

MEDIA KIT FOR *HER FIRST HEIST*

LOGLINE: Mistaken identity has dangerous consequences

Series: Art of the Crime (Book 1)

Author: Rachelle Paige Campbell

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BLURB:

Covering her flu-stricken sister's shift, Sarah Leech helps at an after-hours jewelry exhibition at the Chicago Art Museum, hoping to network. When a handsome stranger asks her to dance, she agrees. Working around the clock to support her young son and pursue a dream, she figures one waltz gives her a fun story and potentially an important career contact.

Jewel-thief turned informant, Nicholas Thatcher is finishing surveillance before the heist that will secure his freedom. He spots his late mother's bracelet on a stranger's wrist, the same piece used to blackmail him into a decade-plus career for a crime boss. He can't be sure of his next move with the unknown woman's sudden appearance. Following her out of the museum, he spots two men on her heels. When the men stall a CTA train on the elevated tracks and start shooting, the night quickly derails.

Keeping her alive long enough to learn her identity becomes his top priority. When they discover a startling connection, they must work together and discover redemption is available for anyone with an open heart.

SHORT BLURB:

Single mom, Sarah Leech, spends her days working as an accountant and her nights taking care of her son. She dreams of making her hobby, jewelry design, a career. When she has the opportunity to work a glamorous society event, she jumps at the chance to network. After catching the eye of a handsome man, she heads home. But her evening is just beginning.

Jewel-thief turned informant, Nicholas Thatcher is finishing surveillance when he spots a woman wearing his late mother's bracelet. Fearing a double cross, he calls off the night's heist and follows her, spotting two men on her heels. Keeping her alive long enough to learn her identity becomes his top priority. When they discover a startling connection, they must work together. Will their surprising partnership lead to redemption and a second chance at love?

EXCERPT #1: (529 words)

"You don't need to flatter me." Lowering her chin, she studied the floor. "You already saved me once."

I could pay you handsomely enough to free you from your contract to kill me. How did he broach the topic? She could flip to his side in the nick of time but only if Gordon wasn't blackmailing her. He hesitated from sharing too much. Perhaps she had a sordid history that couldn't be forgiven. Was his mother's bracelet on the stranger's wrist as a down payment for him or another hit?

He'd never had a price on his head. At least, not that he was aware. In his role, he was visible enough to have been taken out long before now. So what was the point in assassinating him tonight? Gordon was too canny and too slippery for a trap.

She turned, her heavy skirt swishing over the tops of his shoes and brushing his legs.

"Stay." He crept toward her until her shoulders pressed against his chest. "Just one dance." Up close, he breathed on her bare upper back and neck. She was vulnerable with seemingly no protection. He'd bet a knife hid somewhere in her voluminous skirt. "I promised."

The opening bars of a Cole Porter song started, the piano playing the melody.

For a moment, he thought she might not reply. Maybe she'd use force and overpower him and escape. He'd spotted her. She had to give up on whatever her assignment had been and leave.

He wasn't going anywhere. Despite her appearance and the untimely delay, he would finish the job and get his destiny back. Could he unclasp the Art Deco bracelet from her wrist? If he'd been a Victorian England pickpocket, perhaps, but his criminal activity relied on modern-day technology to aid and abet thievery.

She glanced over her shoulder, parted her lips, and met his gaze.

He stared at her quivering chin. She mesmerized him with every studied movement. Her commitment to the part of ingénue was captivating. Maybe she'd teach him a thing or two.

"I'm not sure. I have to get back to work. I'm needed."

Her light blue eyes transfixed him with their particular color. He'd only seen a similar shade of pale cyan in aquamarine gems direct from Madagascar. Even the stones at her throat couldn't compare to the unique hue of her eyes. He gritted his teeth against the brief swell of admiration. Another fake, something memorable that was ultimately false. Something a victim's mind would catch and settle on as a definitive feature for a sketch artist. He knew such pure color had to be faked with lenses. He cleared his throat. "Consider it payment in kind for rescuing you back there."

She darted her gaze to the side. "Do you need a reward for chivalry?"

If she assessed the nearest escape, she wouldn't find it. He resisted the urge to drag her from the crowded place into one of the frozen gardens outside, so he could demand the truth in privacy. Her teasing words didn't match her actions. "Seems a shame to waste an opportunity."

"Yes, let's dance." With the other hand, she lifted the gown.

EXCERPT #2: (433 words)

The lights cut out.

She tensed.

He tightened his grip on her waist and lowered his head to her ear. “We have to get off this train, follow me.”

She shivered and shook her head. His sentence made no sense. The train wasn’t at the next station. From the front, she spotted the end of the platform several feet away. As the lead car, they hovered near the edge of the platform. How could she exit a stopped train on the tracks above the city? Her temples throbbed as she fought a wave of nausea. Would the train tilt to the side and fall off the rails? Every action movie she’d ever seen suddenly popped into her mind, flashing images of death-defying stunts. Could a normal person survive?

“Trust me. We need to leave.” He squeezed her arms gently before stepping away.

Turning, she squinted in the darkened interior and studied him. The determination in his stoic expression didn’t hint at reconsideration. She raised her chin, reading a protest. Meeting his gaze, a sense of calm eased her breathing. She trusted him. She’d just met him but certainty soothed her. He’d get her out of danger and home to her son.

He turned his back and crossed to the door.

She followed on his heels.

A cry ripped through the air.

She snapped her head over her shoulder and adjusted the heavy bag slipping onto her arm.

The other woman rocked back and forth on the ground. She took up most of the aisle, blocking passage to the doors. Her date shushed and rubbed her back.

The door on the other side of the car swung open and crashed against the train. She shuddered. Where were the two men? Had they jumped to the next car? Had they caused the emergency stop? Why? Her chin trembled.

“Please be advised.” The singsong transit authority voice echoed in the car. “Help is on the way. Stand clear of the doors.”

The stranger reached for her shoulder.

She turned at his soft touch.

With a twist of his wrist, he opened the door.

Wind slammed the panel against the front of the train.

A blast of icy air lashed her cheeks. She gasped, her inhalation burned her lungs.

The stranger sat on the floor and scooted toward the edge.

She wrapped her arms tightly around herself. Watching a person voluntarily sit on the sticky floor was almost as disturbing as his intended action. He was going to jump. She wasn’t afraid of heights, but dangling over the city on a disabled elevated train changed her mind.

EXCERPT #3: (484 words)

“Satisfied?” He cocked his head to one side.

Not really. Could she wait for the FBI agent like she promised? With a tiny tilt of her head, she met Nicholas’s gaze. Her muscles went slack. She had no more fight in her. Was she safe? Outrage drained from her weak limbs, replaced by the chill of fear. Did she trust him? She didn’t really have a choice. Staying was her best option for the time being. Giving herself an easy excuse couldn’t hide the bone-deep certainty she was safe with this stranger. “Will you remove the handcuffs?”

“You promise to stick with me?” Nicholas asked.

“Yes, of course.”

He nodded. Pulling a key out of his pocket, he knelt at her side.

She shifted forward in the chair and extended her hands.

He cradled her shackled arm in a feather-light touch. The key clicked in the lock. The cuffs released. He stood and stuffed the cuffs in his pocket.

She sighed and slowly unwound her arms. Giving herself a big hug, she stretched her arms in the opposite direction and circled her wrists. She dropped her limp hands to her lap and rolled her neck. “Why do you think I am being followed? You’re the one working with the FBI. Aren’t you on someone’s radar?”

He rubbed the back of his head and strolled toward the refrigerator. “I’m not sure. Maybe.” He dropped to his knees and grabbed a bottle of water. When he retraced his steps and extended the drink, he didn’t meet her gaze.

I am the target, and he knows the reason. She reached for the bottle, uncapped the lid, and took a long swig, washing away the sour taste on her tongue. She couldn’t fathom the danger she entered. On the call, Mark mentioned a sting. How had she inadvertently joined the fray? Was the drunk man at the jewelry case Gordon Jones? Besides Nicholas, he was the only other person she had significant contact.

She raised her gaze to Nicholas.

He sat on the couch, studying the space between them.

She held the water bottle with both hands. Her grip tightened, and the plastic crinkled. Would he provide answers without Mark’s permission? She heaved a heavy sigh and capped the bottle. Depositing the water on the table, her diamond bracelet caught in the light and shimmered.

He studied her wrist with an unblinking stare.

The jewelry was never really hers. She used the material good as a defense, admissible evidence in the court of public opinion proving she was adored and valued. After years of

building a wall to justify her actions, she was tired. Whether or not anyone believed her, she knew she wasn't wrong. She'd loved someone once, and a talisman wasn't proof, her son was. She unclasped the bracelet and set it on the table. "If I give you this bracelet, will you set me free?"

TROPE LIST:

Fish out of water
Mistaken identity
Single mom
Protective MMC
Chicago
Romantic suspense

ENDORSEMENT QUOTES:

Full of swoon-worthy moments set in a backdrop of heart-pounding adventure, *Her First Heist* is a gem. This book kept me on the edge of my seat with intriguing characters who find themselves swept up in a high-stakes scheme as they undergo a transformative, emotionally resonant love story.

—Chandra Blumberg, author of *Love is an Open Book*

Her First Heist is an on-the-edge-of-your-seat heist drama. So many twists and turns that you learn quickly to not trust anyone or anything. The best laid plans for this heist unravel when love gets in the way.

—Sloane Steele, author of the Counterfeit Capers trilogy

THIS MEETS THAT COMPARISON:

Enter the high-stakes art world in this riveting romantic suspense duet. Fans of Karen Rose, Lisa Jackson, and Brenda Novak will enjoy The Art of the Crime series.

RACHELLE PAIGE CAMPBELL

Art of the Crime
BOOK ONE

HER

First

HEIST

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Rachelle Paige Campbell writes bestselling contemporary romance novels filled with heart and hope. With a master's degree in Art History, she is always eager for a chance to sneak antiques into her books. Missing works of art capture a special place in her imagination. She believes love and laughter can change lives, and every story needs a happily ever after.

<https://rachellepaigecampbell.com/>

