NASHVILLE

Although first class boarded first Kate and Nick were some of the last people on the plane.
Kate had to make one last trip to the ladies room while Nick watched her carry on.

As they settled in their seats the stewardess asked if they like anything to drink before take-off.
Kate declined but Nick ordered a soda.
Kate tucked her bag under the seat in front of her. She leaned back in the seat sighing.
"So what do you think?" Nick asked.
"These seats are comfortable." Kate replied.
Nick was happy he was able to take Kate first class. He knew she was nervous to meet his family but he knew she'd be totally accepted, especially when his mom found out Kate was pregnant.
She had just been talking last week about him settling down.
Tonight she would only meet Aaron though. Tomorrow he had Aaron invite everyone over for a BBQ so he could introduce Kate to the family.
After a short layover in Chicago they boarded their flight to Nashville.
The flight was only a couple of hours but Kate fidgeted the whole time. When the captain announced their descent into Nashville International, Kate took a deep breath to calm herself.
Nick took her hand, interlacing their fingers.
"They're going to love you, you know."
"Maybe." Kate replied.
He pulled her hand to his lips kissing the back of it.
"I love you and that's what will matter most to them."
She smiled at him, "I love you too."

Aaron was waiting outside security to give them a ride home. Nick gripped his hand and bumped shoulders with him.
"Hey Dude, how was your flight?" Aaron asked.
"Good. Aaron I'd like you to meet my girlfriend Kate. Kate my brother Aaron."
Aaron stuck out his hand to Kate.
"Hi Kate. Glad I finally get to meet you. Nick talks about you nonstop."
"None of its true. I assure you." She laughed, shaking his hand.
Aaron laughed.
"I like her, she's funny." Aaron said.
"Yeah well looks aren't everything." Kate said shrugging.
Both guys burst out laughing.
"So you got checked bags?" Aaron asked.
"Kate does." Nick replied.

Aaron led the way to baggage claim. Nick and Kate were a few steps behind him. He put his arm around her shoulder pulling her close and kissing the top of her head.
"See, I told you they'd like you," he said quietly.
"It's not Aaron I was worried about." Kate explained.
"Then who?"

"Your mom."
"My mom? Why would you worry about what my mom thinks of you?"
"Because my mom has barely spoken to me since I told her," she said quietly, her voice catching.
Nick pulled her to a stop and turned to face her.
"What?"
Kate shrugged.
"Don't worry she'll get over it. It's just been hard being alone. That's why I moved to Omaha. At least I'd have Jewels."
She turned and started walking to where Aaron was waiting by the baggage car carousel.
They got both of Kate's suitcases and headed back to Nick and Aaron's house.
Nick gave her the grand tour. The house was beautiful and amazingly clean. It was a restored farmhouse. The entry way brought you into a large living room furnished in a comfortable couch and recliner. A big screen tv was mounted on the wall with various gaming equipment below it. On another wall was a fireplace.
"Dude did you hire a maid?" Nick asked looking around.
"No. But I didn't want Kate to know what a slob you are." Aaron teased him.
"Me? I've hardly been here." Nick objected.
Kate laughed as Nick gave Aaron a nuggie. Aaron struggled pushing his big brother away.
"Come on," he said, reaching for Kate's hand, "I'll show you the rest of the house."
He led her though the formal dining room with an oval, oak table.
To the left, off the dining room, was a bedroom that the guys had converted to the music room. Off to the right was another bedroom that belonged to Aaron.
Straight thru the dining room was the kitchen. The oak cabinets had been refurbished and the appliances were all made of stainless steel. Off to the right of the kitchen was a hall that led down to a full bath and a flight of stairs.
Nick held her hand as they climbed the steep steps. There was only one door at the top of the stairs. Inside was a large bedroom. Nick's king size bed had a carved oak headboard with his family crest carved into it. He had a couple of guitars on stands in the corner next to a wooden chair that matched the dining chairs.
The wall opposite the bed had large windows that over looked the property. Unfortunately it was too dark to see anything.
Kate looked around at his room. It was simply decorated. A comfy chair sat in the wall near the bed with a tv opposite it. A few framed pictures and posters hung on the wall.
Nick watched her he knew she was tired. He could see it on her face and in the way her shoulders drooped.

"I'll go get your bags so you can get ready for bed," he said.
"Thanks," she smiled gratefully, suppressing a yawn. "I just need the smaller one."

Kate flopped down on his bed after he left and sighed. She was so tired. Why did she get herself all worked up? She really needed to work on not worrying about things she couldn't control.

When Nick returned a few minutes later Kate was asleep. He smiled down at her. She was lying across the bed with her feet still in the floor and one arm above her head. She woke up as he tried to remove her shoes.
"I'm sorry," she said sitting up.

"There's nothing to be sorry about. Come on let's get you undressed and we can go to sleep."
Kate stripped down and crawled into bed. She was asleep before Nick could even crawl in beside her.
He spooned up behind her his hand resting in its favorite place, on her belly.

Kate woke up in the morning curled up against Nick's chest. The warm musky smell of him filled her, relieving the worry she had felt about meeting his family.

She laid there for several minutes before quietly slipping from the bed. She grabbed some things from her suitcase before heading in for a shower. The water felt good. She'd never taken a shower that had multiple shower heads.
After her shower she combed out her lengthening hair and stepped out in the bedroom to dress.
Nick was still asleep. She slipped into the jeans she wore on the plane and a red Hawaiian shirt she had packed. The shirt clung to her baby bump but she fully intended to change before Nick's family arrived.
She walked over to the large windows overlooking the large corner lot that had a creek running thru it. A path led down from the front door and across a wooden foot bridge into a beautiful garden.
Nick walked up behind her wrapping his arms around her. She smiled.
"No wonder you love it here," she said leaning her head back against him.
"My room never looked as good as it does with you in it."
She sighed contentedly then shooed him off for a shower. She headed downstairs to see about breakfast. She smiled seeing the Keurig coffee maker on the counter. The packets were in a box next to it so she started a cup for him.
She scrounged around till she came up with eggs, bacon and toast.
Aaron stumbled into the kitchen in just a pair of sweat shorts, rubbing his eyes.
"Do I smell coffee?"
She smiled handing him the cup she made for Nick and started another. He took it sitting at the small cafe table in the kitchen.
"So why are we up so early?" he asked.
Kate looked at the clock on the stove.
"It's 11 o'clock. It's not early."
He groaned thumping his head on the table. Nick came around the corner.
"Dude what are you doing up this early?"
"According to Kate it's not early," Aaron said sarcastically.
Nick laughed.
Kate made the guys move to the dining table for breakfast since there were only 2 chairs at the kitchen table.
"So what's the plan?" she asked.
"What time is everyone coming over?" Nick asked Aaron.
"I told them to be here at five so you know they'll be here about six."
Nick shook his head.
"Ok so we have a few hours this morning. I can show you the town and my favorite hang outs."

They spent the late morning and early afternoon exploring Nashville. Nick showed her where he recorded his latest cd and the clubs he played at. He took her to Metro Riverfront Park and they walked along the river discussing baby names.
"Well I think if it's a boy it should be Nickolus Jr.," Nick said.
"I don't think so."
"Why?" Nick whined
"Because I don't want to call him Nick Jr. It reminds me of the nickelodeon channel."
Nick laughed.
"Ok what do you want to name him?"
"I want to name *her* Audrey Grace."
Nick scrunched up his nose.
"Kinda old fashioned don't you think?"
"It's for my favorite actress, Audrey Hepburn."
"Oh." Nick said, mulling it over. "Ok I could see that."
They discussed other possible names as they strolled thru the park.

They returned to Nick's house by four. They had stopped at the grocery store on the way back to restock the house and get food for the BBQ. Kate's idea of a BBQ was hamburgers and hotdogs but Nick bought ribs and steak and corn on the cob. When he picked up a bottle of red wine Kate looked at him crossly.
He laughed, "Don't worry it's just to marinate the steak."

Kate helped him bring the groceries in the house before heading upstairs to freshen up.

Aaron came in from the living room to help start cooking.
"So ya think ya bought enough food?" Aaron asked.
"Well it's a lot of people," Nick said dumping ingredients into a bowl to make his marinade. "So what do you think of Kate?"
"She's cool. A little chubby for my tastes, but funny."
Nick smacked him, "She's not chubby."
Aaron raised an eyebrow.
"Well she's not one of the strung out girls I use to date. I like it she's got some meat in her bones."
"Something to hang onto while you're getting your groove on."
"Dude!" Nick scolded.
Aaron just laughed.

Kate came downstairs an hour later.
She was wearing her black and white sundress. She had exchanged the cloth belt for a longer wider black ribbon that camouflaged her belly better. She had no idea if Nick intended to tell his family or not but she was going to be prepared either way.
He was working in the kitchen jamming out to a radio that sat on top of the fridge. Aaron was just outside tending the BBQ.

"Wow you look great!" he said when he saw her.
"Is there anything I can do to help?" she asked.
He looked around at the mess he'd created.
"No I think I've got it." He said, putting the marinate bowl in the sink.
Kate walked over to the sink and started working on the dishes.
"Babe, I'll clean those up when I'm done. Don't worry about it."
"I don't mind. It gives me something to do."

Aaron came in thru the kitchen heading to the front door. He returned a minute later with a short blonde girl. Kate noticed their interlaced fingers as they held hands.
"Who's this?" Nick asked.
"This is my girlfriend Stacie. This is my brother Nick and his girlfriend Kate." Aaron introduced.

Nick wiped his hands in his pants before shaking her hand while Kate just waved a soapy hand from across the room where she as still washing dishes.

Stacie blushed as she shook hands with Nick before heading outside with Aaron. When the door closed behind them, Kate giggled.
"What so funny?" Nick asked.
"She's a BSB fan."
He looked at her confused, "How can you tell?"
"She blushed when you touched her."
He moved behind her, pressing his body up against her back.
"You use to blush when I touched you too." He whispered against her neck.
"Yeah then I got knocked up," she laughed.
He stepped back smacking her butt.
"That'll teach you to flirt with a rock star."

Nick's family trickled in between 5 and 6. Kate was a little shocked at the amount of noise his family could create. They had all eaten outside gathering around picnic tables and in lawn chairs.
Kate had found out that her fears were unnecessary. She had been readily accepted into the Carter Clan.
Nick came up behind Kate's chair leaning over to whisper to her.
"Do you mind if I tell them?" he asked.
"Of course not."
Nick stood up pulling Kate to her feet. She stood beside him while he whistled to get everyone's attention. He wrapped an arm around Kate' waist.
"I wanted to thank you guys for coming tonight and welcoming Kate into our family."
There were shouts of "welcome" from the crowd.
"We wanted to get y'all together to let you know that Kate and I are expecting."
There was a hush as jaws dropped and the family was rendered speechless.
Nick's mother, Jane came over and pulled Kate into a fierce hug. Then everyone started talking at once. Nick and Kate were pulled apart as the family congratulated them.
"Well I think this deserves some cake," Aaron said.

He went in the kitchen returning with a beautifully decorated chocolate cake.

"You bought a cake?" Nick asked.
"No," he said proudly putting his arm around Stacie.
"Stacie made it."

Nick's family stayed till after ten and Kate was exhausted. She knew that they had to be up early to fly to Florida. She caught herself dozing off a few times in the lawn chair.

BJ, Nick's sister, was the first to head out saying she had to work in the morning. The rest of the family followed. They all gave Kate their numbers so she could keep them updated with baby news. Jane was especially excited because this would be her first grandchild.

Aaron said that he would clean up tomorrow so Nick and Kate could get some sleep as the couple headed upstairs for the night.
"So, what time do we need to leave here?" Kate asked.
"Our flight is at 12:15 so... An hour at the airport plus drive time. So we should leave here between 10:30 and 10:45."
"So I need to get up around nine." She said after a mental calculation. "Unless I shower tonight then I can sleep till 9:30."
Nick raised an eyebrow. "We could have a bath," he said seductively.
Kate smiled, "Don't get the water too hot."

They were soon laying in a relaxing bath. Kate was between Nick's legs, her head lying back in his shoulder. He had a wash cloth that he was rubbing gently over her body. It wasn't really getting her clean but it did feel relaxing.
"So what happens tomorrow?" Kate asked.
"Tomorrow we fly to Florida and BSB has a pre cruise party that we're hosting."
"Ok, maybe I should rephrase that. What do I do tomorrow?" She tried again.
"You're coming with me," Nick said.

"I know but I thought we were keeping things on the down low till after the cruise."
"Oh I see. Um I guess I didn't plan that far ahead. Hang on."
He grabbed his phone that was sitting on the edge of the tub next to Kate's.

NICK: Any idea how we're getting the girls on the boat without them being with us?"
ALEX: Nope. Hoping you have a plan.
NICK: What time do you arrive?"
ALEX: 3
NICK: Ok I'll have a car take them to the hotel.
ALEX: What about the party?
NICK: I thought it was at the hotel in the ballroom?
ALEX: Should we get them separate rooms?
NICK: Na we have to go from the airport to the radio station for the promo first so no one will notice them as long as we don't enter or exit at the same time.
ALEX: Good plan see ya tomorrow.

Nick and AJ relayed the plan to Kate and Julie. The girls would meet up at the airport so the guys could 'look single' when they arrived.

Kate and Nick were snuggled up in bed by the time they had everything figured out.
"Nick?" Kate said as her head lay on his chest.
"Hm?"
"Would you do me a favor?"
"Anything." He replied sleepily.
"Starting tomorrow till the cruise is over I want you to just be a Backstreet Boy."
"Honey I'm always a Backstreet Boy."
"I know, I just..." She paused trying to find the right words.

"We've been thru a lot this week and I don't want to you to worry about what I'll think if you kiss a fan or whatever."
"I have no intention of kissing the fans," he said his hand running up and down her back.
She tilted her head back to look at him.
"I just don't want you to spend the cruise worrying about what I think."
"Thanks baby. I appreciate it. But I have no intention of doing anything other than hugging the fans."

They both drifted off to sleep.