Fearless Flying

The Vivienne Series

Book 1

By Karen Gordon

A Note from the Author

Hi! Welcome to Vivienne's world. I'm thrilled you decided to give this series a try.

The book you are about to read is the first of seven novellas in a fierce and flirty chicklit series. I created the main character after reading another series about King Arthur's court by a fantastic writer named Lavinia Collins. Her stories look at the legend from the female perspective and one of her characters, Nimue, fascinated me. She's a quiet young woman who everyone fails to notice or discounts because she's so sweet looking. In reality she is the puppet master. Always watching and learning, she uses her knowledge to control powerful men like the king and Merlin. Vivienne is based on Nimue. Viv is an introvert; smart, quiet, always watching and learning. Those are her super powers. She uses them to get ahead at work but things don't always work out so well when it comes to her love life.

If you love this book I really want you to stay with me on this journey and read book 2, HiJack. In it Viv has to match wits with the top brass at work including a new boss who is easy on the eyes and definitely off limits. I think you'll love seeing how she handles the pressures of the executive suites and I'm so excited for you to read HiJack that I want to give you a FREE copy!

There will be a link at the end of this book, follow it and let me know where to send your FREE copy of HiJack.

This will also put you on my mailing list which is a really fun place to be. I never, ever give names away or sell them (cross my heart). You will get occasional emails letting you know about sales, new books, giveaways and even more FREE books! It's truly a win/win. If this book isn't your cup of tea, I still want to say that you are amazing. You gave an indie author a chance and I truly appreciate that.

So, I hope you enjoy Fearless Flying and don't forget to look for the link for a FREE copy of HiJack at the end.

Lots of love,



"To be old & wise you must first be young and stupid."

- Someone Old & Wise

Chapter One

I can count the number of guys I've slept with on one hand. I can count the number of guys I've wanted to sleep with on one finger. And that man is on his way to my apartment right now. Ironically, if I end up having sex with Danny tonight I have my dad to thank, or blame, depending on how this goes.

It's 4:05 and the chime on my electronic meat thermometer dings. Perfect. Danny will be here at 4:15 so that gives the roast beef ten minutes to rest before I need to serve it. I do another walk through of my tiny apartment for a final confirmation of the details of my plan of seduction.

Pecan pie warming on the stove top and combining with the roast for the perfect scent—check.

Tools necessary for removing and storing the window A/C unit lying next to it—check.

Pristine linen sheets replaced with Walmart cheepie sheets that I am willing to have sex on—check.

My heart is racing a little but ten years of anticipation will do that to you. I check myself in the full length mirror in my bedroom one more time. Even I have to admit, I've nailed this outfit. My new jeans keep it casual, but have strategically placed seems and fading to highlight all my curves. My ass could turn me on in these. My tee shirt looks like I just threw it on, but I shopped for an hour online for this specific one—it's a little sheer, hangs off one shoulder, and highlights the blue lacy bra underneath. And even through my toes are freezing on the hardwood floor I'm barefoot to show off my shell-pink pedi. My feet are one of my best features; no way I'm hiding them today. If all goes as planned I can warm them under Danny's gorgeous muscular legs during our post-sex snuggle.

I grab the tousle spray from the bathroom cabinet and primp my perfectly-styled messy beach waves one last time. *Good luck resisting me now Danny. You're going to need it.*

At 4:15 I hear the buzzer from the building's front door announcing his punctual arrival. I knew it. Danny doesn't do late. He was never late one day in the eight years that my dad was his boss. Yes, his reliability is one of the reasons I crave this man. I buzz him in and use the two minutes it will take him to climb the stairs to my apartment to pull the roast from the oven and tent it with the waiting piece of foil.

I try to suppress my smile as I open the door. I'm keeping it casual. Like he's just Danny moving my air conditioner to storage, not my undying crush finally ready for me.

He is definitely looking laid back, leaning on the door frame, hands in his jean's pockets, looking at the floor. He looks up and shifts the tooth pick to the other side of his mouth, drawing my attention (once again) to how damn full his lips are. I swear I'm turned on already and he hasn't even said a word.

Then he does. "Roast?"

I regain my composure and nod. "Yep."

He takes a deep breath in and launches himself off the door frame. "Pecan pie too?"

"Yep."

And he lets out a long frustrated sigh.

What? NO! Not this. Not again.

He walks over to the window and starts to pull the air conditioner from its perch. It's wedged tightly into the ancient window frame and puts up a fight. I silently thank it for making this harder for him. In muted distress I watch him as he takes a screwdriver from my tool kit and uses it to push the frame back where it has embedded itself into the unit. After replacing the screwdriver in its correct slot (*Do you see why he is perfect for me?*), he shifts his weight back, stretches his exquisitely muscular arms around the machine and heaves. I can't help but swoon a little at the way his shoulder muscles flex then settle as he leans the old hundred-plus pound thing against his chest.

He looks at me, but only to get my attention, then nods toward the door. "Let's go."

My weak smile can't hide my disappointment. Surely he must see that I anticipated and want more than this.

I open the door to my apartment then walk ahead of him down the three flights of steps to the basement storage area. He's not even trying to make small talk--not asking about my job or my new car. This is worse than I thought.

I admit I knew there was a chance he would turn me down, but I weighted it as a slight chance. He could still be getting over his divorce, but it's been over a year. She left him. How long can he mourn the loss of the stupid, wussy woman? I've written off his reluctance to let her go to the fact that she has their son. That's the only reason I can see for him not moving on to someone better, someone who won't bail at the first sign of trouble, someone with a backbone—

Someone like me.

I fumble with the padlock on the door of my storage locker. I probably should have had it unlocked already so he wouldn't have to stand there holding the A/C unit, but I didn't want to leave it unlocked for too long and I did not plan on him doing this right away. My roast and pie were supposed to work their magic and slow this project down so it would last until morning, or at least a few hours.

With the lock finally off I open the door and step aside for him to enter the tiny room. I fight the urge to lock him in there and hold him until he wakes up and notices what is right in front of him.

"I didn't ask you to do this, you know."

He sets the unit down with a grunt and turns to me. "I know." He dusts off his hands and walks past me as I shut and lock the door.

"I'd already made a deal with the maintenance guy to do this for me."

He starts back up the stairs ahead of me. "Yeah, well your dad asked me to come over here and do this, so here I am. You're welcome."

Damn it. I did sound ungrateful, but this was about so much more than the air conditioner. "I made you dinner to thank you."

We reach the landing with the building's front door and he turns toward it. I can't let him go yet. "You're not staying for dinner?"

"Can't. I've got to go to work."

Puhleese. What a lame bull-shit lie. I know where he works, I know his hours, and I know that he doesn't have to go back to work tonight. His shift ended at three and he's not wearing his work uniform. "Did you change shifts?"

"No, but I've got to go." He makes a move for the door and I block him.

My anger and embarrassment has me at a loss for words. I open my mouth to speak but I'm afraid of what might come out. I need time to process this and formulate a response. For once I have no plan B because I didn't plan on failing this spectacularly. All I can think to do is kill him with kindness. "Take the pie at least. I can wrap it up and you can share it with the other guys on your crew."

"Not tonight." He moves toward the door again. I block him again.

"Danny, I..."

"Vivey, I told your dad I would come over here and help you move your air conditioner. That's all he asked me to do and that's all I'm going to do." He reaches out and touches my arm as if the contact will somehow lessen the blow. "I...," He checks his watch. "I gotta go. I'm gonna be late."

He pushes past me, his size and warmth momentarily engulfing me, his Irish Spring scent lingering in his wake as he passes by. He doesn't look back as he descended the stairs then gets on a motorcycle illegally parked on the sidewalk. *When did he get a motorcycle?* He guns the engine, checks for pedestrians and cars and pulls out onto Drayton Street heading toward downtown.

I'm not sure how long I stand there, recovering from the shock of that short, excruciating brush-off. I had an armory of temptation ready in my apartment and he ran after he caught a whiff of my first shot. I shut the door tightly and check that the handle has locked. I love this apartment and this neighborhood, but I'm not naive enough to not be aware of its dangers.

On my way up the stairs I pull my phone from my back pocket to call Dom who's on standby, waiting for her BFF sex summary. She answers, "So soon? Jeez he's quick on the draw."

Chapter Two

"There wasn't any draw. He moved the air conditioner then practically sprinted out of here." I plop down on the couch and hug my favorite pink chenille pillow to my chest. It's like putting a fluffy Band-aid over where I hurt.

"So start from the beginning, he got there and then what happened?"

A Dom-analysis could take an hour, five times longer than the actual date. I'm not up for it. "I don't know. He got here, smelled the roast and pie, asked me if that's what he smelled, then immediately started pulling the air conditioner out of the window. He was definitely on a mission to get the hell out of here. He even lied and said he had to go back to work. He wasn't even wearing a uniform. I mean, what the hell, like I'm not going to notice that?"

That shuts Dom up. Danny is not known for lying. If anything he could be called too blunt, honest to a fault.

"I need an exorcism, Dom. I need to purge him from my soul."

"I won't argue with you there. I've been listening to you moan and drool over him for ten."

"I know." I cut her off because I don't want a review of all the stupid ways I've embarrassed myself over Danny. "Cut me some slack. I was fifteen."

"Ok, when you met him, but this past year...V, if he hasn't made a move by now..." I can tell she doesn't want to say it and hurt my feelings and she doesn't have to.

"He isn't going to." Ouch that hurts to say, but it's like ripping off a Band-aid. I need to do it. I need to move on. "Just give me some time."

"Sure. Yeah. I know." A sad silence hangs heavy between us because only Dom knows how hard this will be for me.

I change the subject. "You and mama going to play bingo tonight?" I know they are.

Dom and her mama and her aunties all played bingo together every Thursday night at their church. "How goes the wedding fund?" They are all pooling their winnings and saving up for Dom's wedding.

"Growing baby, growing. Luis's aunt and grandma are going in with us now." Dom's family is the opposite of mine, huge and involved. Dom still lives with her mama and siblings and will until she marries Luis in a few months. "Do you want to come with us tonight? The girls will make you feel better. We'll down a few *cervezas...*"

"No, not tonight. Besides, I'm an Irish girl...I've got to drown my sorrows in whiskey. I think it's required."

"Alright, you have the night off to drown your sorrows."

"Thanks. And thank you for understanding."

"Hey, I get it. Believe me I've been there the whole time. The man's smile and body alone could do any girl in. And he used to be really sweet to you. Ever since your dad moved away and his divorce, he's changed."

"Yeah, he has." She's right. "I guess he's only nice to me because of my dad. Now that he's not here..."

"Are you going to tell your dad to stop sending him over to help you? You know he'll do it again."

Damn, she's right. It's a losing battle with my dad to convince him to let me take care of myself. I spent half my life taking care of him, and me, and our house, and he still treats me like I'm a child. "*Noooo*. Oh hell, you're right. If this weren't the most perfect effing apartment in this city, I would move my ass to Sweden and get away from both of them."

Dom laughs, "Then Big Mike would find some dude named Sven and have him at your place taking care of you."

"As long as Sven isn't frigid." We both laugh that that one.

"Do you think that's it." Dom asks. "Do you think Danny's frigid?"

"Oh, hell no. Like I've always said, there is something about the way he moves, still can't put my finger on it, but there's something in his stride that tells me he'd be a really great lay."

"No, no, don't go there. Assume he is a horrible lay and a shitty kisser."

"With those lips?"

Even Dom can't argue with that. "Ok, so he might be a good kisser, but he doesn't deserve you."

"Because...?"

"Because he is *estúpido*, a box of rocks. Come on V, how can he not see by now what an amazing catch you are? You are smart, successful, a gourmet cook, totally cute and if he ever gave you the chance I'm sure you would wear him out in bed until he died a happy man."

"I would rock his world."

"Save that for someone who deserves it."

"Like who, Dom? In twenty-five years I have met one man, one, who meets my standards."

"And don't you dare lower them now."

"I'm going to die alone as a cat lady, still looking for that perfect guy."

"No you're not. There is going to be a guy who appreciates how hard you work to make everything perfect. Did you pour yourself that drink yet?"

I put my phone on speaker and set it on the bar cart in the corner of the living room. "Pouring it now." Dom can hear me put ice in a tumbler and pour Jameson over it.

"Of course you had ice in the bucket."

"And little lemon wedges too." I add one to my drink and water from the pitcher.

"What are you going to do now?" Dom is my mother hen. A job she and her mom took over when my mom died.

"Cut the roast into sandwich meat so I can take it to some guys who will appreciate it."

"Ok, good. No single ones yet?"

Dom is always pushing me to find romance at work which, number one, goes against my policy of never dating at work, and two, she doesn't know these guys like I do. They are salesmen, always polite and kind and joking and so full of shit it practically leaks out their ears. "No single ones."

"At least Bob appreciates you."

That he does. My boss, Bob Brockhaus is the lead salesman in international sales for JetStream Aerospace. He travels the world selling private jets to billionaires and he does a damn good job of it, in great part because he has me. I make his chaotic home and work life run like a well-oiled machine and he makes sure I am paid well to do that. At least I have Bob.

Chapter Three

I've put the guys who work in the sales department into three categories: DAL – divorced and looking, DAG – divorced and gave up, and MAH – Married and hanging on by a thread. International sales (or I-sales to insiders) sounds cool and sexy and from the outside might look cool and sexy, but it's a lifestyle that is hell on a marriage.

Right now my boss, Bob, is in Dubai. He's there at least once or twice a month and stays a few days each time. After three days home he'll be flying to Hong Kong, then Melbourne, then Seoul before coming home for another three days. He's married, again. Kara is wife number three. He and I are working together to try to hold on to this one.

I have ten different apps that I use to keep track of Bob, his travel schedule, his contacts, his expenses, and his families and almost all are open this morning. He's on a follow up sales call with a Prince so he had to fly commercial to Dubai. He has enough frequent flyer miles to buy out first class but that doesn't immunize him from delays and missed connections. I'm on line with him trying to find a work around for storms keeping him stranded in Zurich. Kara definitely wants him home this weekend. She and Bob are both hammer texting me and each other. This is not the first time I've felt like I was standing in a room with them, watching them have a very private argument.

I'm refreshing the Swiss weather site on my main computer screen when Ted Kircher leans in, carrying a heaping plate of my roast beef. He holds it up and gives me thumbs up and I smile briefly at him. I set the carved beef out in the conference room with some bread and condiments when I got in this morning and sent a blast email to everyone in I-Sales to come and get it. None of the DALs, like Ted, will touch the bread. Eating out constantly on the road is hell on a diet so all the salesmen still looking for love have sworn off carbs. DAGs will take the bread and make a sandwich with the beef and mayo then add a large slice of the pecan pie. MAHs are rarely in the office. If they aren't on the road they are at home squeezing in all the family time they can.

Ted may be hitting on me but it's hard to tell. Salesmen who sell multi-million dollar jets are constantly on—happy, joking, overly upbeat, super friendly. I could take it all as coming on to me, but I chose not to. (Refer to rule number one at work.) If I meet them on their level it all stays completely artificial and friendly from a distance. I walk a fine line between looking accessible and being inaccessible.

I book Bob on the four p.m. train from Zurich to Geneva where he can meet up with Colin, another JetStream sales rep, who is there with one of our planes working on a sale. The storms will have moved east of Switzerland by then and Bob can catch a ride home with Colin and be back in Savannah by tomorrow morning. I text him the details.

Limo driver on way to frequent flyer club now.
First class train tic in email. Dinner rez on train(carb free).
Limo will b waiting in Geneva to get to airport.
Colin will hold flight for you.

And soothe Kara's ruffled feathers:

Bob in Savannah office at 6:48 a.m. Should b home by 8 a.m. Have a gr8 wknd.

Bob replies:

Perfect, as always. Thank you from Kara and me.

Kara doesn't reply but I'm not surprised. She and Bob have been married for almost a year but she is still getting used to the fact that, for better or worse, I'm part of their marriage. If she wants Bob-time she has to go through me because I control his master schedule. I get her as much as I can, but seriously, he has to work too.

As I spin in my chair to take a much-needed pee break I face Cat, another I-Sales secretary. She's holding the tray with what's left of my roast beef and sandwich fixings and the empty pie plate. She drops them in the center of my desk right in front of me. "Your stuff was in the conference room. I need it."

Why does she always make such a big deal out of everything? This girl feeds on drama which I do not have the time or patience for. "Thank you Cat, now I don't have to go get these later." I smile as I stand and push past her, her cue that this conversation is over. Technically, as the secretary to the senior sales rep I am the senior secretary, but it's not a power I use very often. Being a MAH, Bob is rarely in the office so he doesn't need the facilities here, which means I don't have to join in the reindeer games of fighting for conference rooms and supplies.

The latest Bob-crisis has kept my mind occupied all morning but now the remains of my seduction dinner, strewn across my desk, are taking me right back to last night. Before I lose it and go all pity-party at work I gather it up and head to the kitchen area and the big trash bins. Screw being efficient and thrifty, I'm throwing it all out.

Screw saving my plastic serving pieces for another day. Screw my stupid need to have a plan B and not waste my perfect passion meal—a lot of good all that planning and preparing did me. I channel my hurt into anger and take it out on the serving platters, slamming them into the wide plastic bin. It felt great and I'm tempted to clean outdated lunches from the fridge for another excuse to throw things. But I stop myself. Ranting at work is unprofessional and beneath me.

As I round the corner near the ladies room, I stop dead in my tracks. There's a guy at the end of the hall in a maintenance uniform. The odds of it being Danny are one in a thousand, but my heart thuds anyway as I strain to look for his wide-legged, hands-on-hips, Danny-stance. This guy's too tall and lanky. Not him. I want to write my racing pulse off to anger, but hell, it looks like my heart and hormones didn't get the memo that my Danny-stalking days are over.

Then my traitor brain joins them, seeing the perfect excuse to call Darlene, my dad's old secretary to find out why one of her maintenance guys is in I-sales this morning. After all, if one of the sales planes is broken I need to know. I mean, this could affect Bob getting home. Of course, she would also know if Danny has switched shifts...

"It's one of the new guys." Darlene informs me. "His name's Mark. Why, you likie?"

"No, I just wondered why he's hanging out it I-Sales."

"3-2-B is having landing gear trouble in Morocco. He worked on it last so they called him in to consult with the repair crew there."

"Oh," is the most enthusiastic reply I can muster. If it doesn't affect me or Bob, I let it fall off my radar. I'm also a little occupied trying to figure out clever way to turn the conversation to Danny without being obvious.

Darlene knows me too well. My silence is a giveaway. "He's here. You want to talk to him or about him?"

"About him," I answer. I give her the cliff notes version of last night.

"He's still day shift, sweetie. I have no idea why he would tell you that." She pauses for my reply but I'm too upset to offer one. "I've got about five hundred other single guys down here. You sure you don't want one of them? Give me your shopping list and I'll send one your way."

I chuckle a little at the idea because I know she's only half kidding. Her desk is the social center of the maintenance hangars. She knows every man and woman who works down there; who's single, who's not and wants to be, and who's about to be. "I want one that's 5'11, medium brown hair with soulful light brown eyes, full lips, great body, can't tell a joke to save his life, polite, punctual, kind..."

Darlene lets out a frustrated breath. "Only got one of those and it looks like he's taken by the ghost of wife past. As far as I know he still hasn't gone on a date since she left." This is going nowhere so she changes the subject. "How's your dad?"

"Fine," I say, "He and Carla went to the casino last week and he won two grand."

"Good for him. Now there's another one who I thought would never date again. I still can't believe your dad left here to get remarried."

"I know. I was kind of shocked when he signed up for that dating site, then *bam*, he meets Carla the first week."

"He's one of the good ones. She saw a good thing and grabbed him up."

I sigh, "He is, I know, he's just too overprotective and meddlesome when it comes to me."

"That's just love, Big Mike style." I smile and roll my eyes at her too-true statement. My dad is a bit of a legend on the maintenance floor. He was known for helping people out; giving guys their first job out of college or the military, setting them straight when they screwed up at work or at home. He was the mentor of maintenance. He gave Danny his first job when he was fresh out of the Navy and even though my dad is fifteen years older than him they just clicked and became best friends.

"Speaking of love, yours just walked by my window with a pissed off scowl on his face. It seems like he always looks that way since your dad left."

"I know! I think he's lonely. He needs me Darlene."

"Maybe he does, but do you need him? I get the hot part, sweetie. Don't think I don't stop and take in the view of him working sometimes, but, I mean, don't you want someone closer to your age?"

"He's only seven and a half years older than me and no, I don't. I feel like I'm babysitting when I date guys my own age."

"Yeah, I bet you do," She concedes. "You grew up fast after your mom died."

My phone buzzes and I reach to shut it off so I can continue my conversation with Darlene but it's Bob. "Bob's calling. I need to get this. He's trapped in Switzerland and Kara wants him home now."

"And you are the one person who can make that happen."

"Or die trying. Thanks for the Danny update." I hang up quickly and pick up Bob's call. It's nothing urgent; he's on the train to Geneva and wants to go over next week's meeting schedule so he can stay off his phone once he gets home. Kara's threatened to toss it in their pool more than once. I finish his updates then straighten up my desk to make room for my lunch.

I eat alone a lot and often at my desk. Staying several steps ahead of Bob takes extra effort. It took me six years to work my way from being a receptionist to one of the top secretarial positions in the company. I did it by working my ass off, doing extra work, doing more than anyone could or would ask. I've been with Bob for a little over a year and I'm finally getting my stride. I know all his likes and dislikes. I know how to get him in and out of all his most frequent sales stops as quickly as possible while maintaining his maximum comfort. I know his diet, seat preferences, shirt size and favorite tailors.

I watch the other I-sales secretaries leave together to go out to lunch. I can't say I want to go with them. Office gossip wears me out. But maybe I've become too reclusive lately. Maybe I'm the one who is lonely and that's why I can't seem to let go of my absurd crush on Danny. I'm resolved to take action now and I text Dom.

What r we going to b for Halloween this year?

Halloween has always been our thing. Ever since we were little, we would coordinate our costumes and trick-or-treat together. We graduated from candy to liquor prizes in high school but we've always gone out as a team and entered costume contests. I bailed on her the past two years because of work stuff but I know how to fix that this year. I look up charity Halloween balls in the area while I wait for Dom's reply. Bingo, there is one at the art museum. I copy the link and send it to Kara along with a few very cool, expensive costume ideas for her and Bob. Calendar cleared.

Chapter Four

I wanted us to go as Wonder Woman and Batgirl but Dom put her foot down because we had done that twice already and she hates her Batgirl costume. She wanted us to make new costumes and go as Green Eggs and Ham but I put my foot down on wearing food costumes which are neither cute nor sexy. Besides any literary reference, even one to a children's book would be lost on the bar crowd. In the end Dom's mama came up with Little Red Riding Hood and the Big Bad Wolf—sexy versions of both, of course. It was the perfect solution. I got my cute red dress with boob-enhancing corset and Dom got to be *BAD* in her wolf costume.

I put myself in charge of creating our agenda. Ever since our first Halloween as over twenty-ones, Dom and I have had a goal of spending nothing all night. It sort of just happened the first year, but we figured out a system (my analytical issues rearing their ugly head) and have it down to an art now. Step one is carrying no cash on us, just our IDs and cell phones strategically placed in our costumes.

Then we start at the Corner Bar near my apartment, home to lots of skeezy old men and no contest but extremely cheap drinks. It's my dad's old hang out so I rarely have to pay there anyway. Someone who remembers Big Mike will sit and reminisce about him with Dom and me over a couple of three-dollar drinks. Once we have some liquid courage in us, we will have Dom's fiancé, Luis, pedicab us downtown to hit as many costume contests as we can. Even if we don't win the contests, drunk people buy us drinks because they like our outfits. When Luis finishes his pedicab shift at midnight he will bring his car, meet us, and drive our drunk asses home—free and safe.

The costumes Dom's mom, Lucca, made are awesome. She's the one who taught me to sew...and knit, crochet, macramé, and bake. She's a true Jill of all trades and my organizational idol. She found a tutorial online for making a wolf face with makeup and Dom sits patiently while Lucca and I touch up details and freeze the edges of her long black hair into a frame around her face. She looks evil and hot. Luis should be expecting serious scratches on his back later tonight.

We can walk to the first stop because it's close and, well, we can still walk.

The old dudes at the Corner Bar don't disappoint. They buy us cheap shots and throw cliché lines and jokes our way about our costumes. We call for Luis at ten so we can head downtown and catch the first contest at the BarBar. Dom catcalls her fiancé as he peddles. "Hell yeah, babe. Look at that ass—dimpled with the promise of pleasure."

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