



## The Tomb of Hercules: A Novel (Nina Wilde and Eddie Chase)

*By Andy McDermott*

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AN ANCIENT WARRIOR.  
AN INCREDIBLE TREASURE.  
A LETHAL ENEMY.

It's the opportunity of a lifetime—the chance to prove that a tomb containing the remains of the legendary hero Hercules actually exists. If American archaeologist Nina Wilde can locate it, it will be the most important historical find ever unearthed. But as Nina and her ex-SAS bodyguard, Eddie Chase, begin their search, it's clear that others want to find the tomb—and the unimaginable riches within—and will do anything to get there first.

Who will find the tomb of Hercules first, and what fantastic treasure does it hold? From New York to Shanghai, from Switzerland to the diamond mines of Botswana, Nina and Eddie must stay one step ahead of their enemies in a race to solve a mystery as ancient as civilization itself. But when a beautiful woman from Eddie's past joins the hunt, all the rules change—and in this life-and-death game, their next move may be the most dangerous one of all.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

“Adventure stories don’t get much more epic than this!”—*Daily Mirror*, UK

#### About the Author

**Andy McDermott** is a former journalist and movie critic who now writes novels full-time following the international success of his debut thriller, *The Hunt for Atlantis*, which has been sold around the world in more than twenty languages. He is also the author of *The Tomb of Hercules*, *The Secret of Excalibur*, *The Covenant of Genesis*, *The Pyramid of Doom*, *The Sacred Vault*, *Empire of Gold*, *Return to Atlantis*, *The Valhalla Prophecy*, and *The Shadow Protocol*. He lives in Bournemouth, England.

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#### *Chapter One*

New York City : Three Months Later

The lights of Manhattan shone like constellations of precision-aligned stars against the night sky. Eddie Chase gazed out at the spectacular panorama and sighed. He would much rather have been somewhere, anywhere, on the island—a restaurant, a bar, even a launderette—than here.

Not that the venue itself was a problem. The *Ocean Emperor* was their host’s pride and joy, a 350-foot motor cruiser on which absolutely no expense had been spared. Chase had been on luxury yachts before, but this one represented a whole new level of opulence. Had he just been with Nina and a group of close friends, he would have taken full advantage of the experience.

But apart from a handful of senior IHA staff, so far he didn’t know any of the hundred-plus guests. And he didn’t have anything in common with them either. Diplomats, politicians, titans of industry, all busy networking and deal-making with every handshake. Chase, on the other hand, was here merely as Nina’s “and guest.” This wasn’t his world.

It wasn’t Nina’s either, but she was doing everything she could to pretend it was, he thought with a frown. He knocked back the remaining red wine in his glass and turned away from the vista to face the crowd. Nina was standing with former U.S. Navy admiral turned historian Hector Amoros, the head of the IHA, and shaking hands with a tall, distinguished yet smug-looking man. *Politician*, Chase knew at a glance.

Nina glanced through the open doors in his direction. “Eddie!” she called, waving one hand to summon him. The champagne glass that had been in her other hand from practically the moment she boarded the yacht had been refilled again, he noticed. “Eddie, come here and meet the senator.”

“Yeah, coming,” he replied without enthusiasm, fingering his stiff and uncomfortable collar. A blast of noise and wind swept over the deck as he reentered the ship, another helicopter coming in to drop off more ultra-VIP guests on the yacht’s helipad. Chase and Nina had been brought to the *Ocean Emperor* by boat, as had most of the other guests. Even in the world of the superrich, there was still a pecking order. He imagined the only way to top arriving by helicopter would be to land in a Harrier jump jet.

Nina looked amazing tonight, he had to admit. The sweeping scarlet off-the-shoulder dress was a world away from the ruggedly practical clothes she had worn when he first got to know her a year and a half before, or even the Italian suits she'd adopted more recently in her role as the IHA's director of operations. Her normally red hair had been dyed a richer, darker tone for the occasion, swept and styled to highlight her carefully made-up face.

Chase ground his teeth at the mere thought of her hair. He'd complained about it all day before Nina finally made him promise to shut up.

But still . . . *five hundred dollars* for a fucking *haircut*? "Eddie," said Nina, "this is Senator Victor Dalton. Senator, this is Eddie Chase, who works for me at the IHA. And he also happens to be my boyfriend," she added.

"Nice to meet you, Senator," said Chase, shooting Nina a subtly annoyed look as he shook Dalton's hand. He recognized the name—Dalton was in the running to be the next president of the United States. That explained the two stone-faced men in dark suits watching him coldly from nearby: Secret Service agents.

"You too, Mr. Chase," Dalton answered. "English, huh? Not a Londoner, if I'm right about the accent."

"Too blood—I mean, yeah, that's right. I'm from Yorkshire."

Dalton nodded. "Yorkshire, right. Nice part of the world, I understand."

"It's not bad." Chase doubted the senator knew where Yorkshire was, or cared.

"Senator Dalton's on the IHA's funding committee," Amoros told him.

Chase smirked. "That right? Any chance of a pay raise?"

Nina's glossily lipsticked mouth shrank into a tight line, but Dalton laughed. "I'll see what I can do." He looked past Chase, his eyebrows flicking in recognition. "Say, our host approaches! Monsieur Corvus, good to meet you again!"

Chase turned to see a sleekly groomed, black-haired man in a dinner jacket. He looked to be in his midfifties. "Please," he said to Dalton as he shook hands, "René. This is a social event, yes? No need for tiresome formality!"

"Whatever you say . . . René!" Dalton chuckled.

"Thank you . . . Victor! And Nina," Corvus continued as he turned to Nina, taking her hand, "such a pleasure to meet you again." He leaned forward and kissed her on both cheeks. Nina blushed. Chase glared at the Frenchman, quickly forcing a neutral expression when he turned to face him. "And you, you must be . . ."

"Eddie Chase," Chase announced brusquely, sticking out his hand. "Nina's boyfriend."

"But of course," said Corvus, smiling as he shook his hand. "René Corvus. Welcome aboard the *Ocean Emperor*."

“Cheers.” Chase looked around at the oak-paneled room. “It’s a really nice boat you’ve got here. I suppose being a shipping magnet has its perks.”

Dalton suppressed an amused noise, while Nina let out a fluttering, slightly desperate laugh. “René’s not just a shipping *magnate*,” she said to Chase, emphasizing the pronunciation of the word through clenched teeth, “he’s also one of the IHA’s directors.”

“Nonexecutive, of course,” Corvus added modestly.

“It’s only proper that the experts like Nina should make the decisions about protecting the world’s archaeological wonders.”

“Yeah, well,” said Chase with a big fake smile, “she really does like to be in control of everything, I can tell you.”

Nina took a gulp from her glass before treating Chase to an equally false grin. “Honey, sweetie?” she said, tugging at his jacket sleeve. “Can I speak to you? Over here?” She tipped her head towards the doors.

“Of course you can, *darling*,” he replied. He nodded to the other three men. “Excuse us for a second.” The trio exchanged knowing looks as he and Nina backed away.

“What the *hell* are you doing?” Nina hissed as soon as they were what she mistakenly thought was out of earshot.

“What’re you talking about?”

“You know damn well what I’m talking about! Making an ass of yourself and embarrassing me!”

“Oh, *I’m* embarrassing *you*?” snorted Chase. “What about you and your ‘Here’s Eddie, my dogsbody at the IHA—oh, and he’s sort of my boyfriend as well’?”

“I *didn’t* say that!”

“You might as well have! And *pardon bloody me* for getting a word wrong that no bugger uses in normal conversation. Not all of us could go to the University of Poncy Vocabulary. Or afford a five-hundred-dollar haircut,” he added before he could stop himself.

Nina’s eyes narrowed into angry slits. “You *promised* me you were going to stop going on about that! The one time, the *one goddamn time* I need to look good to impress these people, and all I get is you complaining how much it cost!”

“It was *five hundred fucking dollars*!” Chase reminded her. “I can get a haircut for ten bucks!”

“Yes! And it looks like it!” Nina snapped back, waving a hand at his close-cropped, receding hair. “Besides, I’ve got a high-level job with the United Nations now. I’m earning a hell of a lot more than I was at the university— it’s not like I can’t afford it.”

“Yeah, there’s a lot of things you can afford now, aren’t there?”

“Meaning what?”

“If you can’t . . .” Chase trailed off as he saw two people descending the stairs from the upper decks. New arrivals, brought to the *Ocean Emperor* by the helicopter.

One was a Chinese man, like Chase in his midthirties, surveying the crowd of wealthy guests with an arrogant smile that suggested he considered himself to be far more important than any of them—or all of them. The other . . .

“Scuse me,” Chase said, his fight with Nina completely forgotten. He started for the doors. “I need to get some air.”

Nina blocked his way, confused and still angry.

“What? No you don’t! What did you mean, I can afford a lot of stuff?” “Forget it. I . . .” He looked at the stairs again. It was too late. She’d seen him.

The Chinese man swaggered through the crowd towards Corvus, people moving out of his path as if he were sweeping them aside with an invisible force field. Following a couple of paces behind was a younger woman. Unlike him, she was Caucasian. Brunette, stunningly beautiful, expensively attired . . . and wearing an expression of quiet sadness.

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