



Forgiven but not Forgotten? (DePiero Siblings Book 2)

By Abby Green



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Forgiven but not Forgotten? (DePiero Siblings Book 2) By Abby Green Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #349118 in eBooks
- Published on: 2013-06-01
- Released on: 2013-06-01
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Abby Green worked for twelve years in the film industry. The glamour of four a.m. starts, dealing with precious egos, the mucky fields, driving rain...all became too much. After stumbling across a guide to writing romance, she took it as a sign and saw her way out, capitalising on her long-time love for romance books. Now she is very happy to sit in her nice warm house while others are out in the rain and muck! She lives and works in Dublin.

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Andreas Xenakis didn't like the strength of the thrill of triumph that moved through him. It signified that this moment held more importance for him than he'd care to admit. Bitterly, he had to concede that perhaps it did. After all, practically within touching distance now was the woman who had all but cried *rape* for her own amusement, to protect her untarnished image in her father's eyes. She'd merited him a savage beating, losing his job, being blacklisted from every hotel in Europe and having to start over again on the other side of the world. Far away from anyone he'd known or who had known him.

She was still exquisite. More so. Andreas had found himself imagining that she couldn't possibly be as stunning as she'd been since he'd seen her five years ago. But she was. She was a woman now, not a teenager.

Her hair was so blonde it shone almost white under the soft lighting of a hundred chandeliers. It was pulled up into a high bun. She held herself with the same effortlessly regal bearing he'd first noticed in that glittering ballroom in Paris. His mouth compressed. She was a thoroughbred in the midst of lesser beings. He could see how women near her instinctively shut her out, as if sensing competition.

His eyes moved over the curve of her cheek and jaw. The patrician line of her nose more than hinted at the blue-blooded heritage of her Italian ancestry, diluted only in part by her half English mother who had been related to royalty. Her skin was still pale and looked soft: as soft as a rose petal. Andreas's belly clenched hard to recall just how soft it *had* felt under his fingers.

He'd touched her reverently, as if she were an ethereal goddess, and he'd felt as if he was marking her, staining her purity with his touch. His hands were fists by his sides now as he thought of how she'd urged him on with breathy, sexy entreaties in his ear: *'Please. I want you to touch me, Andreas.'* Only to turn on him almost in the same breath and accuse him of attacking her...

She turned then, to face towards him, and that low, simmering anger was eclipsed when blood rushed to his head and to his groin, making him simultaneously dizzy and hard.

He couldn't escape the impact of those huge, glittering bright blue eyes ringed with long dark lashes. But it was her mouth which drew his gaze and kept it. Sinfully lush and pink. Just waiting to be kissed...crushed under his. Andreas had to consciously will down the intense desire. He was fast being reduced to the instincts of an animal, and he hated her for having this effect on him. Still. *For ever*, mocked the small voice in his head.

No. Andreas rejected it fiercely. Not for ever. Just until he'd had her. Until they'd finished what she'd started

when she'd upended his life so cruelly and comprehensively. Because she'd been curious and bored. Because she'd had the power. Because he'd been nothing.

Resolve firmed in Andreas's gut. He was far from nothing any more, and thanks to a cruel twist of circumstances Siena DePiero was reduced to lower than he'd ever been, rendering her exposed and vulnerable—to him.

Her blonde head dipped out of view momentarily and Andreas's insides contracted with something indefinable that went beyond where he wanted to investigate. He didn't like the fact that he was uncomfortably aware of other men's interest, of their gazes after her, covetous and even lascivious. It made him feel possessive and that was not welcome.

She'd had the gall to play with him once. Andreas desired her. That was all. His eyes caught sight of her bright blonde head again and he watched and waited as she drew ever closer to him in the crowd.

Siena DePiero was in the act of navigating through the crowd with a heavy tray, trying not to upend the contents over someone's feet, when a broad chest at her eye level stopped her from moving forward.

She looked up and had the impression of a very tall man, broad all the way through to his shoulders. A pristine tuxedo with a white bow-tie marked him out as slightly different. As Siena's mouth opened to say *excuse me* her gaze reached his face and her heart stopped.

He was no stranger.

Andreas Xenakis. Here.

The recognition was instantaneous. The knowledge was cataclysmic. It was as if mere minutes had passed since she'd last seen him, yet it had been five years. He looked bigger, darker, leaner.

She could instantly read the unmistakable light of cold hatred in his eyes and her insides contracted painfully. Of all the people to meet in this situation. No one would get more mileage out of it than Andreas Xenakis. And could she even blame him? a small voice mocked.

'Well, well, well.'

His voice was painfully familiar, immediately twisting her insides into a knot of tension. 'Fancy meeting you here.'

Siena could feel his eyes rake her up and down, taking in her server's uniform of white shirt, black tie and black trousers. The effect he had on her now was as devastating as it had been five years before. It was as if she had been plugged into an electrical socket and the current was running through her blood, making it hum, as disturbing and disconcerting as she remembered—especially in light of what had happened.

Her insides contracted even more painfully.

Dark slashing brows framed his incredible navy blue eyes. High cheekbones drew the eye down to a strong jaw. And his mouth...that beautiful sensuous mouth...was all at once sexy and mocking. He lifted one brow, clearly waiting for a response.

Struggling to retain some sense of composure, when she felt like a tiny boat being lashed on high seas, Siena managed to find her voice and said coolly, 'Mr Xenakis. How nice to see you again.'

His arched brow went higher and he let out a curt laugh. His voice wasn't so heavily accented any more. It had more of a mid-Atlantic twang. 'Even now you can make it sound as if you're greeting me at your own dinner party—not serving drinks to people you once wouldn't deign to look in the eye.'

Siena flinched minutely. She didn't have to be psychic to recognise that the man who stood before her now was a much harder and more ruthless creature than the man she'd met in Paris. Xenakis's meteoric rise to become one of the world's most prominent hoteliers at the ridiculously young age of thirty had been well documented in the press.

'I'm flattered you remember me,' he drawled, 'After all we've met only once—as memorable as that meeting was.'

He mocked her. Siena felt like pointing out pedantically that it had actually been twice. After all, she'd seen him again the morning after that catastrophic night. But *that* memory was far too much to handle right now.

'Yes.' She glanced away for a minute, uncomfortable under that dark gaze. 'Of course I remember you.'

Suddenly it was too much. The tray of glasses started to wobble alarmingly in Siena's hands as the full magnitude of seeing him again hit her. Surprising her, Andreas took it competently out of her white-knuckled grasp and put it down on a nearby table before she could object.

Just then they were interrupted by Siena's boss, who was shooting none too subtle daggers at Siena while smiling obsequiously at Andreas.

'Mr Xenakis, is everything all right here? If my staff have been in any way remiss—'

'No.' His voice was abrupt, cold. He truly was Lord of all he surveyed now. Exuding power and confidence and that tangible sexual charisma.

Feeling a little dizzy, Siena tuned back in to Xenakis's voice, being directed to her boss.

'Everything is fine. I am acquainted with Miss—'

Siena cut in urgently before Xenakis could say her hated name, 'Mr Xenakis, like I said, it was nice to see you again. If you'll excuse me, though, I really should get back to work.'

Siena picked up the heavy tray again and, without looking at Andreas Xenakis or her boss, fled on very shaky legs.

Andreas followed the progress of the bright blonde head, inordinately annoyed with this small rotund man for interrupting them. He was saying now, in a toadying voice, 'I'm so sorry about that, Mr Xenakis. Our staff have the strictest instructions not to make conversation with any of the guests, but Miss Mancini is new—'

Andreas bit out coldly, 'I spoke to her, actually.' Then he realised something and looked at the man, 'You say her name is Mancini?'

'Yes,' her boss said absently, and then he smiled even more slimily, saying *sotto voce* to Andreas, 'Of course her looks are a bonus—she could be a model, if you ask me. I don't know what she's doing waitressing, but I can't complain. I've never had so many requests for her phone number.'

Andreas desisted from informing the man that she was waitressing because she was *persona non grata* in polite society across Europe. He pushed aside the fact of her name-change and felt something like rage building inside him. He fixed the manager with a look that would have felled many. 'I presume you do not give out her number, of course?'

The man immediately went puce and blustered, 'Well, I... Well, of course not, Mr Xenakis. I don't know what kind of a service you think I'm running here, but I can assure you—'

'Don't worry,' Andreas sliced in cuttingly. 'I *will* be assured once I've checked out your company thoroughly.'

With that he turned and walked in the direction he'd last seen Siena moving. He had something much more urgent to take his attention now: making sure Siena DePiero didn't disappear into thin air.

A couple of hours later Siena was walking quickly through the moonlit streets around Mayfair. She still hadn't fully processed that she'd seen Andreas Xenakis, here in London, where she'd come to hide and move on with her life. To her everlasting relief she hadn't bumped into him again, but she'd been horribly aware of his tall form and had endeavoured to make sure she stayed on the far side of the room at all times.

Now, as she walked and felt the blisters on her heels, she cursed herself for letting Andreas get to her like that. Yes, they had history. She winced inwardly. It wasn't a pretty history. She didn't want to be reminded of the blazing look of anger and betrayal on his face when she'd stood beside her father five years ago, holding her dress up over her chest, and agreed shakily: '*Yes, he attacked me, Papa. I couldn't stop him*

Andreas had cut in angrily, his Greek accent thick. 'That's a downright lie. She was begging me—'

Her father had held up an imperious hand and cut Andreas off. He'd turned to face Siena and she'd looked up at him, terrified of his power to inflict punishment if he chose to believe Andreas.

He'd said quietly, 'He's lying, isn't he? You would *never* let a man like this touch you, would you? Because you know you're infinitely better than him.'

Struggling to hide her disgust and hatred, Siena had given the only answer she could. She'd nodded and felt sick. 'Yes, he's lying. I would never allow someone like him to touch me.'

Thinking of the unpalatable past made Siena feel trembly and light-headed. She didn't want to contemplate the very uncomfortable fact that he still had such a profound effect on her.

Once again, though, she marvelled at how far removed he was from the man who had once presided over servers in a hotel. In all honesty she was surprised he'd recognised her at all from his lofty position. She knew how easy it was to see only the hand that served you, not the person. Siena recalled her father's blistering anger when he'd berated her once for aiding a waiter who'd dropped a tray at one of his legendary parties. He'd hauled her into his office and gripped her arm painfully.

'Don't you know who we are? You step over people like him. You do *not* stop to help them.'

Siena had bitten back the angry retort on her lips. *Just like you stepped over your own illegitimate son in the street? Our own brother?* That audacious comment alone would have merited her sister a severe beating. That was his preferred twisted form of torture—if Siena provoked him, Serena would be punished.

Siena saw the bus stop in the distance and breathed a sigh of relief. Tomorrow she would have forgotten all about bad memories and running into Andreas Xenakis. Her insides lurched, mocking her assertion. For one second earlier, when she'd first seen Andreas, she'd imagined she was dreaming.

She'd never forgotten what she had done to that man by falsely accusing him. More often than she cared to admit she remembered that night and how, with just a look and a touch, he'd made her lose any sense of rationality and sanity. On some level, when she'd read about his stellar success in the newspapers, she'd been relieved; to see him flourishing far better than she would have ever expected assuaged some tiny part of the guilt she felt.

Resolutely Siena pushed down her incendiary thoughts. Familiar nagging anxiety took their place. She wondered now, as she approached the bus stop, if the two jobs she had would be enough to help her sister. But she knew with a leaden feeling that nothing short of a miracle could do that.

Siena had just arrived under the shelter of the bus stop when she noticed a sleek silver sports car pulling up alongside where she stood. Even before the electric window lowered on the passenger side Siena's heart-rate had increased.

The starkly handsome features of Andreas Xenakis looked out and Siena backed away instinctively. His presence was evidence that he wasn't about to let her off so easily. He wanted to torture her and make the most out of her changed circumstances. In a second he'd jumped out of the car and was lightly holding her elbow.

'Please.' He smiled urbanely, as if stopping to pick up women at bus stops resplendent in a tuxedo was entirely normal for him. 'Let me give you a lift.'

Siena was so tense she felt as if she might crack in two. Very aware of her ill-fitting thin denim jacket in the biting early spring breeze, and the fatigue that made her bones ache, she bit out, 'I'm fine, thank you. The bus will be along shortly.'

Andreas shook his head. He had that same incredulous expression that he'd worn when she'd spoken to him before. 'Are your co-workers aware you could probably have conversed with every foreign guest in that room in their own tongue?'

Hurt at this back-handed compliment, and his all too banal but accurate assessment of her misery Siena pulled her arm free. She acted instinctively, wanting to say something to prick his pride and hopefully push him away. 'I said I'm fine, thank you very much. I'm sure you have better things to do than follow me around like some besotted puppy dog.'

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