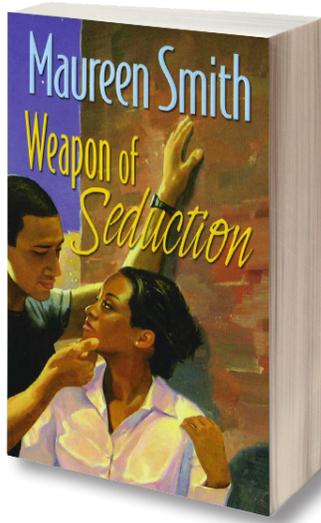


MAUREEN SMITH



AN EXCERPT FROM WEAPON OF SEDUCTION

Korrine glanced at her watch. “We’ve only been here forty minutes. Think that’s enough time to convince the desk clerk that we, uh, satisfied our needs?”

Rafe’s mouth curved in a slow, wicked grin that made her pulse skip. “Believe me, *mi querida*,” he drawled softly, “forty minutes would be nowhere near enough time. But, for the sake of our mission, we can pretend otherwise.”

Korrine started for the door, trying hard not to imagine how long it would take a man like Rafe Santiago to satisfy a woman’s needs. When he reached for her arm, she nearly leaped out of her skin. As she turned, she was greeted by the sight of him tugging his shirt free from his waistband.

“What are you doing?” she demanded.

“Relax,” he murmured, lazily surveying her silk blouse. “Why don’t you lose a few buttons?”

“*Excuse me?*”

His mouth twitched at her scandalized tone. “We just spent the last forty minutes in the sack. I think we should look a bit disheveled, don’t you?”

“Oh. Of course.” Flustered, Korrine fumbled with her buttons until Rafe calmly took over. When his knuckle skimmed her bare flesh, her breath caught sharply.

Their gazes met and held for a prolonged moment. “Don’t be nervous,” he said huskily. “I won’t bite.”

Said the wolf to the sheep. “I’m not nervous.”

“Good.” His hands went to the nape of her neck, and before Korrine could formulate a protest, he loosened the severe knot with the ease of a pro, sending her black hair tumbling over her shoulders.

His eyes darkened with undisguised male appreciation before he gave an approving nod. “Much better. You look more...”

“Disheveled?” Korrine offered tightly.

“Yeah.” Amusement lifted the corner of his lips. “That’s the word I was looking for.”

This time he led the way from the hotel room. Just as Korrine shut the door behind them, Rafe drew her into his arms and slanted his mouth over hers. Korrine stiffened in surprise, her arms jerking up to shove him away. But he pinned her against the door with the solid weight of his body and dragged his mouth to her ear to whisper, “Someone’s watching us. Kiss me back, and make it look good.”

Hesitantly she curved her arms around his neck and left them dangling there, uncertain. Rafe sank his fingers into the tangle of her thick hair and held her still as he deepened the kiss, sending shock waves through her system.

An incredible tightness bloomed in her belly, stretching and filling her entire body, making her acutely aware of him against her, his chest to hers, his thighs to hers as he repositioned their bodies. His clean male scent filled her nostrils, an intoxicating elixir. Heat poured through her, suffusing every cell and nerve ending until she thought she'd burst into flames.

Rafe tasted her lips with his tongue, plunging and invading with the fluid ease of a skilled lover. She gasped as the heat within her turned to melting honey, making her want to lean into him more, relying on his support. Her arms tightened around his neck, her fingers gliding against the silken texture of his close-cropped hair. Before she knew what was happening she was kissing him back, kissing him with a hunger that surpassed the demands of any "performance."

A low, husky groan filled her open mouth, although Korrine couldn't be certain the sound hadn't originated from her own throat. Rafe's hand in her hair loosened, became less a hold and more a guide as he gently tilted back her head to gain even deeper access to her mouth.

She was drowning, drowning in sensation, in dark need and want. The voice of caution in her head, the voice that always helped her keep a tight rein on her impulses, grew dimmer and dimmer until it was barely a whisper, and then nothing at all. With a silent moan of surrender, Korrine gave herself up to what became the sexiest, hottest, most demanding kiss she'd ever tasted.