

Tres Sheik ©

By Layla Revis

Earthquakes, fires, devilish winds. One extreme lured the other. Plastic Land was the last frontier.

They came for things that could only be imagined. Things whispered about in foggy parlors and back alley dens; a boulevard where men tipped their hats to passing women and people still got discovered, a glowing sign that marked the entry to hope. Hollywoodland was the place of dreams, a summertime home away from home, but nobody warned the new arrivals about the searing gusting winds the Chumash referred to as *Vientos de Satanás* or *The Devil's Winds*. Some whispered that the unrepentant winds rode on the backs of broken dreams; others feared building a home or a business interrupted by the winds because it meant a life of bitter failure and regret.

This was long before the real estate tycoons decided that the unpredictable *Devil's Winds* weren't such a hot draw for potential buyers and, as fast as Midwesterners packed into carriages, the *Vientos de Satanás* were re-christened "*The Santa Ana Winds*" and another piece of truth was freshly coated with the slick lacquer of fraud.

Miami DiCarlo didn't move to Hollywood to start out with a blank slate. Even if it happened to be the perfect place to swipe it all clean. She moved because she longed for the days of bathtub gin and golden era supper clubs, days when the sagebrush tickled a long dusty road called Prospect Avenue, a time when Bogey drank a scotch with his eggs for breakfast and nobody thought twice about that sort of thing.

But that night, when the winds blew straight onto her path, the history of weary chieftains and rolling sagebrush signaled a warning. Another El Nino was approaching and this one was packed with the prickly defeat of dashed dreams.

Because the weather in Los Angeles, much like her inhabitants, can be as dicey as the life that looks too good to be true.

Mercury Retrograde

Chapter 1

A dark cloak of Santa Ana winds swept in and punched the sky with a bruise. From black to blue, a feeling more ominous than fate tumbled into the city. Water, tinted by the crimson hue of flashing stoplights, spilled down the Hollywood Hills like blood from a pagan sacrifice. Further west, the heavy palm trees lining the Bel Air Estates whistled something fierce to the falling night. Streetlamps swayed, sirens blared, and tree branches snapped on the heels of an angry tango night, the sidewalks of West Hollywood drenched under the recklessness of what should have been an early spring shower, but was now a late winter flood.

On the corner of Sunset and Crescent Heights, the lights of the Strip cast a carnival glow over the sprawling hills. Tonight, like so many other nights in Hollywood, the city was on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

I wasn't familiar with rejection and this night would go down in history as the first real blow my ego would remember. I pulled my beige corduroy coat tighter around me and shuffled down the Boulevard envisioning myself as an Aztec girl approaching the altar.

A little over the top, I know. But that's what it felt like. A break-up can do that to you. Hell, I've known girls to inflict wounds, binge drink, and stalk. At least I hadn't gone there yet. I'm sure some Buddhist monk has it all spelled out, but I gave up reading anything related to enlightenment the day I stopped wearing amber resin. Most of it's a load of crap. The only thing that ever healed a broken heart is fixating on something or

someone new until enough time passed that you forgot the initial sting of it all. Healthy or not, that's the deal and it works.

It didn't help matters that I was also severely hung-over. This town has a way of getting you off track and I was in no way prepared for the fact that I'd need my stomach later. When the bad news was thrown in my direction, I felt the runs moments from every gasp and step. Not a pretty sight, but it was a horrible night indeed and true love had just taken a dump on my doorstep.