

Survive You

By Tanya Townsend

Chapter 1

The morning is neon-bright with a hint of salt in the light breeze. Five girls are sleeping hard on this mid-May morning as sounds of Miami filter in through the patio doors. Outsiders to this day do not understand the connection between the group and their fans and the additional connection between fans. They can easily witness the excitement that *New Kids on the Block* can conjure through concerts and television appearances but the non-BH's question, ridicule, and think the whole thing is crazy. They were bound to question the insanity of the group locking themselves on a boat for four days with two-thousand women and the fact that they have done it for six year in a row is wild. However, one thing that the fans of *NKOTB* know is that they share a special bond that connects people for a lifetime from all over the world.

It is this bond that has connected five girls from Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois, and New York. Sandy and Tanya met during the *Stay the Same Tour*. Kristy came not long after with her love of Joe at a stop in Youngstown, Ohio during his *Meet Joe Mac* tour. She had driven from Utica, New York to meet Sandy and Tanya. They had met online writing fan fiction stories. It wasn't until the reunion that Karen and Missey joined the group again through an online connection that also brought the girls closer to the five hardest working men in show business, Twitter. Although, at certain points in their lives the girls had always dreams that their favorite would play with them especially on this weekend since three of them were on their first *NKOTB* cruise and it was rumored to be the last one.

Tanya is the first to jump out of bed when her phone began the beginning notes of *Block Party*. As with many in today's society, she grabs her phone and instantly updates her followers:

@LHPTANYA Only @nkotb could have me up at 5 am on a Saturday and actually be happy about it. #NKOTBCRUISE14 #CruiseVets&Virgins. She decides to let the others sleep for a bit because she could take the fastest shower. She quietly slips from the room that she shares with Sandy and groggily slides into the bathroom and closes the door before turning on the light. She couldn't believe the difference a year had made. The last time she saw the boys, they were on tour with *BoyzII*Men and *98Degrees* for *The Package Tour*. She had paid for both her and Sandy to have an Ultimate meeting with the New Kids. It was everything she had imagined. Jordan, Tanya's favorite was so sweet and he amazed her with a hug she wasn't expecting. Of course, she kept herself under control knowing that he was serious with his girlfriend, Marina. But, this time was going to be different. She had dropped about a hundred pounds since the meeting and her whole goal for the boat was to get that gorgeous man's head to turn at least once.

She wraps her hair in a towel, quickly dries off, brushes her teeth, and grabs her portable mirror and make-up. Tanya places her items on the dining room table careful not to wake Kristy who was sleeping on the futon of their quaint two-bedroom timeshare. She meanders to the coffee pot and hits the on button hoping that would wake a few more members. It was only five-fifteen, but when five adult women prepare to leave boyfriends, husbands, children, and problems behind to spend the weekend with the man of their fantasies it takes forever to get ready. Besides they wanted to get breakfast and be the first to get to the port even though they knew there would be BSC's already there.

Kristy was the next to stir. Without saying a word she flips her blanket off, grabs her toiletries bag, and shuffles to the bathroom in her custom made slippers that sang: "Oh, OH, Oh, Oh, O" when you step on the heel. She said it was perfect for a non-morning person.

Karen and Missey were the next to appear and both look like they had already spent four days on the ship. They both give a nod to Tanya as they grab coffee cups and head to the balcony. The sounds of Miami are getting louder as everyone and a few thousand extras are beginning their Friday routines. Tanya takes her towel off, spritzes some volumizer in her hair and seriously contemplates a nap before anything else, but she goes with cooking breakfast for everyone instead. As she pulls things from the fridge, Kristy joins her, sitting at the bar. She made a cup of coffee and switches on the iPod so the boys could get them dancing before dawn.

“So I know you said go with no expectations, but I need a plan,” Kristy directs at Tanya.

“No, I said no expectations when it comes to the guys. This is their vacation too! Be prepared for a lot of standing. Be prepared for the time of your life. Plan nothing. Go with the flow. Be prepared to meet them when you least expect it. Hang with us, but meet new people. Its four days where you don’t have to be responsible. Where you can scream until you lose your voice and nobody cares. You don’t have to worry about being judged, meeting deadlines, or what Martin will do because what happens on the boat stays on the boat. Unless you happen to be one of them where naturally it will be posted to YouTube faster than Donnie can say: NO CAMERAS!” Tanya says. She turns to slap some sausage into the hot skillet and gives the eggs a final beating before adding them to another pan.

“But...” Kristy protests, biting her bottom lip.

“No, Buts unless you are talking about the five hot asses we are going to be drooling like teenagers over. Vacation starts now!” Tanya says. She flips the sausage knowing it would be hard for the straight arrow, newly engaged, pharmaceutical supervisor to not have every minute of her day planned to the minute. However, if it killed them all in the process Tanya was determined to have a blast and make sure Joe knew this was Kristy’s bachelorette party.

The girls wait for the last member of their close-knit group to join them. Other than Kristy's engagement there are so many reasons they want this weekend and each reason was as special as they next. Karen had finally taken her girls and left her emotionally abusive leech. So to her this was her freedom cruise. Missey's husband Luke sent her as a mommy-needs-a-break-because-she's-the-only-girl-in-the-house cruise. Tanya's reasoning beyond celebrating her friends was a follow-up to telling Joe the previous year she had obtained her master's degree because of him. This year she was going to give him a framed copy of her acceptance letter to Harvard University's P.h.D program where she was to focus on Romantic and Victorian British Literature in the fall. This was her I-wonder-if-Joe-will-argue-with-me-again cruise.

However, none of the celebrations compares to Sandy's. She was finally declared cancer free. She had lost three-hundred pounds. The Will of her father was found declaring that she was a multi-billionaire. She had finally come to terms over the loss of both of her parents in a span of three years. She was in litigation for custody of her nephews. She looks great. Feels better. She wasn't going to be wheeled in front of Donnie like some invalid this year. This was her celebration of I-hope-Donnie-says-Raven-who cruise.

Tanya smiles thinking back over their thirteen-and-a-half year friendship. Sure she'd love to change a few things that happened but only if she was guaranteed that it wouldn't affect anything in the present. For the first time everyone she knew was truly happy not just content and going through the motions of life. The girls had even planned some serious tour stalking—much to the amusement of Kristy—for the summer. This year they were finally going to live it up with ultimates and after-parties, bus stalking and hotel cruising, and most importantly follow those men around the world and back again.