To finish writing her exposé on art collectors, Zoe Chandler has fled to a secluded lake house where a muscle-bound neighbor in cargo shorts catches her attention. The problem: he likes seclusion too. Haunted by his past in the CIA, he isn’t looking for company. But when Zoe’s controversial book brings a threat to her door, she begs Nick to protect her from danger…and keep her close. With his own trouble brewing, he’s not sure he can trust her—but she’ll do everything in her power to persuade him.

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My Personal Review:
Zoe Chandler is renting a place in Ely for seclusion and finishing up her first draft of an expose manuscript on art collectors. It may be completed as early as next month. Joe, the man who does her leg work, has found a whole lot of evidence about the Willerbys’ collection and Zoe intends to tell all in her book. Roberto Fiorilli is her contact in the Tutela Patrimonio Culturale (TPC). The Italian TPC is charged with protecting Italy’s cultural heritage and pursues any case of found artifacts to get them back from private collectors. The Willerby couple has the largest collection of ancient artifacts in the world. Knowing Zoe is digging for information on them, and finding it, they are determined to get Zoe to cease the project. Buying Zoe off is useless. So they will have to send people to shut Zoe up permanently. Needing a bodyguard, Zoe decides to hire the guy next door for the job. She can tell simply by looking at him that the guy could easily do the job.
Nick Mirovic still has nightmares since the NATO peacekeeping mission in Kosovo. He walked out afterward, refusing to do anything more with Harry Miller, who is now on the short list for C.I.A. director. Nick knows that the odds are extremely good that Harry will attempt to kill him. It is not as though Harry did not try once before, and almost succeeded. Nick knows too much about all the accidental deaths in Kosovo, and Harry does not like loose ends. But Nick learned a lot while dealing with the C.I.A. He is now very skilled in booby-traps for one thing.

When Zoe approaches him for the position as her bodyguard his first thought is that she is a plant by Harry. Her story about the Willerbys’ “diplomatic ambassadors” sounds plausible and Zoe never once showed any tell-tale signs of lying. Nick knows he should flat out say no. He even tries to scare her off by letting her know that some bad men may be after him too. In the end, Nick’s libido has him agreeing to protect her, but she would need to travel with him to an outpost he has in Ontario. The two strike a deal and dice are rolled.

***** Novels by Susan Johnson are more addictive than chocolate! This one is no exception. The story opens up with a scene that grabbed me immediately and held on tighter than Super Glue until the very end. Even the scenes where the characters are meeting and telling about themselves are written in such a way that the element of danger constantly vibrates underneath. Unlike many Suspense and Thriller novels, this one does not slow down toward the middle. This is non-stop and fast paced. Brilliant! *****

Reviewed by Detra Fitch of Huntress Reviews.

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