

Chapter Two

Over the next few years my taste in music changed, but only slightly. My 98° CDs were put away, never to be pulled back out. And Nick Lachey and Jeff Timmons were not thought of again. I listened almost exclusively to NKOTB and began listening to the Backstreet Boys. I found that my young teenage crush on Joe McIntyre had not gone away, but only increased.

New Kids On The Block had broken up in 1994, and then reunited in 2008. And I made sure I was in line for every concert I could get to. Then, in 2010 they joined up with the Backstreet Boys for one tour. I dragged Natalie to a few concerts and we both fell madly in love with Backstreet Boys.

And now it was 2013 and NKOTB were on the road again. The Package Tour, they were calling it, because along with NKOTB there were two other bands. And one of those bands was 98°.

Natalie was bursting with excitement when she called to tell me the news that she heard that NKOTB was on tour again. But as soon as I heard whom they were touring with, I shot the idea down. There was no way I wanted to see 98° again. Ever. But Natalie insisted it would be worth it. NKOTB had a new album out and it was going to be amazing, if nothing else we could skip 98° and get to the concert a little bit late.

Six months later, we were in St Louis and it was the night before the concert. We had decided to arrive a day early so we could do a little sight seeing in the city before the concert. The hotel we were in was also a casino. So we were going to head down and do a little gambling. Maybe lady luck would be on our side. I stood in front of my mirror, looking at the woman I had become.

I thought of that young 15-year-old girl, and the excitement I held when I saw NKOTB for the first time. I had not been a pretty thing. With big thick glasses and a bad perm, but it was my personality that shined past the ugly façade. Joe McIntyre had looked at me that night as if I was the only girl in the crowd, or at least that's what the little teenager saw.

Then I thought about the night we saw Nick Lachey and Jeff Timmons. Gone were the thick glasses and unruly hair, replaced by a young woman who wore contacts but hadn't quite lost the baby fat. I had had plenty of confidence that night, until we were shot down by two pretty skinny blondes.

That night, I lost all confidence I had in myself. I think Natalie had the same feeling, because after that we both went downhill. Natalie and I also went our separate ways. We both of us moved to different states and lost contact. It was the most depressing time of my life. I never wanted to feel like that again.

Just three years ago, I decided it was time for a life change. I finally realized that I wasn't going to change for anyone else. I needed to change for me, and only me.

I started watching what I ate and workout daily. I also became infatuated with a time when women were becoming empowered, right around the time of World War II.

I started doing research about the time period, especially the clothing. It was becoming a fashion that was blossoming, but still in the beginning stages.

I wasn't happy with my current job, and was never really good at handling authority. So I decided to open my own store, become my own boss. I opened a vintage inspired clothing boutique where I lived. It was flourishing. And to top it all off, I convinced Natalie that the best thing in the world for her, was to move to Nebraska where I lived. It would be a life change for both of us.

I shook my head, bringing my thoughts back to the moment and the woman in the mirror before me. I smiled as Natalie entered the mirror frame. We were both dressed in pin-up style clothing, our hair piled upon our heads in a wave of curls. We both were at a point in our lives where we were the most fit and most healthy we'd ever been.

Anytime we walked into a room, people smiled at us. I'm not entirely sure if it was because the way we were dressed or the way we carried ourselves. Maybe even something as simple as the fact that we were in shape. Neither one of us were overconfident, as we still had never fully recovered from the night we were dismissed by Nick and Jeff.

As Natalie and I walked down the main hallway to get to the casino, we passed the two bars the hotel had. The one on our left was very much a sports bar, with some sports event going on. And just further down the hall was the other. It seemed more like a dance club than a bar.

"Adrianna? Let's check that out," Natalie suggested.

"Maybe later. I'm feeling really lucky right now. I wanna blow some money first."

Natalie just nodded and we continued down the hallway.

I had only brought \$100 in cash with me, and purposely left my debit card in our hotel room. Natalie wanted to do quarter slots, so we separated for a short time. I headed over to the poker table. I wasn't any good but I found it to be fun. I was a little surprised that I was doing well. I was up to \$500. The guy sitting to my right had lost his last \$10 and left. I didn't realize there had been someone behind me, waiting for a turn. I glanced over as the seat became occupied. I turned and was about to say hello when I saw his face. I hadn't thought of him in years and never would have expected him to sit next to me.

Nick Lachey glanced over and smiled at me. My heart skipped a beat and my body temperature began to rise. Not from attraction, although he was more hot now than the last time I

had seen him, but in anger. I had agreed to go to the concert with explicit instructions that we would completely avoid seeing 98 Degrees. And now Nick was sitting next to me.

"Hi," he said, his voice smooth as butter. I just nodded his way and turned back to my cards. "Are you having any luck?"

"I was, but I think my luck just changed for the worse." He reached over and patted my hand.

"I'm sure things will turn around."

"Not likely," I whispered under my breath. I played a few more hands, losing each time. Finally, I couldn't take it, having him so close, giving me words of encouragement. I finally stood up, letting the dealer know I was out.

I walked away, planning on never looking at him again. But as I took a few steps, heading for the slot machines and Natalie, I heard Nick tell the dealer he was out. Then within a heartbeat or two I felt him step up beside me.

"Hey, I never caught your name. I am Nick, by the way."

"I know who you are and I have no interest in giving you my name," I said, not even bothering to glance his way. My words hit him, and he stopped his tracks. I sped up my steps a little bit faster to catch up to Natalie.

"Nat, let's get out here. I think I'm ready to go dance now." Natalie glanced up at me and she instantly knew something was wrong.

"Did you lose all your money already? I thought you said you're feeling lucky." She laughed.

"I was, but Lady Luck left my side and the devil sat down next to me. I just need to get out here."

"Okay, let me to spin this one more time."

Lady Luck had definitely left me, but she was sitting squarely on Natalie's shoulders. As she spun the slot machine, it landed on three diamonds. Natalie had just won the jackpot.