



Evidence of Passion (Shadow Agents Series Book 7)

By Cynthia Eden

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But first he has to stop the madman obsessed with Rachel. Ex-SEAL Dylan has the skills and determination to meet every danger the twisted assassin can unleash. A relationship has never had a place in his life...until he senses Rachel wants him as badly as he wants her.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Cynthia Eden is a *New York Times* and *USA Today* best-selling author. She writes dark tales of romantic suspense and paranormal romance. Her books have received starred reviews from Publishers Weekly, and was named a 2013 RITA® finalist for best romantic suspense. Cynthia lives in the Deep South, loves horror movies, and has an addiction to chocolate. More information about Cynthia may be found at www.cynthiaeden.com.

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As a rule, the EOD didn't usually handle routine murder investigations.

The EOD—the Elite Operations Division—was an off-the-books covert unit that Uncle Sam liked to pretend didn't exactly exist. The men and women in the EOD were all ex-military. They were lethal, well-trained agents who specialized in hostage rescue and unconventional warfare.

A murder in D.C. shouldn't necessarily catch their attention.

But this was no ordinary murder. And it was far from a routine case.

Dylan Foxx slipped past the cops who waited in the hallway of the high-rise hotel, a hotel that was situated just a few blocks away from Pennsylvania Avenue. They were on the top floor of the hotel, and the cops had all gathered around suite 706. Dylan's boss, Bruce Mercer, had made sure he'd get access to this room. Bruce Mercer controlled most of D.C. from behind the scenes. A puppet master, always pulling the strings.

Dylan entered the room and surveyed the area. The murder victim lay sprawled near the bed. His blood had pooled and darkened the lush carpet. *One shot to the heart.*

Dylan recognized the victim. Hank J. Patterson. Patterson had been a military judge, one of the most respected on the bench.

Patterson spent over fifteen years as an active soldier, but the man hadn't been able to fight back against his attacker. He lay there, no signs of defensive wounds on him, as the scent of death deepened in the suite.

Dylan heard a sharply indrawn breath behind him, and he turned to see Rachel Mancini staring down at the body. Her blue eyes were wide with horror.

He immediately moved to try and block her view. "What are you doing here?" Dylan demanded as fury and fear twisted within him. Because in Patterson's blood, Dylan had seen something—something that triggered a long-held rage within him.

Rachel blinked in surprise. Her hair, a dark curtain of silk, brushed against her jaw as she gave a little shake of her head. "I'm following orders. Mercer called and told me to get down here." She straightened her shoulders. "I'm your teammate, remember?"

As if he could forget. When it came to Rachel, there was never any forgetting for him.

"Where you go," she added, her gorgeous eyes meeting his, "I follow."

But he didn't want her following him into this mess. Rachel could handle danger, he got that, it was just—*I don't want her here. Not on this case. I need her to be safe.*

"That's Hank Patterson," she said, nodding. "I worked with him back when I was a Judge Advocate."

Before Rachel had traded her courtroom days for a life of secrecy with the EOD.

"I've seen plenty of bodies before—you know that," Rachel told Dylan, arching one dark brow. "So just drop the protective routine, okay? Let's get to work."

That was one of his problems. When it came to Rachel, all of his protective instincts went into overdrive. Actually, *most* of his primal instincts did. There was just something about her...

Dylan didn't move. His gaze swept over Rachel's face. Glass-sharp cheekbones, golden skin, full, plump lips. And her eyes—they could bring a man to his knees.

Beautiful. He'd thought that from the first moment he saw her—even though she'd been terrified at the time. Terrified, but still so brave as she held that gun in her shaking grip.

Rachel was one of the strongest women he'd ever met.

Dylan's boss at the EOD agreed with that assessment, which was why the guy had brought Rachel into the fold.

But while Mercer only saw her strength, lately, Dylan was seeing more of Rachel's vulnerability. She could be hurt so easily. Just as she'd been hurt a few months before when one of the EOD's own agents had turned against them.

Rachel had wound up in the hospital and Dylan—for a few minutes there, he'd lost control. When he'd thought Rachel might die, he'd spiraled into a pit of fear that had left him feeling—

"Dylan?" Rachel's voice was soft. Worried. "What's happening?" Her hand lifted and touched his arm.

As always, her touch sent an electric shock right through his system.

"Mercer..." His voice came out too gravelly, so Dylan tried again, saying, "Mercer didn't tell you why we were being called in?"

"Patterson is military," she said, bringing her body even closer to his. Her scent—the sweet scent reminded him of roses—wrapped around him. "I figured he wanted us to take lead because of—"

"Hank Patterson was executed," Dylan said, breaking through her words. Of course, leave it to Mercer to force this reveal on Dylan. The next bit of news he had to share would wreck Rachel's world, he knew it would. And he hated that he had to put her through more pain.

After a brutal attack by a rogue agent, Rachel had only just been cleared to return to work. She'd left one nightmare, and now she was walking straight into another one.

If he had his way, he'd protect Rachel from anything and everything out there—and from one twisted man in particular.

Still frowning at Dylan, Rachel slipped past him. He noticed that she was careful not to touch anything in the suite. After her time prosecuting, Rachel knew better than to contaminate a crime scene.

She knelt next to the body. Her gaze swept over Patterson. Dylan easily read the sorrow on her face. Then her attention locked on Patterson's wound.

On the blood near him. On what was *in* that blood.

"That's a playing card," Rachel said. Her words shook. Her golden skin had just turned pale. Her head tilted so that she could look up at him, and her eyes were wild with emotion. "Tell me, *tell me that it's not him!*"

Because the EOD was well acquainted with one particular assassin who always left a playing card behind. *Jack.*

Rachel, in particular, was intimately acquainted with the man.

Dylan had gloves on his hands and, carefully, using tweezers, he bent and turned over the playing card so that both he and Rachel could see the face.

The Jack of Hearts stared back up at him.

Rachel surged to her feet. "*No.*" Her denial was immediate.

He'd expected that denial.

Dylan turned to the tech who waited silently just a few feet away. He passed the card to the tech. It was bagged and tagged immediately. That evidence would be going back to the EOD for analysis.

As for Rachel.

She hurried from the room.

Dylan didn't follow her, not yet. He stared down at the body then he let his gaze sweep the suite once more. There had been no evidence of a break-in. But that was the way Jack worked. In and out. Fast kills.

And a calling card left behind. The guy always left his card because he liked to claim his kills.

Dylan stayed a few more minutes, needing to be thorough. Crime-scene analysis sure wasn't his area of expertise, but killing— Well, he'd learned plenty about that during his time as a Navy SEAL and as an EOD agent.

He knew he was looking at the work of a professional killer. The man had used a silencer because no one at the hotel had reported hearing a shot. The maid had received a horrifying surprise when she bustled inside to clean the place that morning.

After giving orders to the tech, Dylan exited the room. He wasn't particularly surprised to see Rachel pacing

in the hotel's hallway.

When she'd rushed out, he knew that she wouldn't have gone far. That wasn't Rachel's way.

But they didn't speak until they were in the privacy of the elevator. The doors slid closed and Rachel—

"Why didn't you tell me?" Pain thickened her voice.

He *hated* for Rachel to be in pain. His fist struck out, and he hit the button that would stop the elevator. Immediately, they jerked to a halt.

"If you thought he might be back in D.C....*why didn't you tell me?"* she demanded again.

Dylan turned toward her. Rachel's eyes were so wide—*she 'll bring me to my knees*. He locked his jaw and knew he had to stay in control. "I didn't know he was hunting here again. Patterson's death—this is the first time any kill in D.C. has been linked to Jack in three years."

Three long years.

But now that Dylan did know Jack was back...his first instinct was to get Rachel the hell out of that city. He wanted her transferred to someplace safe and sunny while he hunted the maniac known as Jack.

Because Jack will go after her.

"It's not him, is it?" Rachel asked as she rubbed her arms. "It has to be a copycat, right? I mean, three years ago, his exploits were all over the news. Everyone knows about him now."

Jack. The man wasn't a serial killer, at least not in the strict sense of the word. He was an assassin. One who killed for cash.

He was a man with far too much skill when it came to death.

"Tell me that he's a copycat," Rachel said.

He wished he could. Dylan took a step closer to her. He wanted to pull Rachel into his arms and hold her, but that wasn't protocol. He was the team leader. They worked together, side by side. They fought together.

Their relationship was supposed to be professional.

To him, it was so much more.

"Dylan?"

"I can't tell you that. At this point, I don't know who we're dealing with."

"Jack vanished three years ago. After—" Her lips clamped shut, and Rachel didn't say any more. But she didn't have to. He knew her past as well as he knew his own.

Jack had been hired to kill Rachel. Quincy Langam had hired the assassin to kill Rachel and two others

who'd been associated with Quincy's case. Two of those people on Langam's kill list had wound up with gunshot wounds to the heart.

Only Rachel had survived.

And Jack disappeared.

"We have intel... Mercer has intel that indicates Jack may have been killing in Europe during the past few years." And leaving his trademark calling card behind. "EOD agents were sent over there—"

"I should have been told!" Now spikes of red color stained her cheeks as anger glinted in her eyes.

Dylan didn't touch that one. He'd been the one to tell Mercer that Rachel *shouldn't* know. "They weren't sure. No one saw the killer to confirm his identity."

"I'm the only one who survived Jack's attack. I should've been there. I could've done something!"

Or Jack could have just come for her.

Again, Dylan found himself sliding even closer to her.

"He eluded the EOD agents in Europe, and now...now it looks like he's come home to do his hunting again."

If they truly were dealing with Jack, the local cops wouldn't handle the case. An international killer—sure, maybe the FBI or the CIA would want a piece of this action, but the EOD would be in charge of the investigation.

Because the targets Jack had taken out—the men and women he always hunted—were tied to military cases. Linked to the U.S. Navy, Air Force, the Marines. There was always a military link for Jack.

And besides, the EOD had a personal interest in the case.

They had Rachel.

"Can you handle this?" Dylan asked her. He had to ask the question as the team leader.

"Of course." Her chin notched up. "I survived him before, didn't I?"

The image of her—bloody, afraid—still haunted him in the darkness of the night.

"If he's back, he'll come for me." Rachel spoke these words with certainty.

"Then he'll have to get *through* me," Dylan fired back, unable to hold those words inside any longer.

Her eyes widened.

He put his hands on her. He *had* to touch her. His fingers curled around her slender shoulders. "He isn't going to have the chance to hurt you. I'll stop him. That's why Mercer has me on the case. He knows I'll do anything necessary in order to make sure that Jack doesn't have the chance to get to you again."

"And what am I supposed to do?" Her body brushed against his. "Hide? Stay in the shadows while you hunt? That's not who I am, Dylan. You know that."

He did. He knew everything about her.

"Mercer sent me here." She gave a slow nod of her head. "He wants me on the case, and I'm going to stay on it. Jack won't get away with this." A brief pause. "If this *is* Jack."

He wanted to pull her flush against him. To kiss her. They'd worked together for three years, and he'd wanted her that entire time.

But he'd played by the rules and kept his hands off her.

Dreamed of her every night. "They're going to send hotel guards up soon," Rachel murmured. "Maybe even a firefighter or two." He blinked.

"You can't keep the elevator stopped forever."

And he couldn't toss Rachel over his shoulder and run away with her. No matter how badly he wanted to do just that.

So he stepped back from her. He started the elevator again, and Dylan focused on breathing. Nice and slow. But he had to ask her, "Do you still love him?"

"What?" Her voice rose, breaking a little on the one word.

That break wasn't what he'd wanted to hear. His gaze held hers. "You loved him three years ago."

"He tried to *kill* me."

"I just want to make sure that emotions won't be a problem for you." His hands clenched into fists. "I have to know that I can count on you."

The elevator had reached the lobby. A soft ding filled the interior then the doors slid open. Rachel brushed past him. He followed her. "Rachel?"

She turned toward him. "I don't feel any emotion but hate for the guy, okay? So don't worry about me. Nothing is going to cloud my judgment on this mission."

Hate was dangerous. So was fury and fear. He'd have to watch her carefully. *But what else is new there?* He seemed to watch her all the time.

And Rachel didn't know. She had no idea that she'd become his obsession.

"I won't worry." *Lie*. When she shifted away from him, Dylan put his hand on her back and steered her toward the hotel's main desk. "We work this one together."

"Just like always," she murmured. But Rachel was tense beneath his touch. Far too tense.

The hotel manager stared at Dylan with nervous eyes. Dylan flashed him an ID. An official-looking piece that labeled him an FBI agent. The ID was just part of a cover provided by the EOD, but the manager would never know that. "I'm going to need access to every bit of security footage that you've got at this hotel." The EOD would be confiscating that footage. Then their techs would review it, moment by moment, as they looked for the killer.

A killer who seemed to be back, hunting once again in the U.S.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Paul Howard:

Now a day those who Living in the era everywhere everything reachable by interact with the internet and the resources in it can be true or not require people to be aware of each info they get. How many people to be smart in receiving any information nowadays? Of course the answer then is reading a book. Reading a book can help persons out of this uncertainty Information specifically this Evidence of Passion (Shadow Agents Series Book 7) book since this book offers you rich info and knowledge. Of course the knowledge in this book hundred pct guarantees there is no doubt in it you know.

Erica Logan:

Why? Because this Evidence of Passion (Shadow Agents Series Book 7) is an unordinary book that the inside of the guide waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will distress you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book close to it was fantastic author who also write the book in such incredible way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining technique but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this any longer or you going to regret it. This excellent book will give you a lot of rewards than the other book include such as help improving your talent and your critical thinking way. So , still want to hold off having that book? If I were being you I will go to the book store hurriedly.

Matthew Simons:

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