

Dinner

AJ looked around the restaurant. It wasn't what he had had in mind but the girls had wanted something close rather than something fancy. He was disappointed that he hadn't talked Julie into the red petticoat again. They had all just gone as they were, in jeans and still smelling of horse.

The waitress came and took their orders. As they waited for their food Julie asked, "Well not that I want to bring up the dreaded subject but what time does your flight leave tomorrow?"

Kate groaned but Nick pulled her tight against him. AJ got out his phone and looked up their reservation.

"Eleven." He said.

"And yours?" She said, turning to Kate.

"One."

Julie did a little mental calculation. "So we need to leave the house by nine."

"So I'll need to get up between 7 and 8." Kate said, pulling out her phone to set her alarm.

"You're planning on sleeping?" AJ teased.

They were interrupted by the waitress returning with their food.

Nick's phone chimed and he pulled it out.

"You know it's bad manners to text at the table." Julie teased, repeating what Kate had told her one time.

"Sorry," He said, "It's my brother."

"Which one?" Kate asked.

"Aaron."

He looked down reading the text.

AARON: Thought you had a couple of days off?

NICK: I did. Have a concert tomorrow in St Louis.

AARON: Oh well then thanks for ditching me.

NICK: Sorry! Totally forgot. Met a girl.

AARON: She must be something for you to forget to come home.

NICK: She is. Can't wait for you to meet her.

AARON: Is she a fan?

NICK: Yes.

AARON: Uh-oh

NICK: No she's awesome. I'll call you tomorrow and tell ya all about her.

AARON: Send a picture.

"And then we go to Canada for the last 4 days." AJ finished as Nick looked up.

"What?" Nick asked.

"Oh I was just telling the girls about the rest of the tour." He explained.

"Everything ok?" Kate asked, lifting an eyebrow.

"Oh yeah, fine." He said, slipping his phone back in his pocket.

Kate looked down at her plate and started laughing. The others turned to look at her, Julie had pasta half in her mouth, AJ about to take a bit and Nick was holding his soda, about to take a sip.

“What’s so funny,” Nick asked.

“I ordered a steak,” was all she said.

“And?” Aj said, before shoving a bite of his food in his mouth.

“I can’t cut it.”

Nick laughed and then pulled her plate close to him. He cut her meat into nice sized bites. Then, just to be funny, he tried to feed her a bite.

“I appreciate you cutting it, but it is just wrong to have you feed it to me too.”

Everyone was laughing over the situation.

Throughout dinner they joked about the fact that both girls had been injured at some point and how it had benefitted each one at some point.

“And how has this benefitted me?” Kate asked, not feeling lucky in the slightest. Nick wrapped his closest arm around her, pulling her in tightly, yet gently.

“You have me at your beck and call.” He kissed her cheek, causing them to flush red. “I Love it when you blush.” He kissed her again, then placed his fingers on her chin to turn her to face him. He brought his warm lips to hers, kissing her so gently, yet with passion. Kate knew with that kiss he loved her, in some way, he did love her. Kate didn’t know if that would make things easier, or harder.

"Besides you have it better than I did." Julie said.

"Yeah how's that?" Kate asked.

"You can get where you wanna go without stopping to rest."

"Yeah but I go back to work the day after tomorrow."

Julie looks at her like Yeah So?

"It's going to be a little hard to adjust glasses one handed."

"Ew good point."

They talk about the girls' jobs as they eat their meal

“So, what are we gonna do now?” Julie asked, as they stepped out into the evening air. It was humid, but not nearly as it had been the night before. AJ stepped up to Julie and took her hand.

“I love going to the movies, but I don’t know if anyone else would be interested.” Nick stepped up just then, overhearing AJ’s comment.

“A movie sounds good to me.” He leaned in close to AJ and spoke low. “It might help me keep my hands off Kate. I worry I might accidentally hurt her.” AJ laughed, but he completely understood.

“To the movies, then.” Julie started listing off some of the new movies that had just come out. Nick cringed when Julie joked about seeing ‘Glee, the Concert 3D’. Kate suggested Harry Potter 7, Part 2. They all agreed and Julie drove to the theater.

They were all still full from dinner, so no one ordered popcorn. AJ and Julie got a Cherry Coke

to share, while Nick and Kate shared a Coke. The theater was rather empty, but it was a weeknight. For that, they were grateful.

At one point in the movie, both girls were crying. AJ tried hard not to laugh, but Nick pulled Kate close letting her tears fall on his shirt.

It was already after 11 pm when they got back to Julie's house.

Julie offered to do a load of laundry so they wouldn't have to take horsey smelling clothes on the plane.

Kate asked if she could use Julie's oversized tub, since taking a shower would be difficult.

Julie's tub more than made up for the tiny size of her shower.

AJ suggested they take one last swim in her pool, so Kate could have her bath and Nick could use the shower. They walked outside, Julie watched as AJ stripped down to nothing and dove into her pool. She laughed as he splashed at her while she leaned down to get his clothing off the deck.

"Paybacks are a bitch, you know that, right?" She teased him.

Julie was grateful she had her extra bikini hanging in the laundry room, stiffly dry from the last time she swam, just before Kate had arrived. She had just put it on and opened the door when Nick walked up, just a towel around his waist. He smiled at her and held out a pile of clothing. Julie took the laundry and turned to start a load.

"Julie," Nick said, stepping into the laundry room. She looked over her shoulder at him. "I just wanted to say thanks."

"Oh, sure. I couldn't let you go back with smelly clothes."

He laughed, "That's not what I am talking about, although I do appreciate that. I mean thank you for bringing Kate to the concert and then to the after party. I know you hurt your foot right before and you could have cancelled going."

Julie started to shake her head to tell him nothing would have prevented them from going, but he held up his hand as if he knew what she was about to say.

"After what happened with AJ, when we called you up on stage, I could tell you didn't want to be there. But you still stood by her, supported her, so that I could say I was sorry. I can only guess how hard that must have been for you. But it showed me that you would do anything for her. I am glad it all worked out between you and AJ, but still it lets me know that you two will be okay when we go. You will have each other to get you through until we can all be together again."

Julie smiled at him. She understood what he was saying. And it made her so happy for Kate. She deserved someone who would love her for her, just as both the guys craved. They would all get through this, being apart. Hadn't they already been through worse?

She stepped up to him and gave Nick a big hug. He hugged her back, awkwardly. He hadn't been expecting that. He patted her on the back and stepped away, causing Julie to laugh.

“Well, I gotta get outside. AJ is in need of paybacks.”

Nick looked confused but didn't ask what she meant. He excused himself to go check on Kate before he got in the shower.

Julie stepped outside, trying to see where AJ was in the pool. The lights were still off, except for the solar lights in the landscaping. As her eyes adjusted to the semi darkness, a splash of water hit her legs. She still didn't see him. It wasn't until she stood right at the edge of the pool did she realize where he was. He had pressed himself up against the wall of the pool, keeping just enough above water to breath, but low enough that his head didn't peek over the edge.

He turned quickly in the water and grabbed Julie's foot. He didn't pull her in directly, but it unbalanced her enough to cause her to fall in the pool. As she came up from the water, instead of sputtering, as he thought she would, she came up smoothly, splashing water into his face. He wiped the water from his eyes and noticed she had on a swimsuit.

“Hey! What about the rules?”

Julie splashed him again.

“It's not Midnight yet, and I warned you, paybacks are a bitch.”

They both laughed before Julie took off to the deeper end of her pool. She climbed out and as soon as he was close, she jumped in, tucking her knees to her chest, causing a big splash. This time when she came up for air, he pulled her into his arms, with a little difficulty. It was deep where they were, so they were trying to tread water at the same time.

AJ took off to the shallow end, hoping Julie would follow. She swam as he had shown her before. She found she could put her head underwater with a little more ease. When they got to the shallow end, he pulled her back into his arms.

“Look at you. I can see a difference all ready.”

Julie blushed at his words.

“Well, I have nothing to fear anymore.”

He smiled at her and then brought his warm lips to hers. Julie sighed as his lips parted hers and their tongues began to dance with one another. His hands reached around her back to the strings that held her top one. With one mighty tug, the bottom strings of her top can undone, the material floating upwards.

AJ broke their kiss so he could pull the top over her head. He tossed it to the side of the pool, it landing in a small, wet pile on the deck. Julie pressed her breasts to his bare chest, reveling in the feel of his warm skin against hers.

Their kissing resumed, but with a new fervor. Their hands explored one another. AJ slid his hands down to her waist, over her hips, to catch the very edge of her bikini bottoms. He took a

deep breath then went under the water to remove her bottoms. When he immersed, he threw the bottoms to land by her top.

Because of the buoyancy of the water, she was able to wrap both her legs around his waist, with ease. She could feel his body changing, growing beneath her. She gasped when the soft mushroom head began to press at her most sensitive core.

His kisses became wilder, more all-consuming. Julie could hardly breathe as their passion took over. In one swift movement, he impaled her. She cried out as her body took him in, all the way to the hilt. With the motion of the water, she rode him hard and fast. Her body tightened around him as she felt an orgasm building. He saw in her eyes that she was almost over the edge. His hands almost dug into her waist as he helped her move up and down. Julie dug her nails into his back as her body exploded with pleasure.

Her legs began to fall away from him, as her body went weak. He slipped from her body to move them over to the stairs. She sat on the second step, keeping her body from the breasts down, still in the water. She opened her arms to welcome him back, her legs going around him again.

Julie sighed as she felt him enter her. He lifted her up one step, so he could bring her breast out of the water and into his mouth. She could feel her core tightening as he suckled. AJ released her and look into her eyes. He let out a deep sigh before he kissed her, his body still in motion.

Julie tightened her legs around him, squeezing him, as she felt another wave building within her. She grabbed at him, trying to pull him deeper within her. Her body went rigid as her orgasm rocked her. Two more deep thrusts and AJ was joining her.

He leaned forward and rested his head in her bare breasts. He sighed again. Julie ran get fingertips across his shaved head from his forehead to his spine. He looked up at her, his eyes looking tormented.

"Was it that bad?" Julie teased.

"No. It was amazing. It's just that..." he sighed again. "I don't want to sound all girly and all but... I really don't want this night to end. In your arms I have found the one thing I have always wanted. And I have to let you go."

Now it was Julie's to sigh.

"You don't have to let me go. We just have to say goodbye for a little while." She kissed him as she felt their bodies separate. Then trying to brighten his mood she said, "You know, this night doesn't have to end. But the pool time does. I am turning into a prune. Let's go get cleaned up." AJ smiled and they climbed out of the pool, grabbing towels from the shed before heading in.

Kate ran water in the tub, running her right hand thru the water to check the temperature. Nick had taken their clothes downstairs despite her objections.

She climbed in the hot water letting it ease the tension from her body.

In 24 hours this would all be a dream. No not totally she was going to have to make plans. Of course there was always the possibility that Nick would keep in touch but she'd wait to see before she told him. She didn't need legal hassles as well, she'd have enough to deal with.

She opened her eyes as Nick walked back into the spacious bathroom. She smiled seeing him in only a blue towel that matched his eyes.

He walked over kneeling next to the tub.

"How ya doing, Baby?"

She sighed, "It's awfully lonely in here."

A sly smile spread across his face. He stood up touching her shoulder to get her to sit up. She sat up and slid forward as he dropped his towel slipping in behind her, his legs wrapping around her. Kate leaned back, her head resting on his muscular chest.

Nick sighed contentedly. His hand ran up into her hair. His wet fingers dampening her hair.

After a few minutes of silence Nick asked, "What are you thinking about?"

Kate actually laughed out loud.

"Isn't it always the girl who asks that?"

"Yeah I guess it is," He chuckles, "You just seem far away right now and I was wondering where you went." He continues

"Sorry, I just don't want tomorrow to come."

"I already told you that I'll call you everyday. And as soon as the tour is over I'm going to come see you."

"I know."

"But you don't believe me." Nick said flatly.

"I want to but..."

"But what?" He says feeling frustrated.

"I'm nobody and your Nick Carter Rockstar. Why would you want to come back to me?"

"Turn around." He instructed.

With his help she worked herself around to look at him."

"Kate Reagan, I love you. I want to spend time with you, make you laugh and hold you when you cry. I don't know how to make you believe me you just have to trust me. I won't fail."

She leaned into him careful to keep her brace out of the water. She kissed him with all the passion she had built up in her. Nick pulled her body close feeling himself harden under her.

Kate felt it as well her body aching to be joined with his. She repositioned herself on top of him.

Nick moaned as she slide onto him. Her lips trailed to his neck as she began riding him. He pulled her closer his head dipping down to her breasts. Kate's rested her cheek on his hair as he suckled. She began to move more urgently.

She threw her head back crying out as her body spasmed around his. The sensation drove him over the edge as he joined her. He pulled her tight as their bodies shook in pleasure.

As Kate's breathing began to slow she looked into Nick's blue eyes.

"I love you too." She panted.

He laughed.

It was obvious that they weren't getting any cleaner in the tub so they drained it, wrapping in towels and went to the guest bathroom. The shower in there had a removable head so Nick helped Kate wash her hair without getting her brace wet. He toweled her off and sent her to the

bedroom while he finished his shower.

Kate slid into her yellow nighty and panties. She looked at the brace on her wrist.

"Stupid cumbersome thing!" she thought.

She turned off the light and turned to get into bed. She caught a glimpse of the moon thru the window. She walked over gazing up at it, her hands resting on the window seal.

Nick paused in the doorway seeing Kate silhouetted in the moonlight. He smiled. Was he the luckiest guy in the world? Was it fate that brought them together? He didn't know but he certainly wasn't going to lose her now that he found her.

He stepped up behind her encircling her in his arms. Kate sighed leaning back against him.

"Sing for me?" she asks, her arms covering his.

"What would you like me to sing?"

"Anything. I just love to hear you sing."

He thought about it for a minute before he began singing the chorus and bridge of How Did I Fall in Love With You.

What can I do to make you mine
Falling so hard, so fast this time
What did I say, what did you do
How did I fall in love with you

They swayed back and forth as he sang. His voice soft and sweet in her ears.

When he finished he leaned down kissing her neck. He then lead her over to the bed and snuggled up together.

They were both exhausted but neither of them wanted to sleep.

"Ya know I realized I don't know your full name." Nick said.

"Katherine Hope." Kate replied.

"Katherine Hope." He repeated. "I like it. It suits you. Are you named after anyone?"

"Katherine of Aragon."

"Who?"

Kate laughs, "She was the first wife of King Henry the eighth."

"Why were you named after her?"

"Because she was an amazingly strong woman. She was originally married to Henry's older brother but he died and she convinced Henry to marry her and helped him win many battles."

"Wow, sounds like a good person to be named after."

"I like it. I also like the fact that Katherine means pure, so my name means pure hope."

They talked most of the rest of the night, finally drifting off to sleep near dawn.

Julie told AJ to take the first shower since she needed to switch over the laundry anyway. Once she had it all in the dryer, she headed back upstairs. She could hear Nick and Kate talking. Actually, she could hear Nick singing to Kate. She smiled when she realized the song. It made her so happy for Kate.

As she entered her bathroom, AJ was still in the shower. What she wouldn't have given in that moment to have a shower like the hotel had had. She slid the frosted glass door just an inch to be able to look in at him. AJ had his head back, the water running over his forehead and down his back. She sucked in her breath as she looked at his massive chest. She could look at him all day long and still be surprised by the things she saw.

AJ looked over then as saw her watching. He smiled big.

"I would invite you in..." He started to say, looking around at the small space. Julie just laughed.

"You don't have to explain to me. I have a hard enough time just trying to shave my legs in there."

He shut off the water and reached for a towel as Julie dropped hers.

Julie took the shortest shower she could. All she wanted to so was spend her last few hours wrapped in his arms. When she stepped out, she expected to find him sitting on the bed. But he was no where to be found. She slipped on her navy blue nighty, since she hadn't had much of a chance to wear it. She put on the small robe as well.

Julie went to check in the kitchen and saw the door to the top deck open. AJ was sitting on one of her patio chaise lounge. He was looking up at the dark sky. The clouds had rolled in and there were only a few stars peeking out. She stepped out into the cool night air.

He heard her moving and turned to look at her. He spread his knees and patted the space in front of him. Julie took the hint and was more than snuggle up against him. AJ had put on one of his tee shirts and a pair of boxers. He had on no pants at all. She laid her head back, turning just a bit so her ear pressed against his chest. She listened to his heart beat for a moment, before looking up into his eyes.

"You have a concert tomorrow. Don't you think you should get some sleep?"

He kissed the tip of her nose.

"Not yet. I want to sit here with you for a while longer. I can sleep on the plane. Nick makes a great pillow." He laughed to himself, picturing a time when Nick and Howie had fallen asleep on each other on a flight.

"Speaking of Nick," Julie trailed off. AJ waited for her to continue. "Um, he was singing to her, and I, um, wondered..." She was too embarrassed to continue. She felt his laughter come from deep in his chest, as she lay there, still listening to his heart.

"Would you like me to sing to you?"

Julie just looked up and smiled at him. He looked up to the sky, as if deciding what to sing to her. It took him a moment, then he nodded his head as if it hit him.

He wrapped his arms around her, holding her tight, as he began to sing.

Julie had always loved how his voice seemed to resinate within her, but now, with her body so close, it really seemed to be a part of her.

The words to the song took on a whole new meaning. She knew he didn't write the song, but right then, it was as if he had.

It's in the silences,
The words you never say
I see it in your eyes,
It always starts the same way
It seems like everyone we know is breaking up
Does anybody ever stay in love, anymore?

I promise you,
From the bottom of my heart
I will love you till death do us part
I promise you as a lover and a friend
I will love you like I never love again
With everything I am

Ooh I see you look at me,
When you think I'm not aware
You're searching for clues,
Of just how deep my feelings are.
How do you prove the sky is blue, the oceans wide?
All I know is what I feel,
When I look into your eyes

I promise you,
From the bottom of my heart
I will love you till death do us part
I promise you as a lover and a friend
I will love you like I never love again
With everything that I am ooh yeah

Oh there are no guarantees
That's what you always say to me
But late at night I feel the tremble in your touch
Oh what I'm trying to say to you,
I never said to anyone I promise

I promise you,
From the bottom of my heart
I will love you till death do us part
I promise you as a lover and a friend
I will love you like I never love again

With everything I am I promise you,
From the bottom of my heart
I will love you till death do us part
I promise you as a lover and a friend
I will love you like I never love again
With everything I am

When he finished, she looked up at him. His eyes had been on her the entire time. He leaned down and kissed her deeply.

"I love you," He whispered against her lips. That brought her up quickly.

"What?" she said.

He looked at her confused. She sounded angry.

"Why would you say that?"

"Because it is true."

Julie scoffed.

"You haven't known me long enough to know that for sure." He pulled her back against him.

"Do you feel that?" He asked.

"Feel what?"

"My heart. It is beating for the first time."

Julie laughed.

"Are you serious?"

"Completely," he replied. "With you, I don't have to hide who I am. You forgave me for something unforgivable. You showed me that I can be me without worry. I know enough about you to know that I love you."

Julie looked at him. She had always been the hopeless romantic, the one who dreamed about love at first sight. And here it was, in her hands, yet she was trying to deny it.

She could see it in his eyes. He was not lying. He truly believed he was in love with her.

She reached up to place one hand on his cheek. She kissed him softly, the bristly hairs of his goatee tickling her soft lips.

"I love you, too. Alex."