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Sempre (English Edition)



Par J.M. Darhower
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Par J.M. Darhower : Sempre (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sempre (English Edition):

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA sexy ebook about two seventeen-year-oldsone a victim of human trafficking; the other the son of the man who enslaved herwho fall in love and question everything they ever believedHaven Antonelli and Carmine DeMarco grew up under vastly different circumstances. Haven, a second-generation slave, was isolated in the middle of the desert, her days full of hard work and terrifying abuse. Carmine, born into a wealthy Mafia family, lived a life of privilege and excess. Now, a twist of fate causes their worlds to collide. Entangled in a web of secrets and lies, they learn that while different on the surface, they have more in common than anyone would think. In a world full of chaos, where money and power rule, Haven and Carmine yearn to break free, but a string of events that began before either of them were born threatens to

destroy them instead. Murder and betrayal are a way of life, and nothing comes without a price especially not freedom. But how much will they have to sacrifice? Can they escape their pasts? And, most of all, what does it mean to be free?

Extrait Sempre 1 The hot, dry air burned Havens chest. She gasped, struggling to breathe, as the dust kicked up by her frantic feet made it hard for her to see. It wasnt as if it would help anyway, since it was pitch black out and she had no idea where she was. Everything appeared the same in every direction, nothing but desert all around. Her feet felt like they were on fire as every muscle in her body screamed for her to stop. It grew harder and harder to continue with each step, her strength deteriorating as her adrenaline faded. A bang rang out, her footsteps faltering as she swung in the direction of the noise, spotting a faint glow of light in the distance. A house. She darted toward it, trying to yell for help but no sound escaped her throat. Her body revolted against her, giving out when she needed it most. The light grew brighter the harder she ran until all she saw was a flash of white. Blinded, she tripped and collapsed to the ground, pain running through her in waves as the light surrounding her burned out entirely. The basement was dark and damp, the only exit a set of metal doors locked with heavy chains. With no windows, it was sweltering, the air polluted with the stench of sewer. Dried blood tinged the concrete floor like old splatters of red paint, a grotesque canvas of prolonged misery. Haven lay in the corner, her frail body unmoving, except for the subtle rise and fall of her chest. Her long brown hair, usually somewhat frizzy, was so matted it appeared only half its length. By societys standards, she was as sickly as they come. Jutting collarbones and limbs like twigs, her ribs could be counted through her bruised and bloodied skin. She thought herself to be healthy, though. Shed seen people worse than her before. The day had begun like every other. Haven woke up at dawn and spent most of the morning cleaning. In the afternoon she spent some time with her mama, the two of them sitting against the side of the old wooden house. Neither spoke as the sound of the television filtered out of an open window above them. The news told of a hurricane brewing in the south and a war waging in Iraq, the significance of both lost on Haven. Her mama said listening to it was a waste of time, because their slice of the world was barely a blip on the big radar, but Haven couldnt help herself. The five oclock news was the highlight of her day. She needed to feel like she was real, that something or someone shed had contact with still existed out in the world, somewhere. Screaming started inside the house, interrupting the news as fighting made its way into the living room. Haven climbed to her feet, not wanting to be caught eavesdropping, when she heard something that stopped her in her tracks. I want the girl gone! I know, Katrina! Im working on it! Not hard enough! Katrina was the lady of the house, a harsh woman with short black hair and wickedly pointy features. Get rid of her already! Get rid of her already. The words suffocated Haven. The fighting moved from the living room to upstairs, their voices fading as tense silence crept in. She was in serious trouble. This worlds scary, her mama whispered. People will hurt you. Theyll do things to you, sick things... the kind of things I hope you never know about. And theyll trick you. Theyll lie to you. You have to be on guard at all times, baby girl. Haven didnt like where the conversation was going. Why are you telling me this? Because you need to know, she said. You have to run. Haven stared at her in disbelief. Run? Yes, tonight. Theres more to life than this, and Im afraid of what will happen if you stay here. But I cant run, Mama. I dont know whats out there! People out there can help you. Tears formed in Havens eyes. I cant leave you. Its the only way, she said. You have to get away from here, find someone and tell them who you are. Theyll Save you? Haven asked, finishing her sentence. Will they come here? Maybe. Something sparked in her eyes. Hope? Then Ill do it, Haven said, for you. After nightfall, when Haven thought no one would look for her until morning, she quietly slipped away. She ran for the world outside of the ranch, determined to find help so shed never have to return. Waking up in the musty basement, she realized shed failed. A clanking jolted Haven awake, a blinding light assaulting her. Cringing, she noticed the doors open and someone standing a few feet away. A man with olive skin approached, his dark hair slicked back on his head. He wore black pants and a white button-up shirt, the sleeves rolled up to his elbows. Haven gaped at the silver gun holstered to his belt. Her voice cracked. Are you the police? The man knelt near her, setting a small black bag on the floor. He didnt answer but gave her a bemused smile as he pressed his large palm to her forehead. Haven closed her drowsy eyes and got lost in the silence until the man finally spoke. She opened her eyes again, surprised by his gentle tone, but recoiled when she met a hostile glare. Behind the stranger stood someone she knew well. Michael, or Master as he preferred to be called, scowled at her with his dark eyes, the whites of them dingy yellow. His lip was curled in a sneer, his wiry hair graying around the ears. Relax, child, the stranger said. Its going to be all right. She looked at him, wondering if she could believe it, and panicked when he pulled a needle out of his bag. She whimpered, trying to move away, but he grabbed her and jabbed it into her shoulder blade. Im not going to hurt you, he said, letting go and handing

the offending little weapon to Michael. Im only trying to help. Help? Her mama had told her people out there would help, but shed also warned her that some of them would lie. Haven wasnt sure which group this man fell in to, but she leaned toward the latter. Yes, help. The man stood. You need to rest. Save your energy. He walked away, and her master followed him without saying a word. Haven lay there, too drained to make sense of it, and her eyes closed when she heard their voices again. She looks horrible! the man yelled, all trace of kindness gone. How could you let this happen, Antonelli? I didnt mean for it to, Michael said. I didnt know shed try to run! This started before yesterday, and you know it! You shouldve been watching her! I know. Im sorry. You should be. Haven started to slip away, but before sleep took her, the man spoke once more. Ill give you what you want for her, but Im not happy about this. At all. Haven awoke later, still on the concrete floor. Every inch of her ached, and she grimaced as she struggled to sit up. A throat cleared nearby, the stranger once again standing in the basement with her. How do you feel? She wrapped her arms protectively around herself as he moved toward her. Okay. His voice was calm but firm. The truth. Sore, she reluctantly admitted. My head hurts. Im not surprised. He knelt down and reached toward her, the movement making her flinch. Im not going to hit you, child. He felt her forehead and grasped her chin, surveying her face. Do you know who I am? She shook her head, although something about him struck her as familiar. She thought she mightve seen him from a distance before, one of the visitors shed been kept away from throughout the years. Im Dr. Vincent DeMarco. Doctor? Theyd never gotten medical attention before, even for the severest of problems. Yes, Im a doctor, he said, but Im also an associate of the Antonellis. I arrived after you went missing. You suffered a minor concussion, and youre dehydrated, but theres no permanent damage that I can see. Youre lucky you were found. You couldve died out there. A sinking feeling settled into the pit of Havens stomach, a small part of her wishing she would have. It had to be better than being killed at the hands of a monster. Dr. DeMarco looked at his watch. Do you think you can walk? We should leave soon. We? Yes, youre going to be staying with me now. She shook her head, cringing as her pain intensified. I cant leave my mama. She needs me! Maybe you shouldve thought about that before you ran away. She tried to explain, her words sluggish. They were going to kill me. I didnt have a choice. You always have a choice, child, he said. In fact, you have one right now. Youre giving me a choice? Of course I am. You can come with me. Or? He shrugged. Or you stay here, and Ill leave without you. But before you decide, tell me something. You ran away because you thought they were going to kill you. What do you think theyll do to you now? She stared at her dirt-caked feet. So I either go with you or I die? What kind of choice is that? One I suppose you wont like making, he said, but it is a choice, nonetheless. Tense silence brewed between them. Haven didnt like this manipulating man. What do you want me for? She was used to being punished for speaking out of turn, but she had nothing to lose. What would he do, kill her? I never said I wanted you, but Im a busy man. I can use someone to cook and clean. You cant pay someone? She regretted the question immediately and backtracked. At least it would be legal. I think this is illegal. Isnt it? Truthfully, she wasnt sure. I suppose it technically is, but Before he could finish, shouts rang out above them in the house. Haven flinched at the loud thump and startled cry, tears stinging her eyes when she realized Michael was hurting her mama. Dr. DeMarco sighed. Look, Im not going to wait around all night waiting for you. If you dont want my help, so be it. Stay here and die. The man stood to leave. Haven climbed to her feet, muttering, Why me? She wanted to believe there was a point to it all, but she wasnt sure anymore. He gave a slight shake of the head. I wish I knew. The soles of Havens feet burned as Dr. DeMarco led her out of the basement. Im not chasing you if you run, he said, laughing bitterly when her panicked eyes darted to his gun. Im not going to shoot you, either. Youre not? No, he said. Ill shoot your mother instead. She gasped as he let go of her arm. Please dont hurt her! Stay where you are and I wont have to, he said, walking away. Although her legs were weak and she felt dizzy, Haven refused to move an inch as he disappeared inside the house. The sky glowed bright orange as the sun dipped below the horizon, casting distorted shadows along the ground in front of her. She didnt know what day it was, had no clue how much time had passed. She scanned what she could see of the property, searching for some sign of her mama. She wanted to call out to her, to find her. Shewanted to ask what she was supposed to do. But her mama never appeared. The sun disappeared, and out of the darkness came Dr. DeMarco again. He didnt look at her as he opened a door to a black car. Time to go. Timidly, Haven slid into the rigid passenger seat and peered around as he slammed the door. The harsh stench of fresh leather in the confined space made her feel like a weight was pressing on her chest. She had trouble breathing, struggling to stay calm when he climbed in beside her. Dr. DeMarco frowned as he reached into the backseat for his bag. He pulled out another needle and stuck her without a word. Blackness came again. The small road cut through the dense forest, the

painted lines so faded it appeared made for one car. A new highway diverted traffic from the area, so the only people who navigated there were locals and those who lost their way. Haven lay slumped over in the passenger seat of a car, woozy as she watched the trees whipping past in the darkness. She turned from the window, fighting sickness. Her eyes found the clock on the dashboard, the numbers glowing a quarter after twelve. She'd been out for hours. I didn't mean to sedate you for so long, Dr. DeMarco said, noticing her movement. You slept the entire flight. In an airplane? He nodded. It was her first time even being near a plane. She wasn't sure whether to be glad it was over or disappointed she'd missed it. Where are we now? Almost home. Home. Haven didn't know what that meant. Before we get there, I want to make something clear, Dr. DeMarco said. You're going to have some normalcy living with us, but don't mistake my kindness for weakness. I expect your loyalty, and if you betray my trust in any way, there will be consequences. As long as you remember that, we won't have any problems. He paused. I want you to be comfortable with us, though, so you can speak freely as long as you're respectful. I'd never disrespect you, sir. Never say never. Sometimes we don't realize when we're being disrespectful. Haven wondered what he meant by that, but he didn't explain. Do you have any questions? You said us. Do you have a family? I do. I have two sons, ages seventeen and eighteen. Oh. She was on the verge of panicking. She hadn't been around many people her age and had never had any contact with teenage boys. Studying him, she noticed the plain gold band gleaming under the moonlight on his left hand. Married. And your wife, sir? Their mama? The moment the question came from her lips, Dr. DeMarco's demeanor shifted. His posture stiffened and his jaw clenched as he stared straight ahead, his foot pressing harder on the gas pedal. He gripped the steering wheel so tightly his knuckles turned as white as bone, conversation ceasing. So much for speaking freely. The car turned off the pavement and drove down a bumpy path that cut through the dense trees. They came to a clearing, and Haven gaped at the house that came into sight. The old plantation home stood three stories high, with columns spanning the height of the structure. The white paint was faded, tinting the exterior a dull gray. A large porch wrapped around the first floor, with smaller ones running the lengths of the second and third. Dr. DeMarco parked between a smaller black car and a silver one, and Haven stepped out cautiously, taking in her surroundings. All she could see in the darkness beyond were trees, while a porch light made the gravel faintly visible beneath her feet. Dr. DeMarco grabbed his luggage before heading toward the front door, and she limped behind with empty hands, having nothing of her own to carry. She'd never had much, all of her clothes ragged hand-me-downs that she'd left behind without a choice. After stepping onto the porch, Dr. DeMarco pressed his finger to a small panel on a rectangular keypad. It beeped before he opened the door. Haven stepped into the house, pausing as he closed the door and punched something into an identical keypad on the inside. A green light flashed as a lock clicked into place, the door automatically securing itself. Its wired into a computer network, Dr. DeMarco explained. The house is impenetrable, the glass bulletproof and windows nailed shut. You need a code or fingerprint authorization to get in or out. What happens if there's a power failure, sir? It's on a backup generator. And if the generator doesn't work? Then I suppose you'll stay locked inside until power's restored. Will I have a code? Maybe someday, when I feel I can trust you with one, he said. After what you pulled in Blackburn, I'm sure you can understand my position. I'm a lot closer to civilization than they were. She couldn't understand his position, refused to try. What happens if there's an emergency? There are ways around the system, but I don't foresee any situations that require you to know those tricks. But what if there's a fire and I need to get out? Dr. DeMarco gazed at her. You're a crafty one, aren't you? Before she could respond, he turned away. I'll show you around. Straight in front of them was the family room, with several couches and a television on one of the walls. A fireplace was tucked in the back beside a piano, the wooden floor shining from the glow of the moon streaming through the large windows. To the left was a kitchen filled with stainless-steel appliances, an island in the center with pots and pans hanging above it. The dining room behind that had the longest table Haven had ever seen, big enough to accommodate fourteen. She wondered how often all those seats were taken, unable to imagine cooking for that many people. To the right were a bathroom and a laundry room, as well as an office tucked underneath the staircase. The second floor belonged to Dr. DeMarco's bedroom and a bathroom, along with another office and a spare room. Some of the doors had keypads beside them, a sign Haven wouldn't be going into those rooms. They continued up to the third floor, the stairs ending in a large open space. A window lined the back wall, in front of it stood a table with two plush gray chairs. The other three walls held doors leading to bedrooms, but the area itself was packed full of bookcases. Hundreds of dusty books lined the shelves. Haven stared in shock, having never dreamed of seeing so many before. Our library, Dr. DeMarco said. It doesn't get much use and I imagine it still won't, considering Antonelli said you couldn't read. Haven could

feel his eyes on her, but she remained quiet and didnt meet his gaze. A door opened nearby and a boy stepped out from one of the bedrooms. He was tall and lanky, with shaggy brown hair. Dr. DeMarco turned to him. Dominic, this is, uh... Shes going to be staying here. Dominic eyed her curiously. Hey. Hello, sir, she said, her voice shaky. His laughter echoed through the room. Oh, that wont do. Just call me Dom. Dom headed downstairs as Dr. DeMarco led her across the library, striding past the middle door without a word and stopping at the last. This is where youll sleep. Go in. Ill be back. Haven hesitantly stepped inside. The furniture, the curtains, and the carpet were all plain, everything a dull white with dustings of wood. Most of the house held the same effect, the walls empty and rooms uncluttered. There were no pictures and no knick-knacks, nothing to hold any sentimental value. Nothing to give her any idea of what type of people she was dealing with. She still stood just inside the doorway when Dr. DeMarco returned with a pile of clothes. Theyll be big, but at least theyre clean. She took them. Thank you, sir. Youre welcome, he said. Get cleaned up and settle in. This is your home now, too. Hed said it again. Home. She had lived with the Antonellis her entire life and never heard it referred to as home. Dr. DeMarco walked away but stopped after a few steps. Oh, and help yourself to anything in the kitchen if youre hungry, but dont try to burn down my house. Doing so wont get you a code any faster. Ill let you burn to death before I let you outsmart me. Haven ran her hand along the fluffy comforter. Shed never had a bed before, much less a bedroom of her own. Her nights in Blackburn had been spent in the stables, in a back stall on a worn-down mattress with some of the springs exposed. The temperature was comfortable there at night, so she hadnt had much use for blankets, one of the ratty covers they kept for the horses enough for the occasions it did get cold. She preferred not to use them, because they were itchy on her skin, nothing like the material against her fingertips now. After stripping out of her old clothes, Haven went into the connecting bathroom. A large tub sat in the corner with a long counter and a sink across from it, a rectangular mirror on the wall above the sink. Hesitantly, Haven surveyed her reflection, her sunken cheeks and the cuts covering her face. A bruise ran along the right side of her jaw while blood caked her hairline from a gash in her forehead. It was like a layer of dirt had settled on her body, tinting her skin a slightly darker shade, but it wasnt enough to cover her scars. There were dozens she could see and even more on her back, constant reminders of what shed been through. The bruises faded and sometimes so did the memories, but the scars... the scars remained. She drew a bath and slid into it, hissing as the scalding water came into contact with her skin. She scrubbed every inch of her body raw as tears pooled in her eyes, overwhelmed and unsure about what would come of her. Dr. DeMarco had been civilized, but she wasnt fooled by his gentle voice and small tokens of independence. Nothing came without a price. While Dr. DeMarco might not have looked like a monster, she wasnt nave enough to believe one didnt live inside of him, lurking under the surface. Experience told her one always did. She got out after the water cooled and found a towel in a small cabinet. It smelled like flowers and was soft against her skin as she wrapped it around her body. Heading back into the bedroom, she grabbed the clothes and slipped on the black flannel pants. They hung limp on her frail form, and she had to roll them up to keep them in place. She grabbed a white t-shirt and unfolded it, noticing the football on the front. Turning it over, she flinched at the big black number 3 covering the back. Time passed slowly as sleep evaded Haven. She huddled under the blanket, trying to find comfort, but the stillness was unsettling. It was too new, too foreign. A prickly sensation crept across her skin as the walls closed in on her, hunger and anxiety taking its toll. In the early morning hours, it got to be too much, and she quietly slipped downstairs. The hallways were dark, but she noticed a subtle glow of light in the kitchen. Tiptoeing to the doorway, she peeked inside and saw a boy in front of the refrigerator. He was a few inches taller than her, his skin the color of coffee with a lot of extra cream. A few days worth of stubble accented his sharp features, and his thick hair was dark, shorter on the sides than on the top. His gray shirt hugged his chest, the short sleeves shoved up to his shoulders. Ink marked his right arm, a tattoo she couldnt make out in the darkness, and he had on a pair of pants identical to the ones she wore. He drank juice from a glass, unaware of her presence, and Haven took a step back to flee. The movement caught his eye, and he turned in her direction, the drink slipping from his hand when he spotted her. It hit the floor and shattered, the spray of liquid soaking his pants. Jumping back, he looked down at himself. Shit! The curse sent Haven into a panic, and she darted forward to clean up the mess. He bent down at the same moment Haven dove to his feet, their heads colliding. The force knocked him backward, a piece of jagged glass stabbing him when he caught himself on the floor. He cursed again as blood oozed from the small gash and stuck his wounded thumb into his mouth. She noticed, as she looked at him, a scar running through his right eyebrow, slicing it in half. His gaze lifted, a pair of vibrant green eyes greeting Haven, intense passion swirling in the color that took her breath away. She broke eye contact, her

chest tightening as she snatched a towel from the counter to clean up the juice. Tears streamed down her cheeks as she pushed the glass into a pile, but she was disrupted when his hand seized her wrist. She yelped at the zap of static electricity, and he blinked rapidly, just as caught off guard. Whats wrong with you? he asked, gripping her tightly. Im sorry, she said. Please dont punish me. Before either could get out another word, the overhead light flicked on and Dr. DeMarcos harsh voice rang out. Let her go! The boy dropped her wrist so fast it was as if hed been savagely burned. Sorry, he said, the word barely audible as he climbed to his feet. Haven struggled to breathe as Dr. DeMarco poured a glass of water from the faucet and handed it to her. Drink, he commanded. She forced the water down and gagged, her stomach more interested in expelling its contents. What happened here? They replied at the same time, answering in sync. It was an accident. It wont happen again, sir, Haven continued. I swear. Dr. DeMarco blinked a few times. Its not often two people accept blame around here. As if on cue, the boy spoke again. Yeah, well, it wasnt really my fault. She scared me. Shes a fucking ninja or something. Dr. DeMarco pinched the bridge of his nose. Watch your mouth, son. Go get ready for school. He started to argue, but Dr. DeMarcos hand shot up to silence him. The sudden movement startled Haven. She recoiled, bracing to be struck. The boy eyed her strangely. What the hells wrong with? I said go! Dr. DeMarco said. I dont have time for you. Fine, what-the-fuck-ever. Dr. DeMarco turned to her after the boy stormed out. He isnt usually... well, never mind; thats a lie. He is usually like this. Hes finicky and angry, but thats neither here nor there. Hes set in his ways, and it doesnt matter what I do. Carmine is who he is. Carmine. A strange name for a strange boy. Why are you up, anyway? he asked. I figured youd sleep most of the day to recover. I didnt know what time I was supposed to get up. You get up whenever you get up, he said. You can go back to bed now. But what about? He didnt let her finish. Ill handle this. Dont worry about doing anything today. Just rest.

Prsentation de l'diteurA sexy ebook about two seventeen-year-oldsone a victim of human trafficking; the other the son of the man who enslaved herwho fall in love and question everything they ever believedHaven Antonelli and Carmine DeMarco grew up under vastly different circumstances. Haven, a second-generation slave, was isolated in the middle of the desert, her days full of hard work and terrifying abuse. Carmine, born into a wealthy Mafia family, lived a life of privilege and excess. Now, a twist of fate causes their worlds to collide. Entangled in a web of secrets and lies, they learn that while different on the surface, they have more in common than anyone would think. In a world full of chaos, where money and power rule, Haven and Carmine yearn to break free, but a string of events that began before either of them were born threatens to destroy them instead. Murder and betrayal are a way of life, and nothing comes without a priceespecially not freedom. But how much will they have to sacrifice? Can they escape their pasts? And, most of all, what does it mean to be free?