



## More Than Perfect

By Day LeClare

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Angie Colter can't understand who wouldn't want to spend time with the sexy, caring and utterly compelling Lucius and darling baby Mikey. Then she discovers his goal. With a few tweaks to the program—and to her appearance—*Angie* will be the perfect wife! But what if Lucius finds out the truth about his nearly perfect fiancée?

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## More Than Perfect By Day Leclair Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2395674 in Books
- Published on: 2012-02-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.62" h x .50" w x 4.21" l, .20 pounds
- Binding: Mass Market Paperback
- 192 pages

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## Editorial Review

### About the Author

USA Today bestselling author, Day LeClaire is described by Harlequin as “one of our most popular writers ever!” Day’s passionate stories warm the heart, which may explain the impressive 10 nominations she's received for the prestigious Romance Writers of America RITA Award. “There's no better way to spend each day than writing romances.” Visit [www.dayleclaire.com](http://www.dayleclaire.com).

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You aren't just a devil, you're a total son of a bitch!"

Angie Colter's head jerked up at the unmistakable sound of a hand striking flesh and she swiveled to stare at the closed door of her boss's office—Lucius Devlin, owner and CEO of the Seattle based company, Diablo, Inc., a multibillion dollar business that specialized in buying and rehabbing commercial real estate. The next instant the door slammed open and Ella, the gorgeous redhead Angie had ushered in not ten minutes earlier, emerged. The woman had been Devlin's latest in a long string, lasting a full two weeks. A record breaker among the spate of women her boss had seen over the past three months.

"I don't know how you could possibly think I'd be interested in your insane proposal." With that, she swept across the plush expanse of carpet on impossibly high heels, her backside twitching out her profound irritation as she headed for the private elevators.

Okay. That was interesting and added to Angie's growing suspicion that something was up with Lucius. She hadn't figured out what, but suspected the six-month-old baby he'd received guardianship of a short three months earlier was somehow responsible. The baby, Mikey, was the son of the former head of PR for Diablo, Geoff Ridge-way. He and his wife, Lisa, had died in a train wreck in Europe shortly before Christmas, appointing Lucius the guardian of their infant son. From the moment Angie had first taken Mikey into her arms, she'd fallen in love with the little guy. Maybe it was due in part to the faint ticking of her biological clock. More likely it was those huge dark eyes staring so gravely into hers. Whatever the cause, an emotion unlike any she'd ever experienced before had fisted around her heart and refused to let go.

Angie glanced toward Lucius's office in open speculation. Initially, she'd thought her boss was searching for the perfect nanny, someone to replace the sweet-natured woman who'd accepted the job in a temporary capacity. But lately... Unable to contain her curiosity, she snatched up her electronic tablet and stylus. Crossing to the open doorway, she gave a brisk knock.

Her boss stood in profile, drowning a handful of ice cubes in scotch. Through the floor-to-ceiling windows behind him sprawled the city of Seattle, modestly veiling its beauty behind a misty, gray morning. At six foot two Lucius "The Devil" Devlin possessed a powerful physique at odds with a job that required endless hours behind a desk. No doubt he'd spent some of his billions on a home gym, filled with the best equipment money could buy. And used it with the same ruthless efficiency that characterized everything else he did in his life. He was a gorgeous man with hair the color of soot and eyes as dark and mysterious as a moonless night. A man who could steal a woman's breath without even trying. And the first time he'd tossed his devil-may-care smile in her direction, he'd stolen her heart...and quite possibly her soul.

Maybe that was why she'd committed the ultimate folly and fallen in love with him.

He glanced over his shoulder at her and frowned. "This isn't a good time."

The scowl snapped her back into focus. Ignoring his order, she stepped into the office. "Try using some of

that ice on your jaw," she instructed crisply. "It'll help with the swelling."

"She packs quite a punch for a woman."

"I don't doubt it. Ella can bench-press a hundred and a quarter."

He swiveled to fully face her. "Get out. Seriously?"

"Dead serious. We go to the same gym. You're even more lucky she didn't use those Christian Louboutin heels on you. I've seen what she can do in our kickboxing class. She'd have skewered you like a shish kebab."

"She never mentioned she knew you."

Angie didn't doubt it. That would involve connecting with someone of the female sex. Ella only had eyes for men. "I doubt she noticed me. I don't exactly stand out."

Lucius tossed back the scotch, then took her suggestion and pressed the iced glass against the red mark darkening his jaw. His gaze swept over her. Even though he stripped her with that swift look, it was in a—sadly—asexual manner. Not that it surprised her. She knew what he saw. She'd come to the conclusion long ago that she had a head for business and a bod for well, business.

At five foot eight, she was as slender as a reed, her curves best classified as subtle. Granted, she possessed an attractive enough face and great hair, even if she did keep it confined in an elegant twist, the color containing every shade of brown known to man. But her most attractive feature were her eyes, a brilliant aquamarine that her former lover had called "unnerving." Of course, that was right before he'd dumped her for her five-foot-two, blonde and buxom—*former*—best friend, whom he'd promptly married. Nine months later they produced the baby she'd dreamed of having with him, and that he'd claimed he not only didn't want, but would never want. Maybe that was why Angie had chosen to throw every scrap of her time and energy into her career. While Britt was giving birth to Ryan's baby, Angie secured the prime job as Lucius Devlin's PA. She hadn't quite decided who got the better deal, which told her that maybe her feelings for Ryan hadn't run as deep as she'd thought.

"Ella didn't notice you because you're female," Lucius stated, echoing her earlier thoughts. "Not because you don't stand out. The right clothes, the right hairstyle—"

She stiffened, pricked by his careless dissection. The hazards of loving a man who saw you as a piece of equipment rather than a human being. Damn him. Her chin shot up and she pinned him with her "unnerving" gaze, pleased to have found some use for it. "Oh, wow. Advice from Lucius 'The Devil' Devlin on how to transform myself into the perfect woman. Wait now. Let me take notes." She flipped her electronic tablet over and allowed the stylus to hover above it. "Please, Lucius. Don't keep me waiting. Other than the right clothes and hairstyle, how else am I lacking?"

"Hell, woman."

She narrowed her eyes at his use of the word *woman*, pleased to see him wince. Huh. Maybe she'd patent the look. It was certainly coming in handy. "You should know all about hell, Lucius."

A grim expression closed over his face and he snatched up the cut glass decanter, splashing more scotch into his glass. "I should and I do."

Despite the threatening storm clouds, Angie refused to back down. "I don't doubt it." She lifted an eyebrow in open challenge. "Anything else you'd care to add about my appearance?"

He took a long swallow, regarding her over the rim of his tumbler with intense black eyes. "Not a chance."

"I didn't think so." She gestured toward his glass. "Put the ice back on your face or you'll have to explain that bruise to your clients. I shudder to think what sort of nosedive your reputation will take when you're forced to admit you were coldcocked by a woman."

"That's not how I'm going to tell the story." Still, she couldn't help but notice that he rested the glass against his jaw—an aching jaw if she didn't miss her guess.

She offered an angelic smile. "No, but it's how I plan to tell it."

"How the hell could I have thought you'd make the perfect PA?" he snarled. "I must have been out of my mind."

"Agreed." Unable to contain her curiosity, she asked, "What in the world did you say to Ella that made her so mad?"

His annoyance intensified. "You would think it was my fault."

"Do I owe you an apology?"

She could see the internal debate rage, before he settled on admitting the truth. "No, it was my fault. I made the mistake of proposing to her."

Angie struggled to breathe. He couldn't have hit her any harder if he'd been the one doing the kickboxing. "What?"

He glanced her way and blew out a sigh. "Oh, get over it, Colter. This isn't high school. We're not talking about some grand romance. Hell, I've only known the woman for two weeks. I made a business proposition that involved marriage and for some reason that ticked her off. Go figure."

Her world righted itself and she found she could breathe again. It took a second longer to settle her face into something that passed for mild interest. Another few seconds to gain control over her vocal cords so she didn't sound as shrill as a steam whistle. Until that moment, she hadn't realized just how bad she had it, just how desperately she'd fallen for him. His brilliance. His innate kindness, a kindness he worked so hard to encase in a cold, tough exterior. The wealth of inexplicable pain buried in his eyes, and no doubt his heart. In the year and a half she'd worked for him, she'd gotten to know the man behind the reputation. And with that knowing had come the sort of love she'd only played at with Ryan, skating across the surface of the emotion without embracing the true depths and scope.

Gathering her control, she allowed a cool smile to drift across her mouth. "You're right, Lucius. I can't imagine why any woman in her right mind would find a marriage proposal phrased as a business proposition in the least offensive," she commented drily. "Go figure."

Lucius set his glass down with a decisive click that caused the ice to shiver in warning. He took a step in her direction and fixed her with a dark, impenetrable gaze. "You have an opinion to offer on the subject?"

She didn't answer the question directly, didn't dare. "Is this about Mikey?" She couldn't help the softening that came into her voice when she said the name, any more than she could help the softening that ...

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

**Glen Thomas:**

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