

BROTHER
NUMBER

3

JUDY SERRANO



Black Rose Writing
www.blackrosewriting.com

© 2011, 2013 by Judy Serrano

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publishers, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review to be printed in a newspaper, magazine or journal.

The final approval for this literary material is granted by the author.

Second printing

All characters appearing in this work are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

ISBN: 978-1-61296-037-1

PUBLISHED BY BLACK ROSE WRITING

www.blackrosewriting.com

Printed in the United States of America

Brother Number Three is printed in Gentium Book Basic

Author's Note

I would like to thank my amazing husband, Miguel, for his endless well of encouragement and support. He is the inspiration for all that I write, with a vision that keeps me motivated. And I would like to thank him for all the long hours he put into the book's cover. The concept was his idea.

I would like to say thank you to all four of my children, Miguel III, Theo, Tad and Enrique for putting up with my tireless nights of writing and watching me, without complaining, from the top of my computer screen.

I would like to thank all of my readers for their support and interest in my characters and their journeys.

When I went back to college as an adult, I met a teacher named Dr. Kathryn Jacobs. She was my poetry teacher and I learned so much from her. I want to thank her for pushing me, insisting that I had more inside of me than I believed. She gave me the confidence to go forward.

And finally I would like to thank my publisher Reagan Rothe of Black Rose Writing for his confidence in me as a writer. He helped make my dreams come true.

Brother Number Three Reviews

“As for the author Judy Serrano I can't wait to read her next book. She writes with such passion and enthusiasm with lots of twists and turns, and full of adventure and excitement. She is such an amazing writer, you never know what to expect.”

—Patricia Foltz, *Way2Kool Designs*.

“...this is one of the better series I have read in a long time.”

—Melissa Vera, *Adventures of a Frugal Mom*

“A thrilling read, left on a huge cliff hanger again which makes you want to read the next book, *Relatively Close* straight away!”

—Rachel Simons, *stressedrach.co.uk*

“I highly recommend this book series to everyone. I read this one again in a day. You don't want to put it down. I get sucked into the story from page 1.”

—Gina Butler, *Gina's Library*

“Serrano has once again left me wanting more, so much more. So eager to turn page after page. Becoming enthralled with Lilly and the Montiago family, you will find yourself wrapped up into their lives as if it were your own. I can't wait for *Relatively Close* to be released!”

—Jodie Baker, *Uniquely Moi Books*

BROTHER
NUMBER

3

Chapter 1

The Open Window

I lay in Little Diego's bed all night hugging his teddy bear. Diego Sr. and Maxwell stayed with me for a while, but eventually went off to bed. Max hired Mia right away to watch the baby. Mia was an FBI operative who was fluent in the martial arts and Spanish. I was afraid of her Mexican heritage at first; but Max assured me that she had no history with his brother Jorge, or as we referred to him as, *The Beast*.

When I woke up, Mia was rocking the baby in the rocking chair and I heard the boys in the kitchen speaking in Spanish. Obviously they were up to no good or they would have been speaking in English. "Good morning, ma'am," Mia said to me. She was feeding Christian a bottle.

"Where is my husband?" I asked.

"They are all in the kitchen, ma'am."

"Thanks," I said. I never did shower or change last night. I was sure I looked a mess. I followed the voices into the kitchen. When they saw me they all got quiet. "Oh Lilly," Max said. He walked over to me and hugged me. I think I looked worse than I realized at that point. "Why don't you go take a shower while we head over to John's house."

"I'm going with you," I insisted.

"Absolutely not," Diego inappropriately added. "He's dangerous, Lilly. Haven't you learned your lesson about him?"

"I will be the only one who can tell if he's lying. I'm coming with you."

"You might want to shower first," Hector said, trying to add some levity.

“If you’re going now, I’m going now. So... let’s go.” They all stood there, motionless.

“We’ll wait for you,” Max assured me. “Go clean up. You’ll scare him looking like that.”

I went into the bathroom to shower and got a good look at myself. My make-up was all down my face and my eyes were swollen from all the crying. How could someone just come into my house and steal my son? The desperation was written in blood all through my unidentifiable eyes. I took a shower and headed down the stairs. They were in the living room in silence waiting for me. We all got up and headed out. Max drove up in his shiny, nice, new Beamer and we landed in front of John’s old house. It gave me the creeps, remembering the last time I was there. John was trying to convince me that I was still in love with him until Max busted in with his gun drawn, warning me that my psychopathic husband was on his way. I shivered a little at first; but then I remembered what was at stake here. It was all carefully planned. Diego and I were to ring the bell while Hector and Max presented the danger. Same old, same old.

We rang the bell and a blond-headed Irishman answered the door. He instantly recognized Diego. He put out his hand and said, “Diego, it’s been a long time.”

“Sean,” he answered. “Where’s Rory?” Max slipped in at that moment, put his arm around Sean’s neck and put a gun to his temple.

“John!” Sean screamed. Rory came down the hall and pointed the gun at Max. Hector walked in and said, “You obviously don’t know who we are.”

“Put the gun down!” Sean shouted in an urgent, anxious voice. “It’s Max Montiago, put it down!”

“I’m hurt,” Hector said, putting his hand over his heart. He picked up his gun and pointed it at Rory.

“Which one?” Rory asked in confusion. “Which one is Max?”

Max and Hector both started to laugh. “It doesn’t matter who’s who,” Diego stated. “They’ll drop you both in a heart beat if you don’t hand over the boy.”

Brother Number Three

Rory put the gun down on the floor and put his hands in the air. "We don't have a boy. What are you talking about?" Then he yelled out, "John!"

John came sauntering out of his bedroom and a girl in a bathrobe followed. "Some things never change," Diego snickered.

"You mean like you and Max sharing Lilly," John shot back. Diego picked his gun up from his waistband and pointed it at John. "Where is my son?"

"Dieguito's gone?" he asked. "Max..." he continued, still calm. "Please, haven't we been through enough that the guns are no longer necessary?"

"Where's Dieguito, John?" I asked, getting impatient with all of this cops and robbers stuff. "Do you have him or not?"

"I didn't even know he was missing." He started to look concerned. "When did he disappear?" Max put the gun down and the other two followed his lead. Sean ran over to where John was standing. "He doesn't have him," Max said. "I can tell."

I walked over to John and put my hands on his face. He looked like he thought I was going to kiss him or something and got very nervous. "Lilly, don't get me in trouble."

"Shut up," I said. "Look at me." He looked into my eyes. "Did you take him, John?"

"No baby, this is the first I've heard about it." I searched his eyes for something... anything that would tell me he had my son. Finally I pulled my hands off of his face and looked at Max with tears in my eyes. "I almost wish he was lying. He doesn't have him."

"I'm going to start looking for him, though." He picked up his cell phone.

"John, don't tell me that. I can't know about your interference or I have to stop you." He paused. "But if you find him..."

"Of course," John interrupted. "I will call you first."

"What about your sister, John? Does she have any reason to take him?" Max asked.

"Elizabeth? How do you know Elizabeth?"

"She visited us on Easter," Hector added. "She's been with us

ever since, except for last night.”

“Oh God, not you and Elizabeth?” He said it in disgust and his face twisted a little. “Why are our families always so tangled up together?”

“She said she was here last night,” Hector continued, ignoring John’s concern. “Was she here?”

“We haven’t seen her in years,” Rory answered.

“I guess we need to check her out,” Diego said, looking at Hector.

“Check who out?” We looked at the door and Elizabeth was standing in the doorway.

“Where were you last night?” Hector asked. “What happened to visiting with your brothers?” Her face was slightly flush as though we had caught her in a lie.

“I pulled up and saw all the cars and had second thoughts,” she replied. “I stayed in a hotel.”

“Any company?” Max asked.

“How does ‘go to hell’ sound?” she answered.

“Elizabeth, I work for the FBI *and* the police. I have to know if there are any witnesses.” Hector was waiting in anticipation. She dug into her purse and pulled out a receipt. “Will this do?” She handed it to Max.

“Someone has to tell me you were there all night,” he continued. “If you had a visitor, you need to tell us.”

“Look,” Hector said. “We never made any promises to each other.” She rolled her eyes. “It’s all right if someone else was with you.”

“No one,” she answered. “I was alone.”

“Then you won’t mind if I go see the hotel desk clerk?” Max asked.

“I don’t care,” she blurted. “Hector, you don’t think I betrayed you, do you?”

“Of course not,” he answered. But I could tell he was lying.

“I think we’re done here.” Max put her receipt in his pocket. “Sorry Sean, I hope I didn’t hurt you.”

Sean made a sour face and moved a little closer to John. A

Brother Number Three

second girl came out of John's bedroom and started walking up to Max.

"Hello there." She reached for his face but he backed up quickly.

"I'm married," he told her.

"I don't mind," she replied.

"I do!" I said, getting ready to take her down.

"Beat it," Hector said. "He would never touch something *he* touched anyway." He pointed to John.

"Sure he would," John said, pointing at me. I was horrified.

"Do you want to join us?" she asked Max.

"Not interested," he answered.

She walked over to Hector and walked around him like an animal stalking her prey. He watched her carefully, almost to make sure that she didn't get too close. "Even less interested," he uttered nervously.

"How about you, big and dark one?" She moved over to Diego.

"Not on my loneliest day," he answered.

"Let's get out of here," Max stammered. "I don't want any of us to catch anything."

They all laughed and started pushing their way out of the door. I giggled as I watched how uncomfortable that girl made them all.

As we walked out, Elizabeth followed. "Wait, wait!" Hector turned around. "Are you going to the hotel?"

"Maybe later," Hector answered. "Go visit with your brothers. Give me a call later if you feel like it." She turned away and went back into the house.

"We're not going to the hotel?" I asked, a little surprised that he could be taken in so easily.

"Of course we are," Hector answered. "I didn't want her coming with us." He winked at me and smiled with that boyish grin he and Max shared and we went to the Inn where she was staying. The lobby smelled like a combination of mold and cigarette smoke. Max showed his ID, asked the clerk about the receipt, and if he could verify that she had never left the room.

“There was some guy up there with her.” He paused. “I think he was in his 30’s. He was up there all night.” He paused again. “Why don’t you ask him?” He looked up and made eye contact with Diego, almost as if he thought he knew something about all of this.

“What did he look like?” Max asked.

The clerk looked thoughtful for a minute. “You!” He pointed to Diego.

“Jorge?” Max asked, referring to their oldest brother who was currently in prison.

“I think his name was... Polo,” he quickly corrected us. “That’s right, it was Polo Montiago. That famous family that’s always on television.”

“Who the heck is Polo?” Max asked. Diego pulled his wallet out of his pants pocket and showed Max a picture. Then he showed it to the clerk. “Is that him?”

“Yes, that’s him,” he confirmed.

“He stayed all night?” Hector swallowed hard when he asked to reconfirm the information.

“All night. They left together this morning.”

“Diego?” Max asked.

“Remember the crazy old man at the church?” he answered.

“Uncle Hector?” Max continued.

“His son. We’ve always been told we resemble each other.”

“What does Elizabeth have in common with our cousin?” Max wondered.

“You mean what does he have in common with me,” Hector added. “Oh I am just sick. I invited her in. This could be my fault.”

“We don’t know she took him,” Max reminded him. “We do have to wonder how she ever got to know Polo in the first place.”

“Thank you for your help,” Max told the clerk as we all left.

“Polo,” Hector repeated. “I need to think about this.”

“Don’t stop seeing her,” Max went on. “Take one for the team and keep her close.”

“I will.” He smiled and looked at the floor. “The same appeal isn’t there anymore, but I will.”

“I don’t know,” Diego added. “All that love making should help

Brother Number Three

ease your burden.” He slapped Hector on the back and laughed.

“I wonder if all that screaming and moaning was just for show,” Max said, smiling mischievously.

“Okay, everyone shut up!” Hector shouted, obviously getting agitated. “This is not what I want to be thinking about right now.”

The whole conversation was making me uncomfortable as well. I hoped she didn’t take him but at the same time I hoped she did. At least if she had him or knew where he was, we would be closer to finding him.

We went home, and Max got a phone call. He walked off and was gone for quite a while. Diego, Hector and I were sitting in the kitchen and I could tell the two of them were wracking their brains trying to come up with a connection between Polo and Elizabeth. When Max came back, he kissed me and ran out the door. I chased him down the driveway but it was too late, he was already gone. I went back inside and Hector and Diego were standing at the door looking at me. “What’s going on with *him*?” I asked them.

“I don’t know, maybe he went to the station,” Hector answered.

“Are you going to see Elizabeth today?” Diego asked.

“Keep your pants on and I mean that,” Hector responded. Diego rolled his eyes. “I’ll leave in a few hours and go to her hotel. I think I may surprise her. You just never know who I might find there with her?”

We went about our day, business as usual. Max called and said he had a case that would keep him out all night. Hector left for Elizabeth’s hotel and Diego and I were hanging out at home together with the boys and the nanny. Diego was on best behavior. He was reading his Bible and I was reading a trashy romance novel. Hector came back home rather abruptly. He looked at me like something had happened to Max. His face was pale and expressionless.

“What is it?” We both put our books down and looked up at him.

“It’s nothing,” he said, shaking his head. “I’m going to bed.” He walked briskly down the hall and we both heard the door slam.

“Okay,” Diego started. “What was that all about?”

I got up and put my book on the couch. “Hector and I take care of each other,” I told him. “I have to go check.” Diego nodded.

I walked down to hallway to Hector’s room and knocked on the door. He didn’t answer so I glanced inside. He was sitting on his bed with his face in his hands.

“Hector, did something happen to Max?” I was almost too afraid to ask.

“Max is fine,” he said. I breathed out a sigh of relief.

“Do you want me to stay with you for a while?” I asked. He smiled weakly at me and motioned for me to sit next to him on the bed. I slipped off my sandals and sat beside him. He took my face into both of his hands. It scared me a little. “Do you ever wonder?” he asked. “Do you ever wonder what it would feel like?”

I pulled back and studied his face for some kind of answer. He looked so terribly hurt and confused. “How *what* would feel like?” I asked.

“Forget it,” he replied, still distraught.

“Why don’t I stay with you, like we used to do?” I asked. I was already in my nightclothes, so I climbed into his bed and snuggled under the covers. “Max already told me he isn’t coming home tonight,” I told him. He took off his clothes down to his boxers in his usual modest manner and slipped under the covers next to me. He spooned me like he did the last time and he never told me what had happened.

Max was out all week, every night. Hector was oddly quiet and Diego was surprisingly well behaved. On the last night I knocked on Hector’s door and peeked inside. He smiled and sat up.

“What is it, Lilly?” he asked.

“Can I stay with you?” I asked him.

“I think we need to quit this,” he answered. “It’s starting to feel way too comfortable.”

“Hector.” I walked inside and locked the door. His eyes opened wide when I did that. “I think Max is having an affair.” He didn’t even look surprised. “Hector?” My stomach took a nosedive when I actually heard the words out loud. “Hector is Max... having an

Brother Number Three

affair?" I couldn't believe it came out of my mouth like that. My Max would never sleep with another woman. *I* was the weak one; *he* was the strong one. "Hector, you had better tell me!"

"Lilly, why don't we spend the night together again," he said. "I could use the company."

"Oh my gosh! He *is* sleeping with another woman. Oh my gosh!" My legs gave out and I sank to the floor. Hector grabbed me and scooped me into his arms and put me on the bed. He looked at me for a minute, as though he was carefully selecting his words.

"I drove to see Elizabeth the other night and I saw Max's Beamer parked in the parking lot," he continued. "I went up to Elizabeth's room and..." he took a deep breath, "Max was there."

"Elizabeth?" That startled me. He hated her. "It doesn't mean they were having sex," I answered. "Maybe he was interrogating her."

"Oh Lilly," he said, shaking his head in disappointment. He continued to stroke my hair and tears formed in his eyes. "I heard them making love. She was screaming out his name... they were definitely having sex."

I got up and started pacing. "This can't be happening." I could feel my eyes well up with tears but I fought them back with the anger that was being unleashed inside of me. "Did you tell them you were there?"

"No, I just left." He pulled me by the arm to sit back down on the bed with him.

"No!" I screamed. "This is *not* happening!" I began to cry and he pulled me close. He wiped my tears with his fingers and then he lay down under the covers pulling me down with him. I snuggled up against his muscular chest and sobbed for a while. Some time had passed and I was able to regain control. I rolled over so he could spoon me. After a few minutes I rolled back over so that we were face to face and I kissed him.

"You don't want to do this," he warned. "You're just angry. You want to punish him."

"I do wonder what it would feel like," I answered. "Kiss me, Hector."

“No, I can’t do that,” he said smiling. I think I was amusing him.

I reached up and kissed him again. He pushed me back a little. “If I kiss you one time, will you stop teasing me?”

“Yes, I promise.” I smiled and braced myself.

“It’s not going to hurt,” he said playfully. “You don’t have to look like I’m about to kill you.”

I laughed. He took my face with one of his hands and kissed me. He took his other hand and put it under my tee shirt and slid his fingers up my bare back. He kissed me over and over again and moved his hand to the side of my breast where my heart was pounding, furiously. I was sure he could feel it. He pulled his hand away suddenly and said, “Oh Lilly, what are you doing to me?” I moaned a little and pulled him closer. “You are playing with fire, girl.” He backed up again. “Once we cross that line... it’s crossed.”

“What do you mean?” I asked. “We’ll still be us, won’t we?”

“Oh, no we won’t,” he answered, obviously still amused. “Once we’re inside each other.” He paused. “Once you call out my name instead of Max’s... feelings that we may not realize we have may start to surface.”

“I’m ready for that,” I told him.

“I’m a little *afraid* of that,” he continued. He stroked my hair back away from my face. “What if I fall in love with you? Then what?”

“I think we’ve had feelings of some kind for each other for a while now, don’t you?” I admitted.

“Having feelings and acting on those feelings are two entirely different things.” He kissed me after he said that. “What if it’s really good and we want to do it again?” He touched my cheek with his fingers and put his lips gently upon my neck. Chills started cascading down my spine.

“Hector,” I whispered. He moved his lips onto mine and I could feel myself losing control of my willpower. “Take me across that line.”

“Are you really sure?” he asked. “Because I am seconds away from not being able to stop.”

Brother Number Three

"I'm very sure," I answered. I pulled my tee shirt off over my head and he let out a groan. The look of desire on his face engulfed me. "Is that a yes?" I asked, barely able to catch my breath.

He pulled me close and began to caress my breasts with his lips. I could hear myself moan even though I knew what we were doing was supposed to be a secret. He kissed me all the way down my body and along the inside of my thigh. He brought me to the edge of my peak and thrust himself back inside of me a second time. He did this over and over again until I had to beg him to take me there - all the way there. When he did, I let out the loudest yell I had ever made before. My body was shivering with pleasure. He put his lips next to my ear and called out my name as he too exploded with satisfaction. When it was all over he whispered, "What are you doing to me, Lilly?"

We collapsed breathlessly as we heard a pounding on the door and Diego's voice saying, "Brother number three!"

Hector laughed. "Shut up!" he yelled back.

"Why *brother number three*?" I asked. "Because you're third born?"

"It's an old family joke," he answered. "When you're number one, you're the guy the girl met first and married. When you're number two, you're the guy she *really* wanted in the first place. When you're brother number three," he stopped and laughed a little, "you're just the guy who can't get his own girl."

"I think I remember you telling me that before," I answered.

"Since I am the third born, I get that joke a lot," he continued.

"It's not like that with us, Hector, you know that."

"It's okay Lilly, I'm a big boy. I can handle it," he assured me, still appearing amused.

"Is he going to tell Max?" I asked with a sudden burst of reality and fear all mixed up together.

"I have covered so many times for the two of you..." He was still trying to catch his breath. "He wouldn't dare."

"That was the best love I have ever had," I confessed nervously. "Wow! Where did you learn to do that?" He laughed with self-assuredness.

“You have no idea how much I want to rub that in Max’s face right now.” He smiled. “But I know, I can’t do that.”

“You’re funny,” I said. “A real charmer.”

“Actually, this is the best love *I* have ever had, if you can believe that,” he continued, much to my surprise. “I’m not sure if it’s because it is so very forbidden or because... well... because we really do have feelings for each other.” Then his expression changed. “How do you feel?” He picked my chin up with his fingers. “Are you all right?”

“I see how crossing the line can change things,” I reluctantly admitted. “I feel warm... satisfied.” I paused collecting my thoughts for a minute. “Like I can’t wait until the next time.”

He smiled and kissed me. “I had a feeling this would change things.”

“How are you feeling?” I asked. Every nerve ending in my body was afraid to hear the answer to that one.

“Pleased, warm, guilty...” He pulled me close and I rested my head on his chest. “Oh Lilly, this is bad.”

“How is it bad?” I asked.

“I can *not* fall in love with you.” He shook his head. “This is not supposed to happen.”

“I know.” I tightened the hug that I had on his body. “It feels really good though. At least right now it does.”

“Wait until we have to face Diego and Max. It might not feel so good then,” he reminded me.

“When can we do it again?” I asked. He laughed and ran his fingers through my matted hair.

“Right now, if you want,” he answered. So we made love again. When we woke in the morning it was 8:00 and we panicked thinking that Max might already be home.