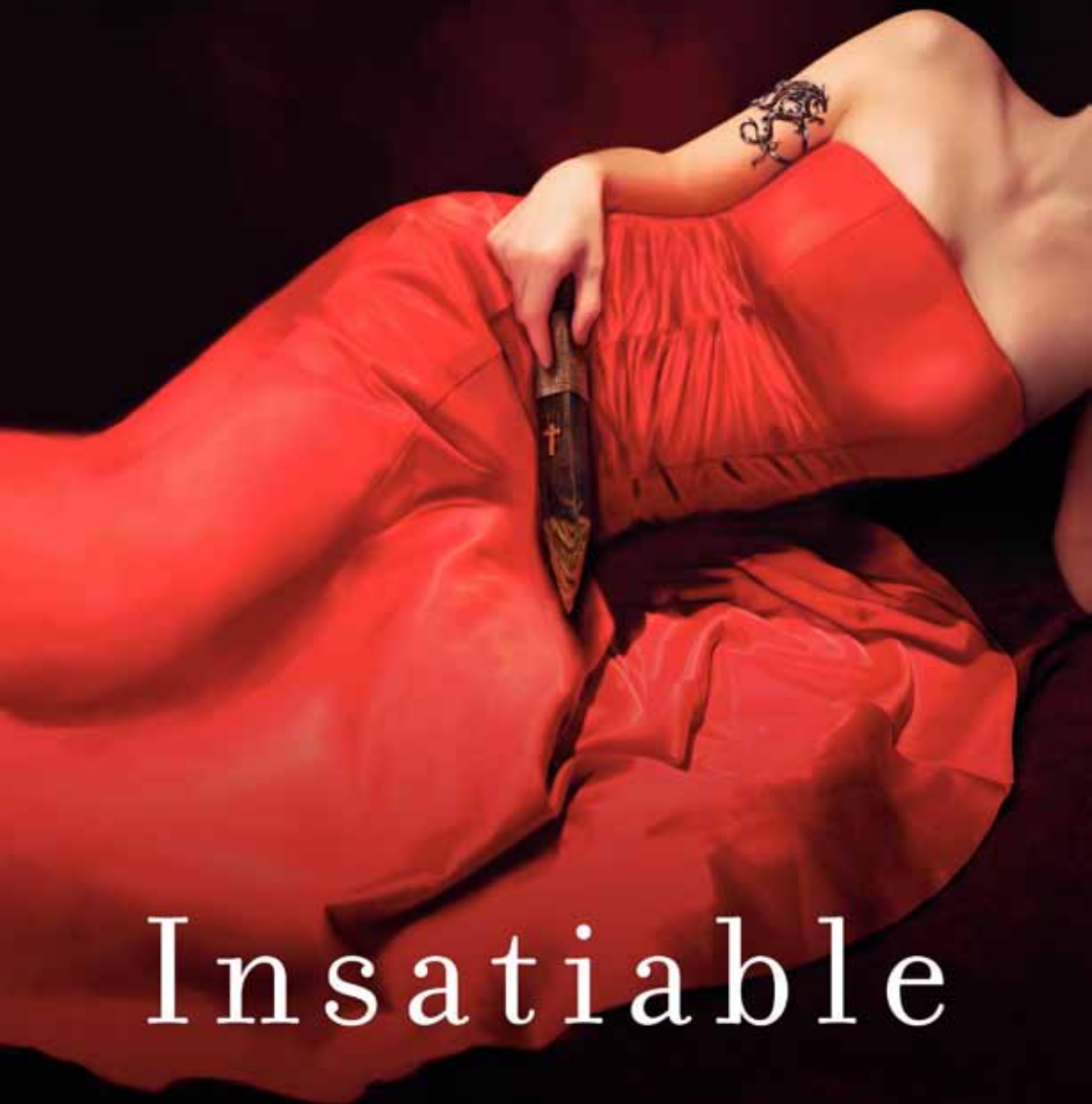



# MEG CABOT

#1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR



## Insatiable

DELETED SCENE: LEISHA



In one version of *Insatiable*, Leisha worked for the Mayor's Office, and her name was Carla. This got changed because she was more fun as a hairstylist named Leisha, and scenes from her POV were dropped for length.

Carla Weinberg stared at the life size cardboard replica of Gregory Bane. The actor—who played a two-hundred year old vampire on the soap opera *Lust*—was clad in nothing but a pair of tight jeans and a white linen shirt, open almost to his navel. He clutched a metal chain tightly around his flexed shoulders as he stared soulfully out at her with a gaze so intent, it glowed almost red.

"You're kidding me, right?" Carla asked, looking disbelievingly at the messenger who'd just delivered the cutout to her office.

"It says right here," the kid said, holding out an invoice attached to a clipboard and a pen for her to sign it with. "Deliver to Carla Weinberg, publicist, New York City Office of Mayor. That's you, ain't it?"

"Oh, God," Carla said, and took the clipboard and pen. She stared at Gregory Bane and his pale, muscular chest a second longer.

Then she said, "Oh, God," again and signed beneath her name. "See ya," the messenger said, took both the clipboard and the pen from her, and strolled away, leaving Gregory Bane behind.

"Hey," squealed a female voice from the hallway just outside Carla's office. Lori popped her head in. "Isn't that Gregory Bane?"

"So I'm told," Carla said, unenthusiastically.

"Where did you get that?" Lori wanted to know. "My daughter would kill for one of those."

"The studio sent it over," Carla said, sinking down behind her desk. "They needed permission to film at Rockefeller Center next week, and we gave it to them. I guess this is their way of saying thank you." She thought, but didn't add aloud, *Maybe as a joke?*

"*Is that Gregory Bane?*" Mariko had been walking by with a cardboard tray full of lattes in her hands. Now she veered into Carla's office and gawked at the bigger-than-life-sized cutout. "My God, he's so hot. My niece would literally chew off her right arm for this."

"I know," Lori said. "My daughter, too."

Carla's phone rang. She checked the caller ID. It was her husband.

"I'll give you twenty bucks for it," Mariko said to Carla.

"Fifty," Lori said.

Mariko narrowed her eyes. "Seventy-five!"

"One hundred," Lori barked.

Carla liked the way this was going. A lot.

"Tell you what," she said, picking up her phone, "whoever gives me two hundred first has herself a deal."

Both Lori and Mariko disappeared, apparently tearing off to find their check-books. Carla said, into her phone, "Hello, Mayor's Office."

"They just found another one," her husband Adam said.

"Another what?" she asked, reaching for the jar of smoked almonds she kept on her desk. They were, according to Oprah, a healthy snack. And, in her final trimester, Carla needed all the healthy snacks she could get her hands on. Although she'd take the borderline unhealthy ones, too, if there were any in her way.

"How could you not have heard about this?" Adam asked. "You work for the Mayor. They found another dead girl."

"Are you serious?" Carla asked, annoyed. Her husband was always doing this to her lately, calling and talking to her about something like they were in the middle of a conversation he'd clearly been having with someone else. "I write his press releases. What have I got to do with murders, unless he's making a statement about one? And when does the Mayor ever make a statement about a *murder*?"

"When it's the third one in less than a month," Adam said. "All young women showing up strangled in local parks. How can you not know about this? It's been all over the news."

Carla stared at the bare, chain wielding torso of Gregory Bane.

"How old are they?" she asked.

"Twenties," he said. "One was nineteen."

"Figures," Carla said, with a snort, dropping more almonds into her mouth. "If they were in their thirties, it wouldn't even have made New York One."

"Carla," Adam said. "Why do you have to be so bitter? And before you say anything, these girls aren't being killed by their boyfriends or drug dealers. They aren't gang-related slayings. They think it might be the work of a serial killer."

Carla couldn't help chuckling at that one. "Would you listen to yourself?" she said. "Exactly how much CNN are you watching? Gang-related slaying? Work of a serial killer?"

Adam sounded frustrated. "He appears to be targeting attractive young women who go out clubbing with their friends. That's you and Meena."

"Um," Carla said. Now she was definitely amused. "Since when? Have you forgotten I'm seven months pregnant? I don't believe they let women as pregnant as I am into clubs. And if any serial killer tried to go after me or Meena, he'd wake up feeling pretty sorry for himself the next morning. You know we took that self-defense class down with our Little Sisters down at the Y. We'd kick any serial killer's booté—"

"It's not funny, Carla," Adam said. "This latest girl was found naked under some leaves near the Alice in Wonderland statue in Central Park. Some guy walking his dog found her. Well, the dog found her."

"Ew," Carla said. "See, aren't you glad we have a cat instead of a dog? Dogs are just a pain. Meena's always having to get up at the crack of dawn to walk hers. And then they're sniffing up dead bodies when you do walk them...."

"Carla," Adam said. "Meena lives right by the park. You guys went out last night. It could have been —"

"Oh my God," Carla said. She wanted to slam down the phone.

At that moment, Lori came bursting back into her office waving a check, looking flushed from having run down a flight of stairs.

"Here it is," she cried. "Two hundred!"

"Wait!" Mariko raced in after her. "I have mine, too."

Carla put the phone receiver down on her shoulder. "Sorry, Mariko. Lori was here first."

Mariko stood there looking as if she were about to burst into tears. Carla wondered if the cardboard cutout was really for her niece after all, or maybe for Mariko.

"Wait," Mariko suddenly said, brightening. "Two-fifty!" And she snatched a pen off Carla's desk, and changed the amount on her check.

Carla looked down at the drying ink. "Sold," she said.

Lori looked annoyed.

"Well, fine," she said. "I didn't want it that much anyway." She turned around and stomped away.

"Ha!" Mariko grabbed the cardboard cutout and dragged it triumphantly from Carla's office, laughing happily the whole way.

"Sorry about that," Carla said, getting back onto the phone with her husband. "Slight work situation. Anyway, Adam, I'm fine. Meena is fine. And you know what? You're fine. We're going to be fine. I'm sorry about those dead girls, but there's nothing any of us can do about it. Will you please just turn off the TV and go take a walk?"

"Carla —"

"Please. You need to get off the couch."

Suddenly, Adam was furious. "Are you saying I don't —"

"No. I'm not." Oh, God. She'd blown it. Now he was mad. "I —"

"Fine. See you when get home after work. If you don't get killed."

He slammed down the phone. Carla stared at the receiver for a second or two before hanging up herself. She thought briefly about calling Adam back.

But she knew how the conversation would go. She'd apologize, not even knowing what it was she'd done to make him so mad (promise not to get killed by a serial killer?) and he'd sulk.

No. She wasn't going to do it. Give him some time to cool off.

She hung up and sighed at the number of unread emails in her inbox. Then she picked the receiver back up and dialed Meena's work number.