

Chapter Four

I turned back to face Natalie and I let out a deep sigh. I should have known it was too good to be true. I was just about to tell her what happened when I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned around to see Joe standing right behind me. I could feel my face light up. I looked back at Natalie and introduced them.

"Joe, this is my best friend, Natalie. Nat, this is Joe." I saw confusion run across her face, followed by recognition. Before she could speak, Joe's velvet voice filled the space.

"It's so nice to meet you, Natalie. I hope I'm not being presumptuous but it looked like you were a little upset over something." Natalie nodded. It looked like she wanted to say something. She let out a breath before explaining.

"I was dancing with this guy and I thought it was going well until he asked me if we were going to his room or mine. I'm not here to be some asshole's booty call."

Joe nodded before he spoke. "That guy was an idiot if he couldn't see that you are a woman with class. In lieu of what just happened, I hope you don't mind that I asked a friend to join us," he said, his voice indicating his worry of insulting her.

"As long as it's not one of the guys from 98 Degrees. " Natalie didn't mean to sound so aggressive. She was just upset.

"No. It's not. But I will warn you, he's gonna want to dance. And I put in a song request. So strap your shoes a little tighter, it's a swinger."

Natalie nodded. I could tell she wanted to leave and get back up to the room but the look on her face said she was here for me. Joe offered his arm to us both and escorted us back to the

table. My drink was still there, as was a glass of water. I never had gotten one from the bar when I went to Natalie. No sooner had we gotten settled when Joe jumped from his seat.

"This is it! Lets go!" He reached for me. I looked at his outstretched hand then at Natalie. I couldn't leave her!

"It's okay," she said. "Go have fun." I could see on her face that she was going to bolt as soon as I was on the dance floor. "Go!" She insisted.

The song playing was another modern swing song I knew. "Zoot Suit Riot" by Cherry Popping Daddies. It was really fast and I was worried I was going to land on my face. As we got to the dance floor, Joe pulled me close and breathed in my ear.

"Just follow my lead."

I nodded and looked to Natalie. A gasp filled my chest. She was no longer alone at the table. Joe's friend had arrived. And he was leading her to the dance floor.

Joe began to spin me around and again we danced like we'd been swinging for years. Every once in a while I would get a glance if Natalie. Finally, a genuine smile was on her face. She was in pure delight.

The song ended and all four if us headed back to the table. Joe quickly did introductions.

"Hey bro. I see you found Natalie all right. This here," he put his hand on my bare shoulder, "is Adrianna. And that, as I am sure you know, is Donnie Wahlburg."

I nodded hello to him and glance over at Natalie. Whatever the jerk of a guy had done to her earlier, her spirits were definitely uplifted again. I finally got a chance to finish my Vesper and Donnie at some point had gotten himself and Natalie a new drink.

"So," Donnie started, looking right at Natalie. "I hear you are having a rough night. You want to tell me about it? Is there somebody's ass I need to be kicking?"

"Thank you Donnie, but I really don't want to talk about it. It was just some idiot that was trying to make the male species look like shit."

"Well, I'm glad I could be here to straighten things out. So how about we hit the dance floor?"

We spent one dance after another with Joe and Donnie, but the night was winding down and we all had a long day ahead of us. Neither Natalie nor myself were ready to go, but we knew our coaches would be pumpkins soon and we had to go back to reality. The DJ had announced it was the last song of the night and he wanted to slow things down a bit. I stifled a giggle as "Lady in Red" began to play. Did I mention I had on a red dress? Joe and Donnie led us both to the center and pulled us into each guys embrace.

I felt the heat of Joe's hand as he rested it on my lower back. I rested my head on his shoulder, my face turn into his neck. I breathed in the masculine scent of him, wanting it etched forever into my memory. As we moved in a slow circle, I came face-to-face with Natalie, who also had her head resting on Donnie's shoulder. I watched as she lifted her head up and leaned back to look into his beautiful hazel eyes. I was a little shocked when he dipped his head down and took possession of her lips. We had turned enough that I could no longer see them, but Joe must have. Because one hand left my back and his hand touched my chin ever so slightly. I lifted my head from the shelter of his neck and looked into his intense blue eyes. I had stared at that face on paper for more than half of my life, never thinking that one day I would be looking at him so close in real life. I held my breath in anticipation as his head slowly lowered. The moment his soft lips touched mine, I felt like I would melt into the floor. His lips were so soft

and his kiss, although tender and innocent, filled my body with heat in places I hadn't felt in years. When our lips parted our eyes locked again.

"Will you let me see you tomorrow?" His voice sounded sincere.

"Um. I will be at the concert," was what escaped my mouth. I felt so stupid after saying that.

"I know. I mean before the concert? Will you and Natalie come to our sound check at 3 PM?"

"Are you serious? I would love to!" The song ended just as the words left my lips, and the house lights came on. Joe took my arm, as Donnie did to Natalie, and they walked us out the club.

Little did we know at the time, but at the bar, two pair of blue eyes watched us.