

EMILY MARCH

New York Times bestselling author of *Lover's Leap*

"For a wonderful read,
don't miss a visit to
Eternity Springs."
—Lisa Kleypas

An
Eternity Springs
Novel

Nightingale
Way

O N E



February
Alexandria, Virginia

Catherine Ann Blackburn heard the grandfather clock on the landing chime twice and knew she'd delayed the moment long enough. She had a special visit to pay this afternoon. She'd better get moving. She saved her work, blew out the cinnamon-scented candle burning on her desk, and rose to leave her home office. The phone rang, but she allowed the answering machine to pick up. She crossed the hall to her bedroom, where she stripped out of her jeans and George Washington University hoodie. Inside her walk-in closet, she stared at the racks of clothing and debated which of her cemetery dresses to wear. She had four from which to choose. Cat spent way too much time in cemeteries.

A year and a half ago she'd joined Arlington Ladies, an organization of volunteers who attended military services at Arlington National Cemetery in order to make sure that no soldier was buried alone. When she paid her respects to the fallen, Cat represented the thanks of a nation for the soldier's service and sacrifice, and she was proud to do so. No one should be laid to rest without someone there to note the passing of a life. Not a soldier, not an old man or woman.

Not a baby.

Grief washed over Cat and she shut her eyes, accepting it. Today was a day for remembering, the one day of the year when she allowed herself to wallow in her heartache. Today she wasn't going to Arlington, but to Rose Hill Cemetery in Hagerstown, Maryland.

She scanned her closet's contents again, but nothing felt right until she spied the red cashmere sweater. Forget the black dresses. Today, she'd wear red—the color of love.

She donned the sweater and a pair of gray wool slacks. She had just slipped into her shoes when she heard her doorbell ring. Immediately she tensed. Surely this wasn't her dad, not after the lecture she'd given him last year. You'd think that after five years, George Blackburn would get the fact that she needed to do this by herself.

Her bedroom window overlooked the front yard, so she glanced outside. The only car in her driveway was her white Mercedes convertible, a recent gift to herself for having won the Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting for her series on fraudulent charities. Nor did she see her father's eight-year-old Volvo station wagon at the curb. When the doorbell rang again, followed by three raps against the wood, a pause, then two additional raps, she relaxed. That was her next-door neighbor's usual knock.

Marsha Wells, the bubbly stay-at-home mother of a second-grader and a toddler, stood on the stoop. She began speaking the moment Cat answered the door. "You won't believe this. It's the most horrible thing."

Concerned, Cat waved her inside. "What happened? Are your kids okay?"

"They're fine. This isn't about us. I spoke to Janie from Paw Pals a few minutes ago. Boy, was she furious."

Janie Pemberton was the director of Paw Pals, the ca-

nine rescue organization that was another of Cat's volunteer causes. "Something to do with Paw Pals?"

"Indirectly. She says she's stumbled upon a dogfighting ring operating here in town. Some prominent people might be involved."

"With dogfighting?" Cat shook her head. Prominent people in this part of the world meant politicians. Politicians and prostitution she'd believe. Drugs wouldn't surprise her. But dogfighting? Other than child porn or murder, she couldn't think of anything that would derail a politician's career faster than being involved in dogfighting. "I don't believe it."

"She's convinced. And Janie is no fool. You know that."

Cat nodded. Janie was a dynamo of energy with a quick, intelligent mind.

Marsha continued. "I think you should call and talk to her about it, Cat. This could be right up your alley."

The old, familiar buzz that she experienced whenever a new story came her way shot through Cat, but she immediately dismissed it. Such things could wait. This was not the time. "Thanks for the tip. I'll call her this evening."

"Excellent." Her eyes gleaming with satisfaction, Marsha shifted the topic of conversation by giving Cat's outfit a once-over. "You're all dressed up. Looking gorgeous as always, I might add. How is it that you can wear red so well when you're a redhead? If I didn't like you so much I'd hate you."

"Thank you. I think."

"I thought you had an Arlington Ladies commitment today."

Cat frowned. She wouldn't have booked anything for today. "Why did you think that?"

"When I handed you my grocery shopping list last

night, I'd have sworn I saw 'cemetery flowers' written on yours."

Oh. Cat didn't know how to respond to that. She didn't like to lie, but Marsha didn't know anything about her past. Hardly anyone did. Luckily, she didn't need to respond because Marsha continued to talk.

"Thanks again for coming to my rescue. We were down to our last diaper, and I would never have heard the end of it if Aiden didn't have a banana for his breakfast this morning, but the thought of loading him into the car seat one more time . . ." Marsha shuddered dramatically.

"I was glad to help." And she was thrilled to avoid talk about cemetery flowers. "Speaking of rescue, how are things going at your house with your new foster? Is he settling in okay?"

"So far so good. He has an appointment at the vet tomorrow for heartworm treatment. How about you? Are you ready for your next baby?"

Inwardly, Cat winced. Today of all days, she didn't want to think of the dogs she fostered as babies. "Actually, I'm taking a break from fostering for a little while. I told Janie I'd help with the website and shelter visits and even do some sitting when our volunteers need help, but I'm trying to schedule some major remodeling so it's probably best I don't have dogs here full time."

"I know that Janie is thrilled to have you do anything you want to help out," Marsha said. "Don't take this the wrong way, Cat, but I'm so glad the newspaper laid you off."

"I'm not complaining. I like the freelance life more than I ever imagined. And the dogs who come to your house are lucky, too."

"I don't know about that." Exasperation wrinkled Marsha's brow. "Aiden keeps stealing their food. Fos-

ters at your house don't have to compete for their supper with an eleven-month-old kibble thief."

Cat worked to keep her smile on her face as she finished up the conversation. Once she'd shut the door safely behind Marsha, her smile faded. Tears stung her eyes and she blinked them away. "It's okay," she lectured herself aloud. "It's natural that the mention of Aiden breaks your heart today. Perfectly normal. Don't sweat it."

She pulled her coat from the closet, locked the front door, then went to the refrigerator where she removed a bouquet of yellow roses wrapped in green tissue. Five minutes later, she was on her way.

A cold, blustery wind buffeted the car and patches of snow clung to the shady spots beside the road. Cat cranked up the heater in her car. She listened to a classic rock station on the radio during the first half of her trip, but as she drew nearer to her destination, she switched off the noise and allowed silence to settle over her.

Had someone asked Cat what she thought about as she drove, she couldn't have said. She spent the trip clearing her mind and preparing her heart, and by the time she turned in to the entrance to the cemetery, she was as ready as she ever would be. Though she hadn't been to Rose Hill since this same day last year, she knew exactly where to go—the Angel Land section. She walked the rows of flat markers, knelt beside the grave she'd come to visit, then opened her mind to dreams she ordinarily kept locked away.

She imagined a toddler with dark curls playing with a fluffy white puppy. She pictured a preschooler with finger paint on her hands standing in front of a child-size easel. Next, it was a second-grader sitting in her lap and learning to read, then a fourth-grader coming up to bat at softball practice.

Today would have been Lauren Ann Davenport's fifth birthday.

Cat remained beside the grave for almost an hour. She reflected on her memories, said a few prayers, and allowed the tears to fall as she mourned those things that she had cherished and lost. When the moment felt right, she laid the bouquet of yellow roses below the marker, pressed a kiss to her fingertips, then touched the raised letters of the name recorded there. "Happy birthday, baby. I love you."

Cat Blackburn turned and walked away from the grave of her only child.

She never noticed the figure of the man who stood behind the shelter of a nearby evergreen, silently watching.

Five months later

"She calls that security?" Jack Davenport muttered with disgust, watching as the idiot wearing a shoulder holster flashed Cat Blackburn a smarmy grin.

Moments before, Cat's little Mercedes sports car had pulled in to the driveway of her home in a quiet suburban neighborhood. From inside her house, Jack noticed that the pretty-boy bodyguard hadn't paid any attention to the pool service truck parked next door in the Wellses' driveway. While it was true that the truck sported the same logo as the service used by the vacationing Wells family, any security guard worth his permit would check out the vehicle before allowing his charge to exit her car.

What surprised him was that Cat remained so oblivious. After all, she's the one whose house had been fire-bombed earlier this week. She should be more careful! It was almost as if she were daring the culprit to have another go at her.

It made Jack want to wring her neck. Right after he made the bodyguard pay for his inattention.

Jack had followed Cat and her escort from her home, to the dry cleaners, then a pet store, and finally to an animal shelter where she picked up a dog. The security loser never looked at Jack's ride twice. He was too busy checking out Cat's chest and ogling her ass.

Jack wanted to shoot him on principle. He'd seriously considered breaking bones—a leg would be good—in order to demonstrate to the incompetent jackass that a career move was in order. Doing so would be a public service. Instead, once the bug he'd planted in her car picked up the order she'd made for takeout at her favorite neighborhood Italian restaurant, an indication that she was finally headed home, he'd postponed his contemplated punishment and made his way to her house ahead of her.

Now, the sound of Cat's laughter drifted through the window he'd cracked open, and he set his teeth. She wore a flirty yellow sundress, strappy heeled sandals, and oversized sunglasses. She pulled a designer dog tote filled with a puffball of four-legged fur from the backseat of the Mercedes. Her wavy auburn hair was pulled up in a ponytail, and as she approached the house, she looked more like a coed than a woman in her mid-thirties who paid no more attention to her surroundings than did her sorry excuse for security.

No wonder Melinda had assigned this job to him. Cat Blackburn couldn't bat her pretty eyes and turn him into a worthless blob of testosterone. No, he was immune to the woman's admittedly significant appeal. He'd been vaccinated.

Beautiful, stubborn fool, he thought as he watched her pause halfway to the kitchen door, hand the dog to the bodyguard, and dig in her purse for her phone. Blithely, she stood right there out in the open and

double-thumbed out a text message. He had thought the woman had more sense than to leave herself exposed that way, but maybe not. After all, she'd managed to stir up a hornet's nest with her blog exposé about the dog-fighters.

The piece had gone live on the Internet three weeks ago. The day before yesterday, someone had firebombed her house. True, it hadn't been a big explosion, but fire was fire. Fire was serious business, and Jack knew that better than most. Luckily, she'd been sitting on the living room sofa when the Molotov cocktail sailed through the picture window and exploded in her dining room.

Imagining the moment, his stomach took a sick turn.

And what had been Cat's response? To hire protection who was more bodybuilder than bodyguard. What the hell was she thinking?

As much as he wanted to teach Mr. Ass-gazer a lesson, Jack knew he had to restrain the urge. This operation needed to be slick and quick. Better he stick to his original plan.

Though when the security guy reached up and playfully tugged Cat's ponytail, Jack reconsidered. Maybe one well-placed kick wouldn't hurt anything.

She dropped her phone back into her purse and resumed her stroll toward her kitchen door. Silent as a ghost, Jack moved past the brand-new dining room window and into the kitchen, taking up position. Waiting for her to slip her key into the lock, Jack realized with a touch of chagrin that his pulse pounded in a way that it rarely had on missions. Honesty made him admit that he worried more about dealing with Cat than he ever did about dying on the job.

Bodyguard Ken entered the kitchen ahead of her. "Idiot," Jack muttered as he took the man down and knocked him out with a pair of smooth, practiced, lightning-quick kicks.

He'd be lying if he denied the pleasure it gave him, or the satisfaction he felt when he plunged the hypodermic needle into Cat Blackburn's shoulder and she collapsed, unconscious, into his arms.

He used duct tape to secure the idiot guard, then lifted Cat over his shoulder and carried her to the garage, where he transferred her into the scroungy old SUV she used for hauling dogs as part of her work for the rescue group. As a precaution, he used the tape to bind her ankles and wrists and muffle her mouth. He'd gone heavy on the drug. The last thing he needed was to have her come to on the highway and cause a wreck.

He climbed into the driver's seat, then hesitated. What about the dog? He hadn't planned for that particular complication, but he liked dogs. For all he knew, Body-guard Bozo would wake up angry and take it out on the purse pet.

He went back and got the dog.

They exited the garage and the neighborhood without incident. Once they'd gained the beltway, he phoned Melinda. She answered on the first ring. "Yes?"

"I have her. We'll be wheels up within the hour."

"Excellent. The guard?"

"Is a tool. I put him on the sofa in the den."

"I'll take care of him." After a brief hesitation, she asked, "How is she, Jack?"

"Not a scratch on her. She'll have a slight headache when she wakes up, but we knew to expect that."

The relieved sigh was almost inaudible. "Yes. All right, then. Safe travels. You'll be in touch?"

"Absolutely." He hung up and made the rest of the trip to the airfield in silence. Though he concentrated on driving, he remained intensely aware of the woman slumped in the seat beside him and stole glances whenever traffic allowed.

She no longer looked like Coed Barbie. This was the

soft, slumbering Kitten he'd known and loved once upon a time.

Afternoon sunshine beamed through slatted wood blinds and woke Jack to the sound of the surf, the musty scent of sex, and soft snuffle of the naked woman lying next to him. He filled his lungs with air and a lazy grin stretched across his face. He couldn't ever recall feeling so . . . pleased.

Rolling up on his elbow, he watched her sleep. Cat was an apt name for her, he decided. Two hours ago, he'd watched her stride along the beach, sleek and strong, confident and utterly feminine in her next-to-nothing bikini. He'd been in their room on a phone call—an important work call—and he'd completely lost his train of thought. She stopped outside on the room's lanai and finished off her ice cream cone. She gazed into the room and licked her fingers, slowly, one by one.

Damned if he remembered hanging up the phone.

She was a tigress in bed—bold and adventurous and enthusiastic. When they mated, when he made her purr, she made him feel like the king of the jungle.

Now, though, relaxed and sated and drowsing, Cat was a soft, cuddly kitten.

Her eyes opened. Gorgeous soft green pools that he could drown in. She blinked once, twice, and when her gaze shifted and met his, she smiled. His heart swelled. My Kitten. My Cat.

Not anymore.

Driving the SUV, Jack took a corner a bit too sharply and her weight shifted. Her shoulder fell against him and he felt the heat of her like a brand. The truck cab was too small, his memories too big. He pushed her back where she belonged—far away from him—and returned his focus to the road.

Ten minutes later, she came to.

She tried to hide it, but he was too experienced to miss

the subtle signs of awakening. He wished he'd given her a stronger dose of the drug and kept her out until they'd left the city. Stupid of him to let his own dislike of the aftereffects of the drug guide him in this case. Even bound and gagged, she could cause him trouble. Hell, she'd caused him trouble when they occupied opposite hemispheres of the globe. Soothingly, he said, "Don't be afraid. I'm doing this to help you."

At the sound of his voice, her eyes flew open wide. Shock filled those familiar green eyes and color drained from her face.

Guilt slithered through him and sparked his temper. *What, she'd rather be abducted by a stranger?*

Knowing Cat, yeah, probably.

He gunned the engine and zipped around a slower-moving car. "Believe it or not, I'm still one of the good guys, Catherine."

This time, anyway.

In reaction, she shut her eyes and slumped back into her seat.

She didn't move or speak, and he said nothing more until he'd pulled the truck up next to the hangar and switched off the engine. "I'll be back in a moment. Behave."

He took the dog with him as he entered the hangar's side door. His longtime pilot saw him and turned away from the Citation jet, clipboard in hand. "Everything's ready on this end, Jack."

"Good." Jack handed over the dog and gave the man some last-minute instructions before returning to the truck and a fuming Catherine Ann Blackburn.

Had this been a real abduction he'd have carried her to the plane, but now that the time had come to hold her close, he found he didn't want to do it. The drug had worn off, and he wasn't ready for the intimacy. Dis-

gusted with himself, he yanked out his pocketknife and slashed the duct tape binding her ankles.

He took hold of her upper arm and when she went stiff, tugged her from the truck. The moment her feet hit the ground, the woman twisted in his grip, as slippery as an eel. Her eyes flashed. She made a growling noise in her throat.

Then she kned him in the junk. Hard.

Pain radiated through him and only the force of will kept him from dropping to his knees. As his grip on her arm loosened, she yanked herself free of him. But instead of fleeing, she stepped calmly toward the Citation, her three-inch heels clicking confidently against the concrete floor. Once he could breathe again, Jack cursed. Once he could move again, he hobbled off after her.

Jack eyed her long, lovely legs and scowled. The shoes had worked against her, and she obviously knew it. Had she not been wearing those ridiculous shoes, she could have dashed toward the more public buildings at this private airport and perhaps found help before he pulled himself up off the ground. Those shoes were something else Security Guard Ken should have cautioned her against.

With that, his temper reached the boiling point. He was as filled with fury as he'd been since . . . well . . . since Melinda told him someone had firebombed Cat's house. Gritting his teeth, he caught up with her. He scooped her up, threw her over his shoulder, and hauled her up the jet's staircase in a fireman's carry. Inside the fuselage, he tossed her into a seat with a curt "Stay!"

Her mouth said not a word, but the furious glare in her eyes spoke loud and clear.

Again, he drew his knife and sliced the tape that bound her hands. She could remove the tape from her mouth herself. "I sit up front during takeoff. After that, we'll talk. There's water there"—he pointed toward a

cabinet—“and the head is in back if you’d like to use it before takeoff. Be in your seat, buckled in, in five.”

He was halfway to the cockpit door when her voice stopped him cold. “Why am I not surprised to discover that you are still Melinda’s lapdog?”

Jack’s spine snapped straight and he stiffened. Melinda’s lapdog?

The barb struck that place deep within Jack’s heart where the doubts had always dwelt. Is that what she had thought of him, even when she professed to love him? Her mother’s lapdog?

Coldly furious, he glanced back over his shoulder and forced a smile. “You know, Cat, I don’t recall you being such a bitch when we were married.”

He slammed the cockpit door behind him with a bang.

Jack Davenport was back.

Cat sat buckled into her seat, a bottle of water clenched tightly in her fist, as the plane climbed. She couldn’t believe this was happening. And to think that she’d thought the day before yesterday had been crazy. Having a Molotov cocktail come smashing through her dining room window should have been the insane moment of the month, but oh no. That was just the beginning.

Now Jack Davenport was back.

She didn’t want to believe it. She’d never thought she’d see him again. She’d never *wanted* to see him again.

A little voice whispered in her head, *Liar*.

The nervous panic that had simmered inside her ever since she’d regained consciousness rolled to a boil. Maybe this man wasn’t Jack Davenport, she told herself, reaching desperately. Maybe she hadn’t recognized his voice, recognized the scent of him. Maybe this was all part of a nefarious plot against her and this guy was an impostor, an employee of the powerful senator she’d

ruined with her story or a crazed fan of the major league pitcher whose team had cut him loose after she'd proved he owned fighting dogs.

Yes. That's it! Jack isn't back. This isn't Jack!

After all, this man was bigger than Jack. He outweighed Jack by ten or fifteen pounds. Ten or fifteen pounds of muscle. Jack's shoulders weren't that broad. He'd never been fat, but he hadn't had a six-pack like this guy did, something she couldn't help but notice when his shirt rode up as he dumped her into the airplane's seat.

She chugged back a gulp of water as if it were whiskey. The real Jack had walked out on her four years ago and she hadn't heard a word from him since. For all she knew, the real Jack Davenport could be dead. He could be living in Timbuktu. She'd never tried to find him after the divorce was final. She might be an investigator by profession, but Jack Davenport was one individual she left alone. Been there, done that, got the broken heart.

This man wasn't Jack. He was an impostor. This man was Jack Davenport's doppelgänger.

And you are certifiable. Get a grip, Blackburn. Now is no time to be writing fiction.

She recognized his walk. She recognized his *scent*. She recognized his voice and his thick black hair and his strong jaw and the tiny little crook in his blade of a nose where he got hit with an elbow during a basketball game at her parents' house. She recognized his striking blue eyes.

Jack Davenport is back.

"No," she said, and it came out in a little moan. As the cockpit door opened, she softly added, "Oh, heaven help me."

"Sure, Celeste, put me down for as much as you need," her ex-husband said into a cell phone as he stepped into the main cabin. "It's a good cause."

No matter how much she'd like to pretend otherwise, he *was* Jack Davenport. No one else on earth had eyes like his, the crisp blue like a gas flame that, once upon a time, had burned with passion for her. Now when they settled on her, they were cold as ice.

"Sure," he said into the phone. "I will. Absolutely. All right. Good-bye, Celeste."

By the time he ended the call, Cat had decided that going on offense was her best defense. "What is this all about, Jack? I don't hear a word from you in over four years, and then you show up out of the blue one day, drug me, and abduct me? Why in the world would you do this?"

He looked hard. He looked formidable. He looked dangerous. She wasn't afraid of him physically, but emotionally, he scared her to death.

He smiled mirthlessly. "Your mom and dad asked me to."

Had she not been sitting down already, she would have fallen down. "Dad! You've talked to my dad?"

He nodded once.

Of course he had talked to her mother. But her dad? "When?"

Now he shrugged. "We talk from time to time."

What? "Since when?"

"You were with a guy named Alan the first time."

Cat sucked in a sharp breath. She'd dated Alan two years ago. Jack had been talking to Dad for two years? And he'd never bothered to mention that little detail to Cat? "You took my cell phone out of Peanut's carrier. I need it back, please."

"Why?"

"I need to call my father."

"Why?"

"He never said a word to me about your calls!"

"I asked him not to."

"So? He's *my* father. He should have told me!"

“I’m not giving you your phone.”

“Why not?”

For the first time in forever, she saw a genuine smile flash across his face. “You’ve been kidnapped. Kidnap victims don’t get to call their daddies.”

Oh, how I’ve missed that smile. Dismissing that disturbing thought, Cat lifted her chin. “Sure they do. I watch TV. It’s proof of life for the ransom.”

“But I’m not asking for ransom. Besides, your father already has proof of life—me. I’m your proof of life, Catherine. I’m going to keep you alive—in spite of yourself.”

She winced with chagrin. “I didn’t—”

“Sure you did,” he interrupted. “You ruined the career of two politicians, three sports stars, and a freaking *America Sings* winner with your little exposé.”

It wasn’t little, she wanted to point out. It had been a twenty-thousand-word series.

“As if that wasn’t enough,” Jack continued, “two of the names you tied to the dogs are also connected to the mob. I’m surprised these guys started with arson. You’re lucky you weren’t taken out in a drive-by shooting the day the story came out.”

He put her on the defensive and she didn’t like it. “I took precautions.”

“Sure you did. I took out your ‘precaution’ with a couple of kicks. Where did you get that sorry excuse for a bodyguard anyway? Who recommended him?”

Cat figured he didn’t need to know that her hairdresser had recommended the agency, and that she had already decided she needed someone less . . . flirtatious.

She folded her arms and crossed her legs. “Look, I can understand why my parents might have been concerned, but why didn’t they just talk to me about it? Why bring you into it?”

Jack waited, obviously debating with himself. Half a

minute ticked by before he responded. "Because there is a slight chance this wasn't about you. It's remotely possible that this was a warning."

A warning? About what? To whom? But as soon as the question formed, she knew the answer. *Melinda*. "A warning to my mother."

"We have a situation. Your mother has been tugging on some threads in-house. People are feeling threatened."

"What sort of threads?" she asked, though she knew he wouldn't answer. Officially, her mother was what she called "a run-of-the-mill bureaucrat" at the CIA. She'd never hidden the fact of where she worked, but she'd always been quick to say that every organization needed an HR department and that somebody had to process benefit plan paperwork. Cat had always known there was more to Melinda Blackburn's job than that. HR department personnel didn't attend meetings at the White House or make extended trips overseas. Or, for that matter, recruit subordinates the likes of Jack Davenport. "Is my mother in danger?"

"She's taking precautions. She's seeing that your father is protected, too."

"Good." Cat was concerned about her father. He was a brilliant man who too often got lost in his thoughts and forgot his surroundings. If someone was targeting Melinda Blackburn's family, Dad would have a bull's-eye on his back, for sure. He needed protection. Skilled protection. "Why aren't you watching over Dad?"

Again, Jack hesitated. "Actually, I volunteered for that job."

Okay. Well. That certainly put her in her place, didn't it? "But Dad asked you to look after me instead."

"Yes."

"And Melinda agreed to it?"

"She insisted on it."

This boggled Cat's mind. Her mother had never liked Cat's relationship with Jack. She'd just about blown a gasket when they eloped, and she'd been the one with a divorce lawyer's name at the ready the moment paperwork arrived from Jack.

"Since she knows your medical records, she even gave me the knockout drug to use on you," he added. "She knew which one would be safest."

"There is nothing like a mother's love, is there?"

His gaze cut sharply to hers and for a long, awkward moment, a ghost hung between them. Cat quickly changed the subject. "I thought you had transferred to a different department and were stationed overseas."

A brow arched above ice-blue eyes. "You checked up on me?"

"Absolutely not. Melinda mentioned you a time or two."

His smirk suggested he didn't believe her, but Cat was telling the truth. On two separate occasions, Melinda had made it known that Jack was no longer based in D.C. She'd said that she feared that Cat had still carried a torch for Jack, and she'd wanted to make sure her daughter knew that no reconciliation was in the cards.

The only thing Cat carried where her ex was concerned was a grudge. Melinda could have saved her breath. "Of course, I know better than to believe anything she says if it concerns her work. I figure it's a fifty-fifty chance that you're still her golden boy."

"As opposed to her lapdog?" he asked, a winter's chill in his voice.

She opened her mouth to apologize—it had been an uncharacteristically snotty remark—but she stopped herself. The man had drugged and abducted her, after all. Neither he nor her parents had bothered to present their case and request her cooperation before setting such high-handed plans in motion.

That's because they all know you better than that. They know you wouldn't have agreed to go to the grocery store with Jack Davenport, much less . . . "Where are you taking me?"

"A place I own. It's called Eagle's Way."

Eagle's Way? Eagle was his code name. She wasn't supposed to know it, but she'd overheard a phone call of her mother's one time and the context made it clear that she'd been talking about Jack. "How long?"

"That's impossible to know right now."

"I need to be home on Sunday." She nodded toward the dog who slept peacefully in her carrier belted into a seat opposite the aisle. "I am only sitting Peanut until her owner comes home after the Fourth of July holiday."

"That's not your dog? You got her from the pound."

"You followed me to the shelter?"

"I followed you the entire morning. Bodyguard Ken was worthless."

Bodyguard Ken? "The dog belongs to a sick little girl named Megan who is going to a cancer camp in the Adirondacks. I promised her I'd watch Peanut like a hawk and that she'd be waiting for Megan when she gets home."

Jack shut his eyes and mouthed a curse. "What day does the kid get home?"

"Sunday night."

"All right. I'll make sure the dog is waiting for her."

"The dog and me?"

"The dog. I'll make the decision about when you go back at the appropriate time."

He'll make that decision? Cat had the urge to go six-year-old on him and stick out her tongue and say, *You're not the boss of me.*

"We're going off the map for a little while, Cathe-

rine,” he continued. “You might as well sit back and enjoy it.”

Enjoy it? With you around? Yeah, right. “Off the map? Where exactly are you taking me, Jack? Mars?”

Again, he showed her a real smile. “Not Mars, but it is a little bit out of this world, I’ll admit. We’re going to the mountains, Cat. Near a little town in Colorado called Eternity Springs.”

Sale of this book without a front cover may be unauthorized. If this book is coverless, it may have been reported to the publisher as “unsold or destroyed” and neither the author nor the publisher may have received payment for it.

Nightingale Way is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the author’s imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

A Ballantine Books Mass Market Original

Copyright © 2012 by GERALYN DAWSON WILLIAMS

Excerpt from *Reflection Point* by Emily March copyright © 2012 by GERALYN DAWSON WILLIAMS

All rights reserved.

Published in the United States by Ballantine Books, an imprint of The Random House Publishing Group, a division of Random House, Inc., New York.

BALLANTINE and colophon are registered trademarks of Random House, Inc.

This book contains an excerpt from the forthcoming book *Reflection Point* by Emily March. This excerpt has been set for this edition only and may not reflect the content of the forthcoming edition.

ISBN: 978-0-345-52878-0

eBook ISBN: 978-0-345-53600-6

Cover design: Lynn Andreozzi

Cover illustration: Robert Steele

Printed in the United States of America

www.ballantinebooks.com

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Ballantine mass market edition: September 2012

ALSO BY EMILY MARCH

Mistletoe Mine
Angel's Rest
Hummingbird Lake
Heartache Falls
Lover's Leap

Books published by The Random House Publishing Group are available at quantity discounts on bulk purchases for premium, educational, fund-raising, and special sales use. For details, please call 1-800-733-3000.