy if we spend our days sitting on our front porch with our canes next to our rocking chairs?”

“Absolutely. With our grandkids or great grandkids playing in the yard? I'd be good with that.”

“Me, too,” she said with a giggle.

“But first we have to have our wedding,” he said with a chuckle, bringing them back to the present. “So you have someone that's doing the decorations, and someone that's doing the food, and our wedding day clothes are taken care of. What about cleanup?”

“The same people doing the food and decorations are doing the cleanup. They’ve both assured me they will bring everything they need with them and take it all back when they leave. They insist we won’t have to do a thing.”

“It sounds like we’re ready for this then,” Clint said with a satisfied smile. “All we have to do now is get through another week at work, and then we’ll go enjoy vacation time at the Holiday House with our family for the next week, and then finally we’ll be ready for our wedding and honeymoon.”

“I can’t wait.”

“Are you sure you’re okay with waiting until Friday to go? Most of our family is going sooner, starting tomorrow.”

“I know, but we’re taking an extra week off for our honeymoon. We really shouldn’t take off more than a couple weeks during your busy season. You have a very good, reputable business to run, you know.”

He chuckled and kissed the crown of her head as she leaned against his chest. “I know, but if it’s important to you to be with your family for more of the vacation time leading up to the wedding, I can probably make arrangements for that to happen.”

“No, I think it’s important for you to be there, at work. I’m good with two weeks now, especially if we’re going to take two weeks again at Christmas. It’ll be fun for us all to be together for the holidays again this year at the same house.”

“But with a couple changes this year. You and I will be sharing a room this year, as will Mom and Daniel.”

“It will be like last year, with both families all together again, only better.”

“There’s that smart lady I’m marrying again. You’re absolutely right about that.” He shared another extremely passionate kiss with her, before they settled in on the couch to watch a movie.

Daniel leaned back in the sofa at Sarah's house, pulling her back with him to lean against his shoulder. "So are you packed and ready to go tomorrow?"

"I've been packed for a week now," she assured him.

"Anxious?" he asked with a chuckle, knowing the answer.

"Aren't you? Two weeks of vacation time with both of our families at the place we all met, topped off by watching my son marry your daughter. What more could we ask for?"

"Well, since you asked, I'd be happy if we were getting married this trip to the Holiday House, too, instead of having to wait until the next holiday."

"I know, I'd like that, too, but I don't want to take away from their special day."

"No, I don't, either. I just wish we didn't have to wait until Labor Day for our special day."

"We could get married sooner if you don't mind a different location. The family's already all taking their vacations over the Fourth of July since the owners gave us two weeks free to make up for the mix-up which led to all of our sharing the house over Christmas, and everyone's planning on another two weeks over the Christmas holidays again this year."

"We've already reserved the house over Labor Day and our family has graciously agreed to take a long weekend to go there again to celebrate our wedding. I don't want to change our plans now," he said. "Besides, I agree with you, it will be special to be married at that special place. It has a lot of meaning and memories for both our families. What better place to begin our life together?"

"Mmm, I agree," she murmured, still cuddling up against him, enjoying his arm around her. "I like the sounds of that, beginning our life together. We'll be doing that in just three more months. In the meantime, we get to watch Clint and Holly begin their life together in just a couple of weeks. I think they'll do just fine together."

“As do I,” Daniel agreed. “That’s another thing we have to be thankful for. Not only do our families get along well together, but since Lance and Merry worked their problems out, I can honestly say that our children have good, solid marriages, and Clint and Holly will, as well.”

“We are lucky. In this day and age, not too many parents are fortunate enough to say that,” she agreed.

They talked another half hour before Daniel suggested that since they had a five-hour drive tomorrow they should call it a night. They planned on getting there as early as possible, since they had the key to the house. Merry and Lance were planning to be there by the next evening, as well, and Daniel and Sarah wanted to have the house unlocked and ready for them.

They decided on a time for him to pick her up the next morning, and he gave her a good-night kiss, then a second one, and they both laughed when he turned around for one more kiss before finally leaving for Clint’s house for the night.

The next morning Clint and Holly had breakfast with their parents at Sarah’s house. After they had finished eating, the younger couple shooed their parents out, knowing they wanted to get an early start. They promised they would clean the kitchen up and lock up Sarah’s house.

Sunday morning Lance made what he felt must have been about his eightieth trip from the house to the car. Once again, he had to do a little rearranging to get his latest load in. “I sure hope that’s everything,” he said as he entered the house again, “because that is one full SUV out there. What’s the hold up; who isn’t ready?”

Seth and Ellie came running. “We’re ready,” Seth assured him.

"We're anxious to get there," Ellie added, hugging her stuffed rabbit that also served as her pillow on longer trips.

"So it's your mother who's not ready yet?" Lance asked with a little chuckle. "Who could ever have guessed that?"

The kids giggled a bit, but they all turned toward the hallway as Merry came walking out, carrying a sheet of paper. "Okay, let's go over our checklist, then we can go," she declared. "Four suitcases."

"And quite heavy ones at that," Lance said with a smile. Then, remembering his wife's protocol, he said, "Check."

She smiled at him in appreciation. "Holly and Clint's wedding present?"

"Check," he said.

"Everybody has a swimsuit?" She waited until both kids and Lance had given the obligatory 'check'. "Life jackets for in the boat Gabe and Nina rented for all of us?"

"Check," Seth said. "Ellie and I took ours out and gave them to Daddy when he was loading the car, so they're in there."

"And I added two for us," Lance confirmed, which earned him another smile from his wife.

"Fishing gear for at the lake?"

"Check," Lance said.

"The ring toss game and air mattresses for the pool at the house?"

"Check," Ellie said proudly. "We gave those to Daddy this morning right after we gave him the life jackets. It's going to be so fun having a pool at the house. Can we go swimming in it every day?"

"We'll see," Lance said. "I'm sure you'll get to swim in it plenty, but there may be days that we spend all day at the lake and are too tired when we get back to the house."

Seth and Ellie both looked at him like he was crazy. "Too tired to swim in a pool?" Seth asked. "You don't get too tired to swim in a pool."

Lance and Merry laughed, but assured their kids that yes, that could actually happen. They continued down the checklist, and once Merry was assured everything on her list was in the car, they got in themselves and headed toward the Holiday House, which the kids had decided was the best place ever for a vacation, winter or summer.