The Melting Pot

When they pulled up to the restaurant, there were a couple of valets waiting. The first opened Julie's door helping her out, then he helped Kate. The second walked around and took the keys from AJ as he and Nick walked around to join the girls.
They offered the girls their arms and escorted them inside. AJ led them inside to the hostess.

"Reservations for McLean. " He said.
The girl in her mid-twenties looked up from her podium. She stared in shock at AJ, as if she recognized him. Julie cleared her throat to get the girls attention. The girl snapped back to reality.

"I'm sorry," She said. "Yes your table is ready for you Mr. McLean. Please follow me."

As they followed the hostess to their table Julie noticed the heads turn to watch them. People were in various types of clothing, from jeans and tee shirts, to suits and dresses. But no one there was as beautifully dressed as they were. Many did not know who they were, but the guys had an air about them. It was obvious to anyone that glanced their way that they were used to first class.

The Melting Pot had once been a very old library and had been converted into the fondue restaurant just a few years before. The building had multiple levels, with elegant wood staircases and balconies. The lights were subdued, giving the restaurant a very romantic atmosphere. The place was crowded, as was normal for the restaurant.

They were lead to a staircase and went up one flight of stairs. They were sat at a booth in front a balcony and across from of a stain glass window. There were six other booths in the area. And all but one was occupied. The girls slid into the booth first, the guys following. The hostess offered the guys a menu each, explaining that there was the option of individual courses or a set of pre-selected meals.

They all agreed to try the four course meal. It would start with a salad. Then on to the cheese fondue, followed by meats and veggies, finished off with a dessert fondue. Julie looked over at Kate, envious of her empire waist dress. She was going to be so full when they left that she would look pregnant too.

While eating their salads, AJ's phone went off. He had had it on vibrate, so both he and Julie felt its notification. He tried to ignore it, but it continued to go off. He finally excused himself to check it and started laughing.

"Ha! I win!" He said, looking right at Nick. The girls were confused.
"Maybe not. I turned my phone off, as a curtesy, so I might have been first." At that point Nick took his phone out of his pocket and turned it on.
"Someone wanna tell me what is going on?" Kate asked.
Nick looked over at her as he waited for his phone to boot up.

"While we were sitting in the cafe in Nordstroms, we where recognized by two girls. So we have this ongoing BSB thing about who gets recognized or tweeted about first." Nick explained.
"And since the girls that saw us said hi to me first, I called it, that I would get the first tweet." AJ pointed out.

"So," Julie said, bringing attention to her, "This means that people will now know you are in Omaha?"
"Yeah, Basically," AJ said.
"Does this mean I can't take you all to the zoo tomorrow?"
Kate looked at her funny.
"You do realize that there is a few inches of snow on the ground right now, right?" She pointed out.
"Yeah. So? There are seven warm buildings in the first part of the zoo. I love going in the winter. Trust me, it will be fine. Well, on that aspect anyways."
AJ took her hand and kissed her knuckles.
"I think going to the zoo will be perfect."
Kate leaned into Nick.
"So what does the twitters say?"
Nick started reading.
"Someone named @missbsb_girl just posted 'I just saw @nickcarter at Nordstroms in Omaha' And another one named @SweetD_Lady posted 'You are wrong He is in Canada.' Should I read more?"
Julie turned to AJ.
"You should read some too," she said.

He looked at his phone and was trying to be funny by using a slightly high pitched voice, as if he was immitaing a girl.
"'OMG, @skulleeroz is in Omaha, right in front of me! Squee.'" He laughed before he read another. "You are not gonna beleive this one. From @songbyrd.'@skulleeroz is in my restaurant with @nickcarter right now. And two girls.'"

Everyone looked around, trying to figure out who had posted it. Was it the hostess, or any one of the servers walking around? They had no clue. At least she hadn't posted the restaurant name.

They had just finished their salads when the hostess brought a young couple to sit at a booth close to them. The woman carried a very small baby in her arms; the man had the car seat. Nick glanced at the couple as they got arranged in their booth. Because of where he sat, he had a perfect view of the young woman and her infant every time he lifted his head up. He noticed the baby was wrapped in a little pink blanket.

The baby made a small noise as she stretched in her mother's arms. She couldn't be more than a few weeks old. Nick felt his heart pounding in his chest. The mother had a glow about her, which made him want to look over at Kate. He felt the knots in his stomach pull again as she look over at him. He was still amazed that the beautiful woman beside him was going to be the mother of his child. The knots in him were from pure joy and terror, in the same moment.
It made him realize he never wanted to leave her side.

Kate smiled at Nick when she saw him looking at her. She wasn't sure what he was thinking, but the look in his eyes said so much. She leaned into him and he took the hint. Their lips met ever so slightly.

"I love you so much, Katy," He whispered against her soft lips.
"I love you too."

Nick was about to kiss her again, with a little more passion, when the server returned. He had a fondue pot in his hands. He set it on the built in burner and turned up the heat. The server quickly explained about the swiss cheese fondue and the oils and spices added to it. A second server was behind him with a tray of plates. The two plates held apples, carrots, broccoli, as well as other veggies and many different types of breads.

They took their time enjoying the food. Julie looked over at AJ, who was watching Nick watching someone behind him. AJ finally turned his head to see what Nick was looking at. When he saw the baby, he laughed quietly.

"Getting excited all ready?" AJ teased.
"Alex, be nice. He is probably just watching to get an idea of how to take care of them," Julie teased. She turned to Nick. "Have you ever even held a baby before?"
"Yeah. But has been it long time." He turned to Kate. "What if I drop him? Nick sounded truly anxious. She could relate, she'd wondered what kind of mother she would make. But she knew Nick had five younger siblings so he'd have no problem with the baby.
"You won't drop her," Kate said, changing the sex of the baby. "You've had lots of practice."
They all laughed.

Almost an hour later, they had finished the cheese fondue and were working on the meats. The broth was made with a red wine, but the waiter explained that the alcohol was burned off during cooking. They had steak, chicken, shrimp, lobster tails and many different vegetables to cook in the broth.

Julie brought up the cruise, asking Nick what theme he was most looking forward to. It reminded him that he had news for Kate.

“Oh yeah, Kate,” he turned to face her. “I have a cabin for you. My assistant was able to get one on my floor. It has a king sized bed and a private deck.”

Julie turned to AJ. "Have you had any luck getting me a cabin?" He looked sheepishly at her.
"My assistant hasn't gotten back to me yet."
Julie turned to Kate.
"Do you mind if I just stay with you?"
Kate smiled.
"Yeah. I don't see why not. That way you can help me get dressed."

As they finished dinner and moved on to dessert, they talked more about the cruise. AJ wanted to know what Julie thought she would wear for 80's night, since she had hinted at an idea, but she wouldn't tell him.

Nick told them about the other themes. The first night, as they said, was Sphynkter 80s Night, the second was PDA Pajama Jam, the third was the Larger Than Life Beach Party, the fourth night was TRL Night, and finally, the fifth night was The Perfect Fan Prom Night.

That let the girls know what kind of things to go shopping for when they went back to Nordstroms in the morning. Julie said she thought all the female fans would be running around in their underwear and naughty nighties, but she would go in her Mickey Mouse PJ's. Aj blushed at the thought, remembering the first time he saw those pajamas. Nick saw the look on AJ's face and inquired.

"Nothing, bro. Don't worry about it." AJ said.
"They must be amazingly skimpy for you to make that face," Nick teased.
"Not really. They are normal pajamas. Pants and a shirt actually." Julie said.
"Then, why...." Nick stopped mid sentence, as if he understood.
Julie blushed.
"Nothing happened when I wore those," She pointed out.
Kate laughed before she said, "I thought it was the navy slip?"
This caused both AJ and Julie to blush.

"Ok, let's talk about something else, please..." Julie said.

It had taken almost three hours for them to get through dinner, with all the talking as well as the food. Julie was so stuffed she thought she would burst. Kate had eaten enough that she wasn't sure if it was the baby moving, or the food settling.

They all agreed the night had been great, but it was time to go their seperate ways. Julie let them know they would be picking them up at 9:30 in the morning, so they could be at the mall when it opened. After they got their clothing picked out, they would head over to the zoo.

Once at Kate's home, Nick helped Kate out of the Escalade and held her arm as the walked into her house. Once she had the door opened, she turned and waved goodbye to Julie and AJ, who had waited until they made it inside.

Kate went inside, returning her coat to the closet. She saw the light blinking on her answering machine and went and pushed the button.

"Hi,Kate. This is Leah from The Women's Health Clinic calling to confirm your appointment tomorrow at nine am."

"Oh shoot!" Kate exclaimed, "I totally forgot."
"Is it about the baby?" Nick asked, a little worry in his voice.
"Yeah." She sighed, "It's just my monthly check up and ultra sound."
"Oh." He said relieved, "Can I come?"
Kate was surprised. She knew he was still getting use to the idea of becoming a dad.
"Of course." She smiled looking up into his blue eyes for a kiss.
He kissed her softly then she lead him upstairs to get ready for bed.

Kate was exhausted. She crawled in bed next to Nick. He was laying on his back so she turned off the light and snuggled up resting her head on his chest.
They lay there in silence, Nick running his fingers up and down Kate's arm.
"Katy?" Nick asked quietly to see if she was still awake.
"Hm?"
"Why didn't you tell me about the baby?"

Kate's heart pounded. She'd dreading this conversation for four months. She'd hoped he wouldn't ask.
"I'm sorry. I should have told you sooner." She apologized.
He wasn't going to let her get off that easy.

"Did you think you I couldn't handle it?" He said, his voice betraying the hurt he felt.

Kate sat up and turned the light back on. She sat Indian style on the bed facing him.
"At first I wanted to tell you in person." She looked down playing with the blanket. "Then your calls started becoming fewer and farther apart-" She started choking up. "I thought you may never come back but at least I could still talk to you. The longer you were gone the harder it was to tell you. Part of me thought that if you didn't want me then you wouldn't want this one." She said touching her belly, "Part of me thought that if you didn't come back that you didn't deserve to know."

Her comment hit him like a blow to the stomach. He had been thinking all day about why she hadn't told him. If he'd have only known he would have come back sooner.
Kate looked up as she felt him move to sit on the edge of the bed. He leaned over with his elbows on his knees, head in his hands. Kate didn't know what to do. She wanted to reach out to him but she knew she had just hurt him.
"Nick I'm so sorry." She said, tears falling down her cheeks.
"You're right." He said defeated.
"About what?" She asked her heart racing.
"I didn't deserve to know."
He turned back to her, his eyes red and wet with tears.
"I took you for granted." He paused moistening his lips trying to think of the right words.
"I'm sorry Kate. These last few months must have been horrible for you."
Kate shook her head to contradict him.
"I'm not going to fail you again. I'm going to take some time off work and be here for you and our little one."
Kate leaned forward clinging to him. Her whole body trembling.
"I want to be a good father." He whispered into her hair.
She pulled back looking into his eyes.
"There has never been a doubt in my mind that you will make a great Dad." She reassured him.
He smiled gazing into her beautiful face.
Kate couldn't suppress the yawn that escaped.
"Let's get some sleep." Nick said crawling back in next to Kate.
She turned of the light and let him spoon up behind her. He rested his hand on her belly. Kate fell asleep quickly but Nick lay awake most of the night watching her.
He didn't deserve her. He knew that. She was amazing. So strong yet able to let him take care of her. She seemed to see things so much more simply than him. If only he had met her sooner, maybe he wouldn't have gotten so messed up. No that's not true. He wouldn't even noticed her back then and definitely wouldn't have appreciated her. Brian was right, God brings you the right person when you are ready for them. He was ready. He wasn't looking for her but he knew she was the one. She was unmistakable.