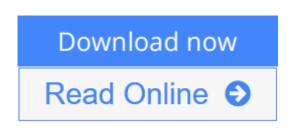


# Claiming the Royal Innocent (Kingdoms & Crowns)

By Jennifer Hayward



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# Found

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# Forbidden

Aristos has orders not to touch the innocent princess, but beautiful Aleksandra calls to the rebellious urges that the self-made Greek tycoon thought he overcame long ago.

# Forever?

As the heat of their desire rises, the rules begin to evaporate. It's soon clear that the person Aristos should be protecting Aleksandra from is himself!

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# Claiming the Royal Innocent (Kingdoms & Crowns) By Jennifer Hayward Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1281283 in Books
- Published on: 2016-04-19
- Released on: 2016-04-19
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.54" h x .53" w x 4.25" l, .21 pounds
- Binding: Mass Market Paperback
- 192 pages

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# **Editorial Review**

# Review

"Glamorous settings and sparkling descriptions make for a thoroughly entertaining read." 4 star Romantic Times Magazine review- a 'page turner.'

### From the Author

Aristos Nicolades stood leaning against a column in the packed ballroom, watching the stunning brunette in the sexy blue gown toss back her second glass of champagne with a speed that suggested she needed courage of some sort.

*For what*, he wondered idly, studying the play of shimmering light as it highlighted every dip and curve of her petite, shapely figure. Considering she'd lied about who she was to gain admittance to the party, he'd thought it best to keep an eye on her.

He'd been behind her in the line-up to the ballroom, his flight from the States delayed, making him almost an hour latefor the party. His every desire had been to skip the event, go home, take along, hot shower and sleep after a grueling week abroad. But considering the king had finally granted him a license to build the jewel in his crown, a new casino on the sparkling, glitterati-strewn, Mediterranean island of Akathinia,giving the occasion a miss had not been an option.

Bemused when the blue-gowned angel had swanned up to the doors of the ballroom and announced herself as Kara Nicholson, he'd thought he'd been hallucinating after almost thirty-six hours without sleep. The Kara Nicholson he'd divested of her clothes before he'd taken her in a long, hot encounter in Vegas six months ago, the Kara Nicholson known to travel in Stella's circles, had *not* been the brunette standing in front of him.

With her near angelic look--all big blue eyes and long, satiny dark hair--she hardly seemed the type to be one of Carnelia's spies or God forbid worse. But nothing could be discounted in this time of tension--spies had been pinpointed, separatist factions had emerged--and considering a satellite company of his was in charge of security tonight, he wasn't taking any chances.

He studied the nerves the beautiful brunette was clearly fighting despite her attempt at outward composure. She had come alone, hadn't attempted to talk to anyone, clearly knew no one. The only one she had shown an interest in, other than the fleeting glances she'd been sending his way as an immediate attraction had sparked between them, had been the king. She had been inordinately interested in his whereabouts ever since she'd arrived.

It was possible she was simply one of those women who couldn't seem to accept King Nikandros was happily married. There were enough of them around. Perhaps a jilted ex-lover? It would fit with the lost look she had at the moment... The inherent vulnerability that surrounded her.

She sensed his perusal. Turned her chin to meet his gaze. The confusion, the anxiety in her beautiful blue eyes stoked his curiosity higher. Confusion which quickly morphed into the unmistakable interest he'd seen there before. He held her gaze. Sustained the connection. Electricity arced between them, a rosy pink staining her cheeks.

Dipping her chin, she broke the contact first in one of those shy gestures that didn't seem to fit with the sexy image. A plus B plus C wasn't adding up.

His curiosity got the better of him. Downing his last swallow of scotch, he set the glass ona table and headed toward her. He'd played games he'd enjoyed far less than the one he was playing now. *This* could prove highly enjoyable.

#### \*\*\*\*\*

Thee mou. He was headed over here.

Alex swallowed hard, wondering what on earth she was doing. She was here to talk to her father, to know him before he died, not flirt with the most strikingly good-looking male she'd ever seen, in a tuxedo, or out of one. Yet *he* had been staring at her, making no effort to hide his interest. Difficult to ignore, particularly since every time she worked up the courage tospeak to the king, he had moved on to another group.

Meanwhile, doubts were piling up about whether this had been an extremely bad idea to choose this party as the venue for her mission as the king glittered as an untouchable force. *Would her father even want to see her? Would he even care she existed? Would he toss her out without acknowledging her?* 

Her ruminations were infiltrated by the scent of expensive aftershave, followed by the man who wore it. He was tall, well over six feet, his height backed up by the lean, hard-packed muscle that covered every inch of him. With his dark-as-sin eyes and designer stubble he made every other man in the room look effeminate in comparison.

# Undeniably intimidating. Insanely attractive.

"I was standing over there wondering why a beautiful woman finds herself alone throwing back champagne like water." The rich, velvety undertone to his voice stoked every nerve ending to full attention. "Rather than allow my imagination to conjure up all sorts of creative possibilities, I thought I would simply come over and ask."

Her gaze slid to her empty glass. "It's only my second."

"In rapid succession." He swept his dark gaze over her in a perusal that scorched her skin. "To provide courage perhaps?"

She tossed her hair over her shoulders. "Why would I need courage?"

His eyes glittered with amusement. "You tell me. You are here alone. Perhaps that makes you feel uncomfortable?"

*Very*. She lifted a shoulder in what she hoped was a nonchalant gesture. "I have business to attend to. It's not so much a social occasion for me."

"Business at a birthday party? How distasteful."

"A personal matter."

He inclined his head. "Perhaps you could combine your personal matter with a little...pleasure. I find myself

at loose ends."

She suspected this man hadn't spent one second of his life at loose ends, but his sexy drawl had the intended effect, tangling her up inside.

"You look quite comfortable at loose ends."

"I prefer to find a...*diversion*. And you," he said, holding her gaze, "are the most beautiful woman in the room."

Her stomach flip flopped, a wave of betraying heat rising from her chest to fill her cheeks."Hardly true. The princess is hosting after all."

"She has a layer of ice that surrounds her. You do not."

She swallowed past the sudden dryness in her throat, finding herself unable to pull her gaze away from his smoky, sexy one. "I'm afraid I'm not available as a diversion."

"Because you are here for someone else?"

She blinked."Because I really must see who I need to see then go."

"One dance." He held out a lean-fingered, bronzed hand. "Then you can get on with your business."

# From the Inside Flap *Kingdoms & Crowns*

#### Young royals in reckless pursuit of passion

When a centuries-old battle between the kingdoms of Akathinia and Carnelia is reignited, the nation's young royals find themselves on the brink of war. But their kingdoms aren't the only thing at stake.

Soon these young monarchs are facing an unexpected royal baby, a lost princess

Can love conquer all?

and an alliance with the enemy.

#### **Users Review**

#### From reader reviews:

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