



Whisper No Lies (Black Ops Book 3)

By Cindy Gerard



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In *New York Times* bestselling author Cindy Gerard's fiery new romantic suspense series, when danger threatens, the seductive heroes of Black Ops, Inc. turn up the heat.

AN INDECENT PROPOSAL...

When a high roller at the Vegas casino where Crystal Debrowski manages security makes a scandalous proposition, she flat-out refuses, especially given rumors of his shady overseas connections. But then counterfeit bills mysteriously flood the gaming tables, and her reputation -- and her life -- are on the line.

REVEALS A SIMMERING DESIRE...

Despite his big, flirty grin, Texas heartbreaker Johnny Duane Reed can't get sassy Crystal off his mind. When she is abducted by an international crime lord with a threatening obsession, Reed enlists his Black Ops, Inc. team to pursue a dangerous mission to rescue her.

...WITH DEADLY CONSEQUENCES.

Between Crystal and Johnny burns a scorching flame, but as they battle her relentless abductor, they uncover a malicious arms trafficking and white slavery ring. Together, they must destroy the tyrant's wicked enterprises or face his reign of terror themselves....

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Editorial Review

Review

"Romantic suspense at its best." -- Kay Hooper, *New York Times* bestselling author

About the Author

Cindy Gerard is the critically acclaimed *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of the wildly popular Black Ops series, the Bodyguards series, and more than thirty contemporary romance novels. Her latest books include the One-Eyed Jacks novels *Killing Time*, *Running Blind*, and *The Way Home*. Her work has won the prestigious RITA Award for Best Romantic Suspense. She and her husband live in the Midwest. Visit her online at CindyGerard.com.

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1

It was business as usual tonight at Bali Hai Casino on the Vegas Strip, which meant that every nut job and wacko who could arrange bail was on the prowl. Crystal Debrowski figured that in her seven years working casino security she'd pretty much heard every come-on line written in the casino crawlers and lounge lizards' handbook. That was because Crystal was what her friend Abbie Hughes Lang referred to as a man magnet and yeah, Crystal knew what men saw when they looked at her: sex on a stick. Pixie features, spiky red hair, and fairy-green eyes. Showgirl breasts and round hips that swayed to a sultry beat when she walked and drew heartbreakers and bizzaros from the four corners of the earth.

In her twenty-seven years, she'd been lied to, cheated on, hit on, and proposed to. Just when she'd thought she'd heard it all, this guy sweetened the pot. Her latest admirer -- a Mr. Yao Long, according to the business card sporting an embossed Komodo dragon emblem -- had come a long way for a letdown.

Wait until she told Abbie about this joker.

She glanced from Mr. Yao to the man who appeared to be his assistant. "I don't believe I caught your name."

"Wong Li."

Wong, a Jackie Chan look-alike, did most of his boss's talking for him. Talking that included propositioning Crystal at a one-hundred-dollar-minimum blackjack table where she was filling in for a dealer who'd gone on a quick break. Crystal was about ninety-nine percent certain that the gist of Yao's offer ran somewhere in the neighborhood of: Him, lord and master. Her, concubine and sex slave.

"Please tell Mr. Yao, thanks, but no thanks," she told Wong, who hovered at her amorous suitor's side like a pet gnat.

Because she perpetuated the sex kitten image -- a girl had to have some fun, especially if that girl lived in a world where few people took a woman seriously who wore four-inch platforms that topped her out around five-four -- Crystal cut Yao a little slack.

That didn't mean she was going for his insulting proposition. And it didn't mean she liked it. She'd pretty

much had it with the opposite sex. Recently promoted to Gaming Manager at Bali Hai, and with several heartbreaks under her belt, Crystal's newly adopted motto was: Men. Can't live with 'em. Can't tie 'em to a train track and wait for Amtrak to do the deed. Chalk her disenchantment up to a string of bad relationships with men who had basically "gotten into her" because she jiggled when she walked.

Johnny Duane Reed was a recent example. That cowboy had heartbreak written all over him and she'd be damned if she knew why every time he blew into town she ended up naked before he ended up gone. Reed always ended up gone.

The latest case in point, however, stood before her tonight. Mr. Yao Long did not look happy. But then, it was hard to tell for certain. His expression hadn't altered since he'd appeared thirty minutes ago with Wong.

"Did he understand that my answer is no?" Crystal's gaze darted from Wong to Yao as she turned the table back over to the dealer. "Because, I'm thinking that if he did, now would be a really good time for him to leave." To stress her meaning, she made walking motions with her fingers.

Mr. Yao, all five-foot-four inches of salt-and-pepper hair, Armani suit, and Gucci loafers, continued to stare at her through narrow eyes the color of onyx. His expression never wavered.

Was it anger? Disappointment? Gas? she wondered, as a frisson of unease tickled its way down her spine.

"Did *you* understand that my answer is no?" She averted her gaze from Mr. Personality to Wong, hoping to make it clear that it was time for the two of them to shuffle on back to Laos or Cambodia or Hong Kong -- wherever -- and out of her face so she could get back to business.

"Mr. Yao understands your response but respectfully rejects your answer."

She blinked. "He said that?" She hadn't heard a word.

"Mr. Yao is quite taken with you. He expresses regret that you are reluctant to allow him the opportunity to get to know you better but must insist on your cooperation."

"No, seriously. Is he like texting you or something because I never saw his lips move." This was so ludicrous it was almost funny. The next words out of Wong's mouth, however, sobered her like a judge in night court.

"Miss Debrowski, please understand it would not be wise -- "

"Wait." She cut off Wong with a hand in the air as unease shifted to alarm. She didn't wear a name tag and as Gaming Manager, practiced anonymity with the fervor of a religious zealot. Yet this man knew who she was. "How do you know my name?"

"Mr. Yao makes it a point to know everything. He is a very important and powerful man in our country."

"Yeah, well, this is *my* country," she informed Wong, searching the sea of gamblers and finally getting the attention of the security muscle on duty this shift. "And in my country it's neither polite nor acceptable for any man -- important or otherwise -- to impose his attention where it isn't wanted.

"Max," she said when the twenty-something bodybuilder walked to her side, pecs and biceps bulging beneath the navy T-shirt with a Bali Hai Security Force logo printed on the breast pocket. "Please escort these gentlemen out. Their business here is concluded."

It wasn't that she couldn't handle the situation -- her daddy had been one of Las Vegas Police Department's

finest before he'd retired last year. He'd taught her to handle *any* situation -- but Max's sheer size was enough to prevent any potential ruckus. She just wanted them gone without incident. Harmless or not, ridiculous or not, the two of them spooked her and Crystal wasn't easily spooked.

"You will regret this," Wong said softly.

"Already do," she muttered under her breath, relieved when they bowed to Max's muscle and allowed him to walk them across the casino floor toward the exit without a protest.

"Tip, boss," Sharon Keiler announced, drawing Crystal's attention back to the table action.

She nodded permission for Sharon to pocket the five-dollar token, then went on about her business of scanning the action on the casino floor.

Crystal had work to do. Promotion came with a price. Because she was who she was -- a very small woman in a man's world -- she'd had to work twice as long and twice as hard to earn her current position. She was two weeks into her Gaming Manager post and still learning the ropes. The last thing she could afford to have happen was to let these jokers distract her from doing her job.

Everyone wanted to score in Vegas. Everyone had an angle. For every hundred no-luck and good-time gamblers, there was at least one among them intent on upping the odds in their favor. It was her job to spot the cheaters -- card counters, past-posters, hand-muckers, palmers, and techno wizards -- whether they were on the payroll or on a weekend junket from Podunk, Missouri.

A war whoop sounded from a bank of Lucky Seven slots. Someone had hit it big. She ambled over that way, prepared to offer the casino's congratulations and assistance with the haul when that unsettling curl of awareness skittered down her spine again.

She stopped, spun around, and found herself staring straight into eyes as cold as chipped ice. The man was Asian, midforties, impeccably dressed in a black suit and blue silk tie -- almost indistinguishable from Wong Li's attire. He held her gaze for a long menacing moment, then turned and melted into the crowd.

"Spooky," she muttered, then resumed walking -- and ran headlong into a wall of muscle.

"Excuse me." She backed up and encountered yet another Asian man. Identical suit. Similar tie. Same hard, intense stare.

This man, too, impaled her with an ominous look before he turned and walked away.

Damn, if her knees weren't shaking when she forced herself toward the slot that was still dinging and whistling for the crowd that had gathered to see exactly how much money the lucky player had won.

And damn if she'd knuckle under to yet another urge to turn and see if someone else was watching her.

Screw them and the Komodo dragons they slithered in on. No way was she letting them see her sweat, because by this time tomorrow, Mr. Yao Long and his ninja squad -- and yeah, she figured those guys were with him -- would most likely be sailing on a fast boat to China and her life would be back to normal.

Normal. Right. What was she thinking? This was Las Vegas.

Three weeks later, Crystal knew she was in trouble. There was no question and no doubt that she was in

deep, mucky doo-doo and she didn't have one single clue how it had come to this.

Ten days ago the counterfeit chips had shown up on the floor. Each casino had a unique set of chips, distinguishable from those used at other casinos and backed up with the appropriate amount of cash. The counterfeit chips that had made their way into the inventory had been identical to the Bali Hai chips so no one had spotted them until random UV testing had discovered the fakes, whose appearance had been traced to her section and her shift.

Initially, there was no reason to blame Crystal, but then things started to snowball. Her section came up short for the evening shift's take. Tens of thousands of dollars short. Then hackers breached computer security codes. Dozens of other little yet vital security glitches -- all on her watch -- had her pulling her hair out.

So yeah, she became a subject of intense scrutiny. And no, she had no explanation, just a lot of sleepless nights trying to figure out how this was happening on her watch.

She'd since triple-covered all of her security measures and prayed to the gods of roulette that she had a handle on things. That's when the unthinkable happened. Last night, twelve of the thirteen gaming tables under her direct supervision had been flooded with counterfeit twenty-dollar bills. Whoever distributed them had taken the casino for close to two hundred K.

Now here she was, standing in her boss's office listening to him tell her ...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jodi Dauphin:

Have you spare time for the day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? Yes, you can choose the suitable activity regarding spend your time. Any person spent all their spare time to take a walk, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open or perhaps read a book entitled Whisper No Lies (Black Ops Book 3)? Maybe it is to get best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time with your favorite's book, you can wiser than before. Do you agree with its opinion or you have some other opinion?

Milton Hill:

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