

A Daughter to Die for



The Somewhere Aching Series
book one

TANYA MADSEN

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Chapter 12

Judith

After taking her statement, Salviati said,

“I’ll have to get your sister’s statement too. Wait here,” he cautioned, then joined his partner, who was pointing out the tire in the ditch.

She studied Salviati in the flashing lights as they conversed. He looked intelligent and serious about his job. It was raining again as he ran a hand through his hair. Those large, steady hands and, better yet, no wedding ring. He folded his arms, and his biceps were huge. Judith had always lusted after slim guys with deep-set eyes, wispy goatees and wild hair. This cop was muscular, with soulful eyes, clean-shaven and short hair. Probably straitlaced too. Keeper of the peace. A regular Boy Scout. She figured he was her worst nightmare—someone who wouldn’t condone underage drinking or smoking pot and who lived with his mother. And still, she couldn’t stop staring.

Salviati broke into laughter as his partner relayed a witty anecdote, and she nearly swooned. So damn gorgeous. How could this guy be hiding out in the sticks? How did he end up being a cop? Salviati followed his partner down into the ditch.

Judith felt suddenly irritated. They didn’t seem to be taking her situation seriously. She needed to do something about that.

Holding up her damp gown, she picked her bare feet over the stones and frozen wet dirt, water pooling into her cleavage.

"I think we were sabotaged," Judith yelled, and they both turned.

Salviati shook his head, and she caught his partner's smirk as Salviati sprang out of the ditch and took her by the arm to lead her back to the car.

"Miss, let us do our job. Wait for the ambulance, okay? You don't need to be walking around like this." Pointing to her bare feet. "It's freezing and wet."

"You don't understand. Someone at the wedding did this. It might have even been someone my dad paid to get rid of her! Who knows? He's an asshole, and we were at his wedding to the woman he cheated on my mom with. He's guilty as hell. Please! Listen! Find those tire thingies. I bet they will show signs of being damaged. No wheel falls off like that! Someone planned to take my mother!" she was shrieking now.

"Miss, you need to calm down." Salviati tried to drag her towards the car, but she dug her feet in and refused to move.

"You aren't going to find her, are you? My mom will be just another missing person's report! Like all those people on TV documentaries. You've got to do something now!" she screamed and grabbed the front of his shirt frantically. Murderous rage slid through her. She wanted to fight, to break someone's head open. She wanted to kill the man who did this.

Salviati removed her hands, holding them firmly in his. He was like a radiator generating serious heat. He sternly replied, "I said calm down."

Another wave of dizziness hit her, but for an entirely different reason. Her soul went sideways as the hands of fate steadied her.

“Miss Monroe,” Salviati addressed her like the father she once had. “Don’t make me take you down to the station. You don’t seem like someone who would enjoy a night in a jail cell for assaulting a police officer. Please, I realize you’re distressed but also in shock. And shock makes people do crazy things.”

Judith gazed up at him, and a hunger so acute devoured her from the inside out. She was ripped apart by her mom’s abduction as much as consumed by her sudden feelings for this guy. It was all too much. Judith wrenched out of his grasp and rolled towards the ditch, sobbing. A bush tangled against her gown. She didn’t care.

Wordlessly, Salviati scooped her up as if she were a pillow. Judith had never been picked up by a guy before. She was way too independent for that. But she wanted this cop. And even more, she wanted him to save her. She wrapped her arms around his neck and buried her face in his collar.

“You don’t understand. I’m a horrible daughter. I treat my mom like shit and I know it. Now she’s gone, and it’s my fault. I’ll never see her again. I’ll never be able to apologize!”

Judith watched the lights from the ambulance approaching.

“We all do horrible stuff from time to time. Now is not the time to think about that. Will you please be patient? We have a crime scene to deal with here and don’t need you contaminating it. If the perpetrator left even a shred of evidence, we’ll find it. He won’t get away with this. Got it?”

Judith inhaled his scent. A heavenly mix of woodsy and mechanical, very masculine. She wanted to kiss him so badly. Salviati was generating such an intense magnetic attraction, spinning her crazy in love after knowing him for less than twenty minutes.

Salviati set her down in her car as the ambulance pulled up,

then took off. The EMTs rushed to care for her and Lizzy. They gave them emergency blankets and checked their vitals. Judith's blood pressure was high, so they escorted her to the back of the ambulance and had her lie on a gurney while they treated her for shock. Gave her water to drink and put socks on her frozen feet.

A cop, introducing himself as Detective Finley, arrived. He came over and asked her the same questions as Salviati. Once again, she felt mortified for admitting she had fallen asleep instead of helping her mom. His eyes judged her, and she wanted to scream in her defense. The wedding was awful and exhausting. Of course, she immediately crashed out!

"Have you found anything? Any evidence?" Judith demanded.

"We're gathering it as we speak. It's muddy, and they left clean shoe prints and tire tread, so we're taking photos now. Looks like they backed up and turned around."

"How are tires going to tell you anything? Every car has tires," she replied flippantly, then added, "are you going to go and question the guests? They're all getting drunk at the reception. Soon they won't be able to stand. Someone must have seen something."

"What makes you so sure it was someone from the wedding?"

"Don't you guys all go off of motive? What stranger would have it in for my mom?"

"You'd be surprised. There are tons of cases of people getting abducted when their car breaks down, likely by a stranger."

"You can bet it was one of those assholes," she fumed, pointing in the direction she thought the lodge might be located.

"Honestly, I'm not sure we are dealing with an abduction. Your mom might have hitched a ride. And tires can fall off on their own, you know."

Finley walked away. Judith was irate. Why weren't there more cops? Why weren't they out arresting possible suspects? This was taking forever!

Salviati walked up to the back of the ambulance, his arms folded in front of him and his legs spread as if trying to put distance between them, looking every bit like a cop.

"I found a lug nut."

"That's what they are called!" She laughed, smacking her forehead. Tire thingies? He must think she was an idiot.

"An ill-fitting tool stripped it. And there's only one. Where are the other four? Good job, detective," he added shyly. Sunshine ripped through her. This attractive police man was flirting with her!

"Will you please do something for me?" Judith tried to sound as demure as possible. "Will you keep me informed of any developments regarding this case?"

"Ah, Detective Finley will be your best bet. I just take down reports. He does the actual investigating."

"But I want you to do it." She didn't try to be coy. She desperately wanted to talk to this cop again.

"I'll see what I can do." He nodded and walked off.

Judith hopped down from the ambulance. A tow truck arrived, and they decided the car was drivable as they put the tire back on her mom's car. They removed one lug nut from the other three tires, secured the tire that had fallen off, and recommended that she have the car serviced first thing. She nodded distractedly and tasted her breath. Yuk. Reached into the cup holder, grabbed a container of Tic Tacs, and crunched a few down. She was starving and had the urge to swallow the whole container of minty candies.

Standing next to the car, she surveyed the scene. The damp

soaked through her socks, but she needed to search. That detective wasn't gonna do anything! There had to be evidence they missed proving her mom would never leave them like this, and she would find it. She slipped past the patrol cars and continued into the darkness, scanning the ground for anything. Maybe he dropped something, or her mom left a clue. Something!

Thirty feet away, she glanced back at the vehicles with their flashing lights, reminding her of parades. One in particular, where she rode the float as the beauty queen for some contest or another. It had been the highlight of her life for years, but now it seemed stupid and pointless. She saw Salviati glance her way, and she stepped down into the ditch to hide. If the cops could search for clues, well, so could she.

The slope was gentle, but the ground was soft and unstable. She sank into the dirt at the bottom of the ditch. Completely hidden from the road, now she peered around. On top of a nearby bush, she caught a sparkle of something and gasped. Turning around to rush back up the hill, she ran smack into Officer Salviati, who looked very annoyed.

"Miss, you need to return to your car and stay there." He pointed down the road and snapped his finger.

"I want to search too!" she cried, hands on her hips, pouting.

He ran his hands through his hair and made a sound of frustration.

"Please. Do as I say. I don't want to have to—"

"What? Arrest me? That detective doesn't even think someone abducted her. I have to find some evidence, or he won't look for her!"

"Get back to the car. Now." He flushed angrily, and Judith fluttered with delight at his emotional outburst.

“Fine. I’ll go. But first, you need to tell me your name.” Judith sucked at flirting. Brusque and direct, when she wanted something, she went for it.

Salviati stood above her, staring down, his eyes roving all over her. He couldn’t hide it.

“Uh.” Taken off guard and flustered, he stammered, “it’s Justin. Justin Salviati.”

“Well, Justin, thank you for being so kind to me.” She smiled at him adoringly.

“Of course. It’s my job.” He was definitely nervous now.

Judith wobbled as she tried to step up the incline, and he held out a hand to help her. He was so close. Practically begging her to do the most daring thing she had ever tried in her almost twenty years. More thrilling than all her beauty pageants combined. Grabbing him by those impressive shoulders, she pulled him down to her as she stood on tiptoes and kissed him. She didn’t care if he was a cop and this was breaking the law. He was the most beautiful man she had ever seen, and she wasn’t about to let him go without him knowing it.

To her shock and amazement, he didn’t shove her away. Sugar to her spice, he melted against her mouth like milk chocolate. Judith had kissed a fair number of guys. Nothing like this. His arms balanced her, holding her to him. Lips soft and unhurried, her whole body melted into Zen. Usually, make-out sessions with her quickly evolved into speed sex. This could last forever. He tasted like warm sunny days in the back of a pickup truck, although she didn’t know what that felt like.

The rain fell steadily, trickling down their faces, and she pulled away, trembling. Even in the dark, she could see that he was so red-faced that she wanted to kiss him again. Salviati grinned at her sheepishly.

"Don't tell my partner, or I'm finished," he replied in a low voice.

"You're not going to arrest me for assaulting a police officer?"

"If I arrest you, it won't be to take you down to the station, that's for sure. I've gotta get. I shouldn't have followed you down here, but wow, that was some thank you."

"More than a thank you, it's an invitation."

"I can't accept any invitations." He was firm but betrayed himself with an iceberg-melting smile.

"You have to. I won't take no for an answer," she demanded. "And promise to call me."

"After this, you may not be able to get rid of me." He whispered, and his words rolled through her like a hot body massage.

Judith placed her hands on his chest and frankly confessed.

"You are gorgeous, Salviati, like some real-life Captain America. I have never met a guy like you in all my life."

She held his gaze, slid her hands apart, wrapped her arms around his waist, and hugged him. He hesitated, then leaned down and kissed her again. Passion ignited in a frenzy, and Judith moaned with delight, which led to touching, faster kissing, and more touching until he pulled away.

"I gotta go. Jones will wonder what the hell is going on."

"Wait. I found something." She took his hand so naturally that she couldn't imagine a world now in which she was unable to touch him. "Here." She pointed to the comb lying on top of the bush. "My mom was wearing it tonight. Someone must have tossed it when they took her. It's proof, isn't it?"

He gasped, "go back to your car and we'll take care of this."

Judith trudged up the hill and rushed back into the light to find Detective Finley.

"I found my mom's hair comb lying in the ditch. It's proof! Someone threw it there! Probably one of my dad's creepy friends who obsessed over her for years. My mom is gorgeous and sad, and like every guy at the wedding, was checking her out. Please! Go up to the lodge and investigate the guests. They are all spending the night, but someone left early. I know it! Maybe they have cameras and you can catch whoever followed us!"

He nodded distractedly and headed in the direction from which Salviati was coming. The wheel was reattached to her car, and their vehicle was now fit to drive. The tow truck was leaving. Judith plopped into the driver's seat, reliving every microsecond of their kiss. And then the second kiss, which quickly included his tongue and how his hands eagerly cupped her breasts, followed the contour of her hourglass figure to circle her slim waist. How she stroked his biceps down to his hips, then around back to cradle his butt. Every second was priceless. She was never going to sleep again until his body was lying next to hers. In the horror of this nightmare, she met someone she knew would change her life forever.

Fifteen minutes later, Salviati walked up to her. Judith had the engine running and the heat blasting. She looked up at him eagerly.

"We've gathered all the evidence we're likely to find. Great job finding the comb. Are you lucky or what?"

"Tonight, I lost everything and immediately struck gold." She said it with meaning. "Now I just go home? Leave? How do I do this? It's like I'm giving up." Choking back a sob, she covered her face, unwilling to drive away without her mom.

"This has got to be brutal. I can't imagine."

"I have to find her." Judith's lips tightened with determination.

“Miss Monroe—”

“Judith.” She smiled at him. “Call me Judith.”

He glanced from side to side to see if anyone was standing within earshot.

“Judith. Let us do our jobs. We will find her.”

His eyes, oh man, were blazing with interest. In her! Judith realized she had thrown a match on a field covered in gasoline, and there was nothing but fire between them now. Why did she kiss him? Judith never chased any guy. They all chased her! She had her pick and grew bored with them quickly because they were all the same: vain, entitled, lazy, horny little brats like her. This cop wouldn’t care about her history of beauty pageants or future modeling plans. He lived in the real world, and for the first time in her life, Judith was eager to join him there.

“Listen,” he said under his breath, “I shouldn’t. God, I hope they don’t fire me for this. I’ll call you tomorrow. Hopefully, I’ll have an update on the case.”

“If you don’t, I’m gonna come down to your station and stalk you.”

“And make me file another report?” His smile shot through her like a dozen of Cupid’s arrows. “Good night. Drive safe.” He shut her car door.

Judith entered home into the navigation system. She paused and watched Salviati speak to the detective, starving for something she couldn’t define but knew he had in spades. She slowly pulled forward then headed home.

Her mind was racing. Lizzy was in a stupor. She barely spoke ten words for a statement. Judith had no idea what to do. Lizzy was a mama’s girl. How would she wake up tomorrow without mom or return to school on Monday? This was a living hell.

Instead of reliving the nightmare, Judith replayed their kiss all the way home and imagined so many delicious fantasies about this cop that she was sure she'd never fall asleep.

At the condo, she dragged Lizzy inside and up to her bed. She rushed to her room, grabbed her phone and opened her Facebook app. She searched until she found the right Justin Salviati, the cop with that gorgeous smile, and fired off a friend request. Was she being too forward? Of course she was! There were times in life when being passive would not get you what you wanted. She remembered his warm eyes and even warmer body, and felt like she was growing wings.

Disappointed that he didn't accept it immediately, Judith flew into the bathroom, removed her torn and filthy dress, and cleaned and moisturized her face. She brushed her hair and her teeth. Years of being beautiful taught her never to shirk her routine. As she crawled into bed, she checked again. To her delight, Justin was now listed as one of her friends.

As she drifted off, she took a long stroll down fantasy lane. How their first time would go, what she would be wearing, where they would be—every detail. Finding her mom and saving the day. Murdering the person who took her. Maybe she wasn't supposed to be just a beautiful girl after all. Perhaps she could be what the pastor said she was.

A daughter to die for.



About the Author

Tanya Madsen is an author whose work explores the emotional fault lines between love, trauma, and human resilience. Known for her deeply character-driven narratives, she writes stories that examine the complicated bonds between women, the shadows of family history, and the dangerous ways desire and memory shape our lives.

Born in the Chicagoland area and raised across the American West, Tanya grew up in a household marked by unpredictability, finding safety in the pages of the stories she loved. Those early experiences now form the emotional backbone of her fiction.

Before becoming an author, she spent years working in call centers and factories while raising four children, eventually earning a degree in English and Technical Writing. Her path to storytelling was shaped by grit, reinvention, and a lifelong pull toward the written word.

Today, she lives in Northern Utah with her husband, four grown children, and beloved fur babies. Her novels blend psychological depth with literary romantic elements, offering readers intimate, haunting stories about the women who

survive the past—and the love that both wounds and heals them.

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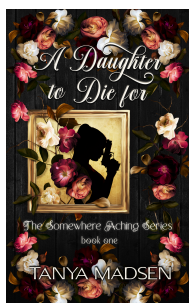
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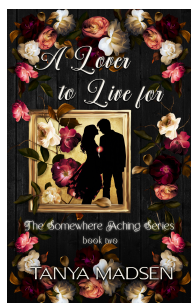
A fractured family. A dangerous man. Two women bound by the wounds they carry—and the choices that could save or destroy them.

When Nicolas Winters abducts Martha, a compassionate therapist still grieving the collapse of her family, he believes he's reclaiming the love he lost. Instead, he draws her into a world shaped by buried trauma and generational secrets, where the past presses in with a force she can no longer outrun.

Martha's daughter, Judith, has spent years trying to escape the violence that marked her childhood. Now, with her mother missing, she must face the man who shattered their family—and the parts of herself she's never dared to confront. Working alongside Justin, a steady, quietly magnetic police officer, Judith is forced to decide whether she can trust someone enough to let them in, or if survival means holding on to the darkness she knows.

Across rural landscapes and emotional fault lines, their lives collide in a story about the long shadow of trauma, the dangerous pull of obsession, and the fragile hope of rebuilding what was broken. *A Daughter to Die For* explores how women survive the men who shape them—and what it costs to reclaim their own narratives.

A tense, atmospheric blend of psychological drama and literary romantic fiction, this is Book One of *The Somewhere Aching Series*, where love is complicated, healing is nonlinear, and the past is never truly buried.



A Lover to Live For - book two in The Somewhere Aching Series

A story of fractured love, buried wounds, and the dangerous pull of the past.

Judith is trying to build a life that feels steady after years of chaos, but the men who shaped her trauma aren't easily left behind. Justin—once her safe place—grows cold and punishing as jealousy takes root. And when Nicolas, unraveling and unable to let her go, reappears, Judith slips into a secret connection that threatens everything she's tried to rebuild.

A trip to Mexico brings Judith and Nicolas face-to-face again, reigniting a bond as destructive as it is familiar. Meanwhile, her sister Lizzy seizes the moment to rewrite her own story, no matter who gets hurt.

As loyalties fracture and old patterns tighten their grip, Judith must confront the truth she's avoided: some loves heal, some loves haunt, and some loves can ruin you.

A Lover to Live For is a tense, atmospheric novel of trauma, desire, and the emotional inheritance that binds a family across generations—Book Two of *The Somewhere Aching Series*, where love is complicated, healing is nonlinear, and the past is never truly buried.



A Future to Fight For - book three in The Somewhere Aching Series

Some futures must be fought for—especially the ones we’re told we don’t deserve.

Eighteen months after their painful goodbye, Judith and Nicolas reunite at a family wedding in Hawaii, where old wounds rise quickly to the surface. Judith is trapped in a relationship that has grown increasingly controlling, while Nicolas—newly sober and fighting for the man he hopes to become—fears the past he shares with her is too tangled to escape.

As the fractured family gathers, tensions simmer. Lizzy pursues her own advantage, Martha confronts ghosts she thought she’d outrun, and Judith and Nicolas slip back into a connection that never truly died. Their reunion exposes the fault lines running through their lives, threatening the fragile peace each of them has tried to build.

When Judith’s partner refuses to let her go, she must decide whether to remain in the darkness that has shaped her—or fight for the fragile hope of something better.

A Future to Fight For is a tense, emotional novel about trauma, desire, and the difficult work of breaking free from the past—Book Three of *The Somewhere Aching Series*, where love is complicated, healing is nonlinear, and the heart’s reckoning is never gentle.

