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***Waiting for the
Big One***



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BY

P.G. FORTE

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WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

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ISBN: 1-59836-359-X

Cover Art © 2006 by Dan Skinner

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WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

Dedication:

For John.
My very own Scorpio Soul Mate.

P.G. Forte

Chapter One

It was one of those perfect mornings, the kind that only ever seem to happen on a Sunday. You know the ones I mean, don't you? Just before noon, all lazy and warm.

The City of Los Angeles was steeped in sunshine, snuggled about as deep into the weekend as it could get. It seemed like everyone was laid back and happy, except for me and the dozens other drivers who were trying to move west along Hollywood Blvd, headed toward Fairfax, going nowhere fast.

They'll tell you Pisces is a patient sign, but you can't really label the fish. We're complex people. We combine the best and worst of all the other signs. And the truth is, I hate to wait.

So, there I was, stuck at yet another red light, when it hit me. It wasn't just me who was waiting and it wasn't just now. All of Los Angeles was in the same boat, all of us, all the time, waiting for the big one.

For most of us, that meant our big break, our shot at seeing our name in a star on the Walk of Fame. It's the role that'll lift us out of obscurity. It's the hit that'll soar to the top of the charts. We're all hopeful romantics—like Kathleen Turner, in *Romancing the Stone*. We're always certain it'll happen with the next deal we make, the next audition we go out on, the next person we meet. Take me, for instance. Any day now, with just a little bit of luck, I could go from being plain old Gabby Browne, aspiring actress and dog walker, to Academy Award Winner, Gabriella Giacomo.

And if fame doesn't get us, the earthquake is sure to. That's the other thing everybody's waiting for, the big eight point, nine point, ten point shaker that scientists say is bound to occur. The one that'll rock this town to its knees. Even hopeful romantics have to admit it seems inevitable. How could any place with this much surface glamour not be doomed?

But this morning, I was waiting for something a little more personal. I was waiting for The Big O: the elusive, G-spot, ultra orgasm. The kind I'd heard about, read about, yearned for, but had not yet experienced.

Don't get me wrong, it's not as if I'd never had an orgasm or anything. But, to date, they'd all been the standard issue, plain vanilla kind. Nice, but nothing I couldn't give myself any day of the week, if I wanted. What I was hoping for was something more life-altering, soul-

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

searing, rock-my-world passionate. I knew it was out there, waiting for me. All I needed was the right guy to help me find it.

I knew he was out there, too. He was my Twin Flame, my Split Apart, my Tantric Soul Mate; the man who would love me madly, passionately, loudly. All night long. They say good things come to those who wait, and I was certainly counting on that being true. But he was taking a long time to get here, and I was growing impatient.

Finally, the light turned green and I made it to where *I* was trying to get—The Body Electric—for my first workout of the week, and definitely my favorite.

Power Yoga with Derek Novello was never an easy class, but with Derek calling the shots, getting whipped into shape was almost a pleasure. I hurried up the walkway toward the two-story Hollywood Deco building, smiling in anticipation, enjoying the trickle of the fountain in the courtyard, the tinkle of the wind chimes in the topiary, the sweet scent of sandalwood.

“You’re late,” a voice growled the minute I set foot inside the deserted anteroom.

I froze for an instant, heart pounding in my chest, as I recognized Derek’s dark-chocolate voice. Then I turned, making one of those slow, graceful pivots I’d been practicing.

Derek has the kind of chiseled features the camera loves. Even now, with his thick, black brows drawn into a frown that had them almost meeting over the bridge of his classically perfect nose, his face was sensual, expressive, intense.

He was looking yummier than ever today, with his two-hundred-push-ups-every-morning-before-breakfast arms folded across a tight black tank, putting all those lovely muscles on an in-your-face display. The black workout pants he wore, on the other hand, were disappointingly loose, at least in front. But experience had taught me that when he turned around...ooh, baby. They’d likely mold to his glutes in a way that would make my own pants grow damp.

Was I in a rush for him to turn around? Uh-uh. ‘Cause he’s also got the fiercest brown eyes, the most delicious looking lips and, oh, I thought with a tinge of sadness, if only we weren’t friends.

“Traffic,” I explained, trying to rein in my runaway lust, trying to resist the urge to run my fingers through the dark waves of his short hair. I’d always made it a policy never to mix sex and friendship, as Derek knew full well, though he continued to tempt me. “You wouldn’t believe all the cars on the road today.”

“So? There’s always traffic, that’s no excuse. Besides, you only live twelve blocks away. You jog, you hike, you exercise—give me a break, Gabe. Are you really going to tell me you couldn’t walk that far? You could get here on time if you wanted to.”

P.G. Forte

I sighed, feeling even more regretful. The truth is, he looks even sexier when he gets worked up, and since he's a Scorpio, that happens a lot. "Don't be silly, Derek. This is LA—no one walks here."

Derek rolled his eyes. "Go get dressed."

Sexy or not, I hate it when anyone's annoyed with me. It's a Pisces thing. We want everyone to be happy. Luckily, I knew just how to make Derek's day. "I'm sorry, Sensei," I murmured in my breathiest, most contrite sounding voice. I dropped my chin, laced my fingers together, and peeked up at him adoringly, like the blondest damned geisha you've ever seen. "Won't you please forgive me? I promise it'll never happen again."

A muscle twitched at the corner of Derek's mouth, showing me how hard he was trying not to smile. "It better not. You know the rules. Don't expect me to make exceptions for you just because we're friends."

Well, that was ridiculous. Scorpions *always* make exceptions for their friends. That's still the best way to tell when they've written you off. But as I bit my lip and took a step closer, I knew that wasn't the case with us—yet. There was a hot, hungry look in Derek's eyes, though he was still pretending to be indifferent to my act. 'Course that all went to hell in an eye-popping, jaw-dropping hurry when I flashed him the twins.

"Damn," he muttered, blinking appreciatively as I tugged my top back into place. I gave him a wink, then turned on my heel, and marched off toward the lockers.

"You still have a few minutes before class starts, Der," I called over my shoulder. "You might want to use the time to rearrange that package of yours. It's bulging."

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

Chapter Two

I'd known Derek for just over a year. He used to be friends with my ex-boyfriend, Bobby. Bobby's a Libra. Sweet tempered. Fun loving. Good-looking. A liar. So, okay, maybe that last one is not necessarily a Libra trait, but it was definitely a Bobby trait. Which is why we're no longer together.

When I first met him, Derek was involved with Claire, owner of The Body Electric and, technically, his boss. Claire's a Leo. She's older, flamboyant, charismatic, and nice when you get to know her; but, like all Leos, she has to be the one who calls the shots. For a while, I guess Derek was content to play Ashton to her Demi, but I knew it couldn't last. They broke up shortly after I ditched Bobby, which is when Derek and I really began to hang out.

I know what you're thinking. I should have ditched Bobby sooner, and gone after Derek even before he left Claire, right?

Wrong. That was never an option. Derek and I share some unfortunate character traits. We're both faithful, loyal, committed, and even if I never had a guy for a best friend before, I do know a thing or two about friendship.

Friends don't break up each other's relationships. That's rule number one. They stick up for each other like the *Train* song says, even when you know they're wrong.

Being a Scorpio, this all comes naturally to Derek. Scorpio's a fixed sign. Once they get an idea in their heads, no matter how stupid, they stick to it. Until hell freezes over or they come to their senses, whichever comes last.

It's been harder for me. When it comes to matters of the heart, we Pisces are not really known for our constancy. Which, believe me, is putting it nicely.

If either of us had been unattached when we met, things might have been different. As it was, our relationship started out platonic, and I was sure that was how it was going to stay.

That isn't to say that I never thought about how things might have been. I thought about Derek the whole time I was changing and all through class, as well. To tell you the truth, I was a little annoyed with us both. I suppose it wasn't Derek's fault that I could always get him with the submissive routine; there are lots of guys who dig demure. But it was one more reason added to the list of why we could never be anything but friends.

P.G. Forte

I'm too independent to play that kind of role for more than a couple of minutes at a time. Any longer, and I'd be bored out of my mind. Pisces are mutable water—flowing, changeable, unrestrained. That's what makes us such good actors. Give us a role to play and we're happy. But try and make us play that role for life. No way.

It would take someone like Grace Kelly to pull off a stunt like that. You know what she was, don't you? Yeah, that's right. A Scorpio.

By the time class started, Derek had recovered his composure. His little soldier was no longer standing stiffly at attention, and trust me I looked to see.

As I said, I was annoyed with myself, too. It's a bad idea to tease a Scorpio. They're ruthless. You can always count on them to find a way to turn the tables, to give back more than you'd bargained for, and that had certainly been the case this time around. Derek and I had both gotten an eyeful and now, his cock was just about all I could think of; wrapping my hand around the thick shaft, wrapping my lips around its swollen head, wrapping my legs...well, you get the picture.

He, of course, didn't even seem to notice I was in class. I was having an off day, too. I could feel it, you know? I wasn't holding the Asanas long enough, I wasn't pushing myself hard enough. Hell, I wasn't even trying on most of those stretches. It was the kind of thing that I could always count on to draw Derek's attention for some hands-on coaching. But not this day. From the way Derek was behaving, you would have thought I didn't even need an instructor. By the time class ended, I was in a really bad mood and there was only one way I could think of to make myself feel better.

I have a confession to make.

Derek and I might not have had a physical relationship in real life, but in my fantasy life things were very different.

Take the showers, for instance. I know you've seen the films where there's a hole cut into the wall of the girls' shower room. There's always some guy on the other side of the wall who gets off on watching naked chicks soap themselves up. I knew there was no such hole at The Body Electric, but that didn't stop me from pretending that there was or from pretending that Derek was watching me as I touched myself.

I wouldn't say it was a regular part of my routine, but some days, especially days like this, when I didn't have to rush off to an audition, I'd take my time getting undressed. I'd stall and dawdle until I had the room to myself. Then I'd hit the showers for a little one-on-one.

I wouldn't call myself an exhibitionist, either, but I *was* an actress. And, if I were certain I was alone, I'd push the curtain open and watch myself in the mirror. Never miss a chance to hone your craft, that's my motto. Or, it should be, anyway.

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

I'd rub soap over my breasts, admiring the rosy flush the hot water had given them, and pretend that Derek was watching, too. I'd roll my nipples between my fingers and pinch them until they'd harden. Then I'd slip one hand between my legs.

"Faster." I'd imagine him growling, his eyes blazing as he stepped out of the steam to stand before me. "Don't stop."

I'd imagine my breath catching at the sight of him, my heart speeding up. "Derek, what are you doing in here?" I'd ask, glancing nervously around.

"Watching you," he'd say, and then he'd pull his cock free of his pants and stroke himself. "Getting hot for you. Getting hard."

Now, given the tent-pole he'd raised when I flashed him, I realized I'd been shortchanging him in the size department. As I adjusted my imagination to accommodate my new knowledge, I found myself getting hot as well—faster than ever before.

It made my pussy drip just thinking about it. I slid two fingers between my labia and gasped in surprise at the heat and slickness there. God, I was so ready. There was only one thing missing—

"I want you," I murmured to my imaginary Derek. "I want to put you inside me."

That wasn't possible, so I made him shake his head. "Not yet. I like the way you touch yourself. I want to watch you get off. I want to come while I'm watching you."

"But, Derek, I—"

"Do it."

Unfortunately, watching myself wasn't doing it for me today. I closed my eyes and rubbed harder, imagining Derek's hand keeping pace, sliding up and down his shaft, faster and faster. My clit swelled beneath my fingers, and I imagined Derek's cock growing harder for me. Pearly drops appeared at the opening as he pumped himself. I licked my lips.

"Please," my fantasy self begged. "Let me have a taste."

"Not yet," he repeated. "Make yourself wet for me."

"I am wet. I—"

"Wetter."

Groaning, I leaned my back against the wall. Water pounded against my chest. I tried to imagine it was Derek's fingers, but that was a bit of a stretch, even for me.

"Spread your legs," he ordered as he joined me in the shower. "Let me see you—now! I want you to come in my mouth."

Ever obedient to his commands, I slid my legs apart and held my lips wide. Water played over my pussy, wet, warm, and delicious. Like Derek's mouth.

"Yes. Like that," I imagined him murmur as the first spasm hit. I bit my lip hard to stifle my moans as I came and, damn, it felt good.

P.G. Forte

Water beat against my face as I slumped lower along the wall, feeling boneless and relaxed. My toes curled against the wet tile of the floor. I shuddered for breath as I rode out the aftershocks.

Pisces is a dual sign—like Gemini or Libra. We're quite capable of holding two opposing viewpoints at one time. I didn't think it at all strange that I should feel both completely satisfied and totally unsatisfied. I was sated and aching, happy and sad.

But while it wasn't unusual for me to feel this way, that didn't mean I had to like it very much, either.

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

Chapter Three

“Well, that took long enough,” Derek said as I exited the locker room after dressing. I turned, surprised to find him leaning against the wall beside the door, one leg bent up behind him, arms crossed. He came off the wall in one fluid motion and fell into step beside me. “You all done?”

There was a faint, ironic tilt to his smile. *What does he know?* I wondered, as I felt my cheeks grow warm. My eyes narrowed. “What are you doing hanging around out here?”

Derek’s eyebrows rose. “Waiting for you. We have a date, remember?”

“A date?”

“To talk about the screenplay?”

“The screenplay. Right. I forgot.”

Like everyone in LA, Derek wants a piece of the business. He’d approached me about a month ago to collaborate with him on this movie he said he wanted to write. I thought he had a pretty good idea. A modern-day retelling of a fairy tale, one that rarely gets retold. I, of course, will be cast in the lead role, if it ever gets optioned. But, even though we’d been meeting a couple of times every week, things were still in the concept stage.

“You forgot?” Derek frowned as he studied my face. “Gabe, are you feeling all right today?”

“I’m fine. Why do you ask?”

“I dunno. Your cheeks are all red. You kept messing up in class—”

“You noticed that?” I asked, touched that he had.

“Of course I noticed. It’s my job to notice. But I figured something was up, so I— Hey!” He broke off abruptly when I leaned in and kissed his cheek. “What’s that for?”

“Nothing,” I said, smiling happily as I slipped my arm through his. “Just ‘cause you’re you.”

The twitch in the corner of his mouth grew more noticeable. “Well, okay, then. As long as you have a good reason.”

We walked down to the corner. There’s a sidewalk cafe there that’s always being mentioned in the Trades, but it’s almost never crowded on Sundays. I ordered a veggie wrap and

P.G. Forte

iced tapioca tea. Derek had a soy burger, a side of yam sticks and some insanely healthy organic juice drink, Kombucha and carrot juice, I think. We started out talking about our movie then the conversation wandered off-track, like it always seemed to do. Next thing I knew, we were back to discussing friendship and sex.

"Come on, Derek, everybody knows it," I found myself saying once more. Frankly, it was a position I was getting tired of having to defend. "As soon as you add sex, friendship goes right out the window."

Derek shook his head. "Everybody? Who's that?"

"It's like in *When Harry met Sally*," I told him, but of course, he disagreed.

"Gabe, I keep telling you. You're missing the whole point of that film. Billy Crystal was wrong. She was right, he was wrong. You're a feminist, you should love that."

I pushed aside my plate and picked up my tea. "What about you? How many women friends do you have that you haven't slept with?"

"Besides you? None."

Which was just what I thought he'd say. "There you go. And if you and I had sex we would no longer be friends, either." It sucked, but that's the way it was.

Derek sighed. "There's something wrong with that logic. One of these days I'm going to figure out a way to prove it to you."

"Go right ahead," I told him, feeling somewhat pouty. There was only one way for either of us to *prove* our position, and that was to try it and see. That was so not gonna happen. Scorpios make great friends and horrible enemies. They hold everyone they know to the same impossible standards they hold for themselves. Derek and Bobby used to be real close, but as soon as Derek found out he'd been cheating on me, he cut Bobby loose.

I did *not* want to be cut loose, too.

They'll tell you Pisces are chameleons, wishy-washy, overly amenable. But you have to have a pretty sturdy backbone to live your whole life like...well, like a fish out of water. I could be as determined as a Taurus when I had to be.

"What now?" I snapped, suddenly aware of the way Derek was watching me. It was...weird.

He shook his head. "That drink of yours. I'm surprised they haven't had to shut this place down yet."

I popped the straw out of my mouth. "What are you talking about? What's wrong with my drink?"

That sexy half-smile was back as he said, "Wrong? Not a thing. It's the way you're toying with it. It's obscene."

Toying? "Oh."

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

Now, for a Scorpio, obscene is always a good thing. Of course, for a Scorpio, butterflies can be obscene. They taste with their feet, you know. Butterflies, that is. But don't let me get started on feet.

A good actress never passes up a chance to practice, especially not when she's got a captive and appreciative audience. It took all of a second for me to find my motivation.

"Hmm," I murmured, as I fitted my lips around the thick straw. If Derek really wanted to see obscene, I was happy to oblige. My fingers lovingly caressed the length of the straw as I slowly sucked first one, then another of the tapioca balls into my mouth. "Mmm." I licked my lips, put my head back, and swallowed, smiling in sheer bliss. "Mm, mm, mm."

"Oh, Jesus."

I know I said it was a bad idea to tease a Scorpio, but there are times when a girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do. Derek's espresso-colored eyes were looking distinctly glazed as I sighed dreamily and parted my lips to take the straw in my mouth again. "Did you say something, Der?"

"Can we get back to discussing the movie now?" he croaked.

I paused, mouth open, and ran my tongue across my bottom lip. My eyelashes fanned my cheeks. "Of course, we can. We can do whatever you want."

That wasn't really a joke. Like all the best performances, it held a kernel of truth. With Scorpios, you can either do what they want, or you can hide 'til they're gone.

"Right." Derek rolled his eyes. "Nice one, Gabe."

Derek's the only one who's ever called me Gabe. It started shortly after we met. He said that since we were going to be friends, he was going to call me Gabe. Gabby, he said, was a girl's name. And he already had a *girlfriend*.

"You're wasting your time with the dog walking job," Derek told me. "You could be making tons more money charging people to watch you eat."

I smiled, feeling smug. "I'll keep it in mind. Now, I thought you wanted to talk about the screenplay?"

Like I said, it was an intriguing idea he'd come up with. A modern-day Rapunzel, trapped by her pre-conceived ideas about love and the man who was trying to reach her. There was just one problem—

"She's a modern woman, Derek. She wouldn't just wait for love to come to her. She'd go out and find it."

"Like you're doing, you mean? You say you want love, too, but I don't see you going for it."

"That's different. I'm a Pisces. A fish. I go with the flow. It's not that I'm waiting, it's more like...like I'm trying to swim *with* the tide, instead of against it."

P.G. Forte

“That’s bullshit. And if you think that’s true, you’re lying to yourself.”

Fish don’t like to be forced to defend ourselves. We really hate to be pinned down. We’d rather turn and swim away. Or, at least, change the subject. “Well, if I am, it’s your fault. I’ve asked you to teach me some of those Tantric Yoga techniques but you refused to help. So, what am I supposed to do?”

Derek leaned back in his chair and crossed his arms. “I didn’t refuse. I said I’d be happy to teach you.”

“You said you could only teach me *hands-on*.” And we both knew what *that* meant.

Derek shrugged. “That’s the only way to learn some things.” He looked at me for a moment and then said, “You know, you’re never gonna find what you’re looking for unless you’re willing to risk something to get it. It’s like that *Matchbox 20* song. You gotta give it up to get off sometimes. You can’t let your fear about what *might* happen hold you back. Love isn’t gonna just drop into your lap without any effort on your part.”

“Maybe it is, and maybe it’s not,” I told him as I got to my feet. “It wouldn’t be the first time something like that happened, you know. Fate works in mysterious ways.”

“I thought that was God?” he asked, looking faintly surprised. “Are you leaving?”

“Fate. God. Same difference.” I planted a kiss on his cheek. “And, yes. I am. I have to go. Thank you for lunch.”

Derek sighed. “You’re running away.”

What I was *not* doing was arguing. “As you wish,” I replied, knowing he’d get the reference to *The Princess Bride*, hoping it would soften the blow.

I left the restaurant and headed toward my car. I could feel him staring at my ass the whole way and I put a little more sway in my hips because of it, which was no more than he deserved.

I stopped on my way home and picked up some stuff for dinner—pre-packaged sashimi and a split of Chardonnay. By the time I got back to my building, my annoyance with Derek had morphed into serious frustration. I was tempted to call and ask if he wanted to continue our discussion over dinner. I knew that would likely send him the wrong signals, but I almost didn’t care.

I shouldn’t be the only one stuck with the task of keeping our friendship from doing a crash and burn. If he wanted to quote song lyrics at me, then fine. Two could play that game. I could tell him that *‘just one move would put him by himself’* but the truth was, I was afraid that the shoe would be on the other foot. That he’d be the one to leave and I’d be the one feeling left out.

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

He'd never actually told me why he'd dumped Claire, and since friends don't kick friends when they're down, I never asked. It could have been anything. And I could be next.

I parked in the garage and was headed for the elevator, so deep in thought I wasn't watching where I was going. That all came to a halt when I collided with something big, hard, and definitely male.

"Oh, no," I gasped as I felt the bag rip. The wine bottle slipped from my grasp.

"Gotcha," my collision exclaimed as he lunged. He caught the bottle scant inches above the cement floor then laughed triumphantly as he tossed it into the air and caught it again. "D'you see that catch? Damn, I'm good."

I certainly couldn't argue with that. He was damn good-looking, too. Kind of like a scruffy, blond, Japanese anime version of Brad Pitt, long, lanky with big eyes and a sweet mouth. He was dressed in a faded black T-shirt that hugged him in all the right places and a pair of worn jeans that did an even better job of it; carrying a box full of clothes and...well, stuff.

"Your split almost split apart," he said as he handed it back to me.

I felt myself blink. *Oh, no, he did not just say that?* Chills ran up my spine. I nodded toward the shoe that had fallen from his box. "Better pick that up. You wouldn't want your *sole* to lose its *mate*."

"Nope. Can't have that, can we?" he murmured as he bent to grab it. He smiled up at me, sea green eyes twinkling, and when our eyes connected, I felt dizzy from the rush.

"Do you live here?" we both blurted at the same time. We paused and tried again. "Yeah, I do. I—"

"You first," he offered chivalrously.

"A couple of years. I'm in 405. Gabby Browne."

"Zach Harris." He slipped his shoe back into the box and extended his hand. "I just moved in today. I'm in 404. Does that mean you're right next door?"

I shook my head and his hand. "Other side of the building, directly across the courtyard. Our apartments actually face one another."

"Really?" Zach's eyes glowed brighter. His hand tightened on mine. I was sure he was picturing the sliding glass doors that opened from each of our living rooms and bedrooms out onto our balconies, even before he murmured, "I hope you're in the habit of leaving your blinds open."

Funny, that's just what I was hoping, too. I laughed as I answered, "Maybe I am."

"I'll look forward to it."

"Mmm. Me, too."

We talked for a few minutes more, sharing all the pertinent info. He was a guitarist and a Pisces. And I knew. I just *knew* we were fated.

P.G. Forte

It's Destiny, I thought, as the elevator doors finally slid shut. *It's Kismet. It's a miracle. It's about freakin' time...*

As soon as I reached my apartment, I grabbed my phone.

"What's wrong?" Derek asked, when he heard my voice.

Wrong? I shook my head. Nothing was wrong. It was all very right. "Derek...the soul mate thing? I think I just figured it out."

"Gabby?"

"I need you. Can you come over?"

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

Chapter Four

I hadn't even popped the cork on my wine before Derek was knocking at my door. One look at his face and I knew he'd run the whole way.

It was late February and not that hot. And, as Derek had pointed out earlier, it wasn't even that far, still his cheeks were flushed, he was breathing too fast. "Omigod. Derek, are you all right? Come in. Sit down."

He came in, but shook his head at the rest. "I'm fine. Tell me."

"No! At least...here, let me get you some water."

I retreated to the kitchen for a glass. I was as shaken by his appearance as I was touched by the gleam in his eyes. It takes a real friend to be that happy for someone else's success.

Derek was pacing back and forth in my living room when I re-joined him. As he took the glass from my hand, I noticed that his chest was still heaving a little too hard. He was acting so strangely and looking so odd, that if it weren't for the smile that kept curving his lips, I'd have thought he was angry.

"You sure you're okay?"

He nodded, drank the water down fast, and handed the glass back. "Yes. I told you, I'm fine." He smiled expectantly. "So?"

"Well, his name is Zach," I said, feeling suddenly shy. Derek's smile and the way he was looking at me were doing funny things to my insides. "He uh, plays guitar. And he just moved into the building today."

Derek frowned. "Wait. Who are we talking about?"

"Zach. The guy I just met. My soul mate."

"The guy you just--? What? Met *when*?"

"Now. When I got home. In the garage."

Derek's eyebrows had risen about as far as they could go. He looked at me for a moment without saying a word and then shook his head. "I need to sit for a minute," he said as he crossed to my couch.

Well, I could have told him that was a good idea, I thought, as I followed after him. In fact, I had told him, hadn't I? "Derek, you're really starting to scare me. Do you want some more water?"

P.G. Forte

“Water’s not gonna do it. What else you got?”

I had wine, but there was no way I was going to offer him that. Not when he already looked like a cardiac candidate. “Iced tea?”

“*Tea?* Yeah, that’d be perfect,” Derek mumbled. “No, damn it, I do not want iced *tea*. Forget it.” He covered his face with his hands and groaned. I watched him, worried.

Finally, he lifted his head and looked at me. There was a different gleam in his eyes now, a look I didn’t understand at all. “Tell me,” he repeated. “Start at the beginning. And don’t leave anything out.”

“I don’t get this. Why am *I* here?” Derek asked, a few minutes later, after I’d told him the whole story.

“To help me, of course.” I couldn’t understand why he was being so thickheaded. He knew about my quest for The Big O, we’d discussed it at length. Maybe he thought these things just happened naturally, but personally, I suspected they took planning and work. “To give me some pointers, help me get this guy’s attention. There has to be some kind of sign I can give him, you know, so he’ll know I’m interested?”

Even soul mates have to start somewhere and we were both Pisces. Someone had to make the first move. If we both decided to go with the flow, it could take months before anything happened. Most of the time, I’d be good with that. But I was really sick of waiting.

“You’re a guy. You must have some ideas?”

Derek’s eyes narrowed. “You want to give him a sign? Oh, that’s easy. Why don’t you put on a show for him, like you did for me this morning?”

I must have looked puzzled, because after a minute he added, “Show him your tits, Gabe. That’ll get his attention. I promise you. It’ll make him think all sorts of crazy things.”

“Derek!” I stared at him, shocked—both by his crudeness and the idea. “I can’t do that. We just met. I--I hardly know him!”

He sighed. “Gabe, right now I’m wondering if you know anyone. Including yourself.”

I had a lot to think about the next day at work. Luckily, that’s one thing my day job gave me plenty of—time to think. I was a dog walker for Pooch Camp, one of LA’s most exclusive pet services. Pooch Camp catered to the darlings of Hollywood’s elite, some of the most pampered pets on the planet. My specialty was providing off-leash excursions for up to six dogs at a time, in several of the area’s parks.

It’s a fun job. Although there were some pets I could have done without, I had no real complaints. Besides being a steady gig, dog walking kept my feet in Pradas and Vasque Calderas, it paid for my classes, and it allowed me to keep food on the table and a roof over my

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

head. Or, as Bobby once put it, to pursue my two favorite hobbies: eating food and living indoors.

I had taken the dogs to Runyon Canyon Park—one of LA's best-kept secrets. One hundred fifty acres, nestled amid the Hollywood Hills, extending from Franklin north to Mulholland, Runyon is secluded, close to home, and gorgeous. The ground is baked hard most of the year, the air carries the rich herbal scents of chaparral mixed with laurel and sage, and the views are exquisite. Hiking through the relative wilderness of undeveloped parkland, with a pack of unleashed dogs romping around you, is guaranteed to leave you feeling like Diana, goddess of the hunt. But that's on a good day.

On a bad day, when the dogs won't behave or the weather is rough, you feel more like Mowgli from *The Jungle Book*—after the pack has turned against you.

Today, the weather was mild, cloudier, and a little bit cooler than yesterday, but no rain yet. The dogs were mostly cooperative. A good day, all in all. And a good thing, too, because, as I said, I had a lot on my mind. I couldn't wait to see Zach again, but I still didn't know how to approach him. Derek had been no help at all.

He'd looked at me, almost pityingly. "Another musician? You're kidding. Don't you ever learn?"

"He's not like Bobby," I said, bristling as I came to Zach's defense.

"Oh, they're all like Bobby. If you're smart, you'll forget this guy. You don't want a musician for a soul mate anyway."

What was he talking about? "You make it sound like I have a choice." Besides, musicians weren't that bad. Sure, they had groupies, and that was always going to be a problem. But, actors were worse. Good actors believed so hard in the roles they were playing that they almost had no choice but to fall for their co-stars. Worst of all were dancers and athletes. They were so focused on their bodies, so focused on bodies in general—

"Of course you have a choice. Haven't you ever heard of free will?"

"Sure I have. I just don't see how it applies to soul mates."

It was a ridiculous thing for him to suggest. In fact, every word out of his mouth last night had been ridiculous.

"Show him my tits," I muttered, feeling grumpy all over again. "Yeah, there's a great idea." It was such a Scorpio thing to suggest. Or maybe it was a guy thing—who knew?

As for his other suggestion, that I didn't know myself? Well that was just laughable. Problem was, I knew myself too well. I knew I was getting bored with acting, bored with the pace of my life, as restless as a salmon in springtime.

P.G. Forte

At this point, my thoughts were derailed by Harry. A two-year-old Rhodesian Ridgeback, Harry's a beautiful dog but hopelessly undisciplined. If you knew who he belonged to, you wouldn't be surprised. Like owner, like dog.

Ridgebacks were bred to hunt lions. There are no lions here in LA County, but there are ground squirrels aplenty. I wouldn't think you could mistake the two, but Harry's been known to anyway.

Harry's been known to tear off into the bushes after squirrels or pretty much anything, actually, wasting my time, ruining the walk for the rest of the dogs. Today it was a Gnatcatcher. Two Gnatcatchers, to be exact.

They're on the endangered list, and they aren't supposed to be disturbed. Particularly not in the middle of their nesting season—which, of course it was. Count on Harry to find a pair and flush them out of the brush.

By the time I finished rounding the dogs up, I was covered in dust and sweat and in desperate need of a shower. I'm pretty sure that's what gave me the idea. I thought about yesterday, thought about everything Derek had said, everything Zach had said, and suddenly, I knew just what I needed to do to attract Zach's attention.

I was left with only one question to answer.

Did I have the guts to go through with it?

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

Chapter Five

I had to wait until dark to put my plan into motion. This was both good and bad. Good, because it gave me time to prepare, bad because...well, did I really want that much time to think?

Luckily, as I've mentioned, it was still February. Dark came early. So early, in fact, that I had barely enough time to get ready. There was so much to do! I had to shower, shave, and touch up the highlights of my honey-blonde hair. I had to give myself a pedicure. I had to pick out my wardrobe, put fresh sheets on my bed, fresh towels in the bathroom, and then set the stage, block my moves, choose a soundtrack...

Liz Phair took an early lead in that department. *Extraordinary* and *Why Can't I?* were perfect for the occasion. But *Little Digger* is somewhat iffy as a love song, Bobby always laughed himself silly over *Favorite* and *HWC*...well, it seemed a bit extreme for a first date.

Eventually, I settled on my favorite *Maroon 5* Acoustic album, instead. It was hot, sweet, totally sexy, a little too short, but, hey, that's what the replay setting is all about, right?

I waited until the lights went on in Zach's apartment, and I knew he was home. Then I fired up the music, opened the blinds, turned on my own lights, and went into action.

I can honestly say it was the scariest thing I'd ever done.

They say some people never outgrow their stage fright. I was already worried that it might be the case for me. Just thinking about performing naked had the butterflies in my stomach spawning and multiplying.

Luckily, I knew how to deal with nerves. It was simply a matter of finding a character to play and submerging myself in the role. Tonight I had decided to play Claire.

Claire is glamorous, sexy, very self-assured. I'm certain she's never known a moment of self-doubt. That's one woman who lives for the spotlight. I could totally see her doing something like this for Derek, vamping it up until she had him on his knees.

I strutted and twirled to the hot strains of *This Love*, tossing in a shimmy or two as I removed my clothes. I'd taken six months worth of belly dancing lessons when I was with Bobby—for all the good it had done me up until now. While I was learning to shimmy, he'd been shaking it up with some waitress in a Venice Beach dive.

P.G. Forte

By the time *Sunday Morning* started, I was so into the act, I'd forgotten I even had an audience. I thrust my hands into my newly-blonde hair and was dancing naked, for myself alone; eyes closed, swaying to the music.

Thinking of nothing but how good it felt I glided my hands down my body. I reveled in the silky smoothness of my skin and pretended it was my lover's hands touching me. I imagined how much better would it feel when it was his hands on my breasts caressing my nipples into hard peaks; when it was his hands slipping between my legs to massage my clit. I was imagining it all so clearly—his hands tight on my hips as we rocked to the music, his cock nudging me from behind, his voice urging me onto all fours in the center of the bed—that the ringing of the doorbell came as a shock. It broke the mood, startling me out of my reverie right in the middle of *She Will Be Loved*.

"Damn," I muttered as I grabbed my robe. I'd forgotten to keep an eye on the window. Was that Zach at my door? Or had I attracted some unwanted attention?

I breathed a sigh of relief when I peeked through the spy hole. "Zach, hi," I said as I opened the door. That was as far as I got. He was through the door in an instant, pinning me against the wall and framing my face in his hands. Kissing me for all he was worth.

And, damn, could he kiss.

His lips covered mine, his tongue filled my mouth with pleasure, reducing me to a mass of jellied bones and molten heat. Blindly, I reached out a hand to push the door shut. Then he was pulling away, leaving me groaning, wanting more but, oh, so not in the mood to stop him as he nibbled his way down my neck.

"That was the hottest thing I've ever seen," he murmured as he pushed my robe aside. "Please, tell me that was for me?" He curved his hands around my breasts, pushing them together, staring at them with an expression of awe, wonder, and greed.

I sucked in a quick breath. "Of course it was."

"Thank you," he said as he dove in, face first. The pull of his lips on a nipple had me arching against him. Electric currents of need were flowing in a perfect circuit from his mouth to my sex and back again.

He ran his tongue around the peaks of both breasts, and then tugged again at the tips. He gazed up at me, his eyes wide and hopeful, his smile hinting at wickedness yet to come. "I want to fuck you so bad. Can I?"

I nodded.

"Right now?"

I nodded again.

"Yes!" I heard him whisper as he sank to his knees. "There is a God."

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

Gently, he pried my legs apart, using his thumbs to spread my lips. His tongue darted out, stroking my clit again and again until my legs started to shake and I clutched at his head to keep myself from falling. Or perhaps to insure that he never, ever stopped. Maybe both. I'm not really sure. I was beyond thinking at that point.

By the time the sweet strains of *If I Fell* were replaced by the hard, driving rhythm of *Highway to Hell*, I was ready for that highway myself—I wanted to burn.

Luckily, so did Zach. “You taste amazing,” he murmured as he reached for my hand and tugged me to my knees. As he kissed me again, I found myself agreeing with him. I thought we tasted pretty good together, too.

He shifted one of his hands to cup the back of my head as he deepened the kiss and slowly lowered us both to the floor. Then he straightened again, kneeling between my legs as he unzipped, dug a condom from his pocket, and quickly fitted it over himself. He had a nice cock—long and lanky, just like the rest of him. I licked my lips as I thought of all the places I'd like to put it. Of all the places I was sure I would put it, eventually.

Zach caught the motion and grinned. “I gotta tell you, this is the greatest birthday present anyone's ever given me.”

“Today's your birthday?” I asked somewhat startled, as he lowered himself on top of me again. I was vaguely aware that the album had started over.

“That's right,” Zach murmured, pressing another quick kiss on my breast before moving up to nuzzle my neck. “All day.” He rubbed his cock along my slit, coating himself in my juices. “Spread your legs a little wider, baby. Help me get nice and wet for you.”

I shifted slightly to comply with his request, feeling suddenly awkward.

“Happy birthday.”

I know it sounds stupid, I mean, I knew he was a Pisces, so the fact that it was his birthday shouldn't have been that much of a surprise. All the same, it kind of drove home the point that, really, what did I know about him? Then he flexed his hips and drove another point home and I went back to being mindless once again.

Say what you will about musicians, but what they don't know about rhythm, probably isn't worth knowing. As Zach began to thrust inside me, rocking right along to the music, I felt the air grow thick. I was hot, so hot, so...

He reared up suddenly, and grabbed hold of my knees, pressing my legs apart, his movements slowing almost to a stop as he stared at me. I gazed up at him in surprise.

He nodded at my pussy. “Touch yourself. Like you were doing earlier.”

I slid one hand over my mound and began to finger my clit as he watched; stroking and circling the swollen nub, growing hotter, growing wetter, arching my back as I felt all my muscles clench tighter, tighter...then it all came undone.

P.G. Forte

“Oh, yeah,” Zach groaned as I spasmed around him. He began to move faster again, thrusting harder. Then he threw back his head and let loose with a long, low growl of release.

A moment later, he’d collapsed alongside me. We both lay there, breathing in tandem, gulping air in companionable silence, like a pair of beached dolphins.

He stirred first, turning his head to look at me. “We’re not done yet, are we?”

Done? Hell, no. Not even. I shook my head.

He smiled. “Good. That’s what I was hoping.” He got to his feet, reached for my hand, and hauled me up as well. Next thing I knew, he’d hefted me over his shoulder and was running for the bedroom. I was choking with laughter as he tossed me on the bed. I gazed up at him expectantly while he ripped off his clothes, waiting for him to join me. Instead, he did something even better. He lifted one of my feet to his mouth and began to nibble on my toes.

Now, you’ve probably heard that Pisces rules the feet. I’m not so sure it’s not the other way around. I’ve heard of women who can come just from having their toes sucked, and I’m thinking every one of them is a fish.

Rippling waves of pleasure were coursing up my leg. I was halfway to heaven when, “Damn, you’re cute,” Zach muttered as he sank to his knees and his mouth rode the waves toward my throbbing pussy.

I opened my eyes, ready to order him to stop, to go back and do my other foot—but the Mistress routine is not my best role. Besides, right about then his lips found my clit and I gave up the fight. Pisces aren’t that big on confrontation, anyway.

It was just before midnight when Zach left my apartment. It was still technically his birthday, so he was going to meet some friends for drinks. Musicians don’t do anything early and they rarely do anything alone. He invited me to join them, but I had dogs to walk in the morning, so I turned him down. He kissed me good-bye, thanked me once more, and turned off the lights on his way to the door, so I wouldn’t have to get up again. Pisces are thoughtful like that.

I wrapped my quilt around me but, tired as I was, I couldn’t fall asleep. Lazy thoughts kept circling in my brain, like leaves in a fountain, bobbing and spinning ‘til I sat up again and reached for my phone.

“What’s wrong?” Derek asked.

I felt myself frown. “Why do you always ask that? You make it sound like I only call you when there’s a crisis.”

“Well, don’t you?”

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

Tears pricked at my eyes as I slid open the drawer of my night table and dug out some emergency chocolate. I've told you how Pisces tends to mimic all the other signs, well at the moment I was feeling as moody as a crab. "No. Stop being mean."

"Has something happened that I don't know about?" Derek asked cautiously.

I chomped on my chocolate macadamia bar for a moment. "Mmm. I took your advice."

"What advice?"

"The strip tease. Did you get that idea from Claire, by the way?"

"Did I--? *What?*"

"It seemed like such a--such a Claire thing when I was doing it."

"Oh, Jesus. Are you fucking kidding me?"

I could hear Derek moving around in his apartment and I closed my eyes to better imagine what the noises filtering through the phone might mean. *Kitchen*, I thought. Glass. Bottle. Pouring. I could imagine him standing at his counter, with the light from his faux Tiffany fixture spilling down on his dark hair, gilding it with a faint green-gold tinge. I could imagine him lifting one of his square glass tumblers to his lips, tossing his head back with a quick motion that would leave his hair in disarray.

"What are you drinking?" I asked, feeling thirsty, feeling like I was right there in his apartment with him, running my hand through his hair to comb it back into place, trailing my fingers down his cheek. He had a nice place, right above the studio. When the windows were open, you could hear the water and the wind chimes in the courtyard below. It was dark and mysterious—just like Derek. It was cozy, crammed with things he'd picked up on his travels. It was warm...

"Never mind what I'm drinking," Derek snapped, sounding *not* warm. "What happened?"

I sighed, breaking off another square of chocolate and popping it in my mouth. "Pretty much what you'd expect to happen, I guess. It worked. He got the message. He came over."

"You *slept* with him? Already?"

Well, I certainly wouldn't put it like *that*. Sleep? No. Not even. Silence hummed over the line. I listened as Derek poured himself another drink.

"How was it?"

"It was great," I replied, sliding back down between the sheets. "But, you know, probably even soul mates don't start out at the peak. Right?"

This time the silence stretched even longer. "I think you're rushing this," Derek said at last. "What do you even know about this guy—nothing."

"That's not true."

P.G. Forte

“Prove it. You said he’s a musician, right? So, tell me what his favorite groups are. What kind of music does he like? What’s the name of the band he plays in? Give me three local artists he’d be likely to follow.”

I sighed. “We did talk, you know.” Not much, but enough. Music was definitely one of the topics we’d covered. I had no problem reeling off the names of a half dozen bands I felt confident would be at the top of Zach’s list.

“But I don’t see what good knowing all that is supposed to do for me,” I said. “How is that gonna get me what I want?”

“You need to slow things down with this guy,” Derek replied, ignoring my questions. “Stop pushing so hard. You haven’t made any plans to see him again, have you?”

“Well, sure. He’s coming over for dinner tonight,” I said, feeling exhausted as I thought about it. Maybe Derek was right. Maybe I was pushing too hard for this. Maybe it was one of those Zen things where the only way to find what I was looking for was to stop looking.

“Dinner?” The way Derek said the word; you’d have thought it was a foreign concept. “Where—your place? Tonight?”

I snuggled even further beneath the covers. “Mm-hmm. You’ve heard of it, right? Dinner, it comes after lunch, before bedtime...and speaking of which...”

“Funny,” Derek muttered, although I thought the only thing funny was how *un*-amused he sounded.

“Night, Der,” I murmured sleepily. “Sweet dreams.”

“Yeah.” His voice was quiet. Almost too quiet. “Yeah, you, too.”

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

Chapter Six

The next day was overcast. The canyon was wreathed in fog and prettier than ever. I didn't have Harry with me and everyone else behaved themselves, so I was able to get my whole menu planned for dinner: lemon sole, fresh asparagus, a gratin of braised winter vegetables and a kick-ass white chocolate fondue for dessert.

Of course, within minutes of Zach's arrival, I was having real doubts about whether we'd make it to dessert. He'd followed me into the kitchen when I went for the wine.

"Ever do it on a counter?" he asked as he nipped at my neck.

I smiled at him over my shoulder. "Not with you."

"Hmm. In that case—" He spun me around and then backed me against the refrigerator. I shivered as he caged me there. "How about here? Ever do it here?"

I shook my head.

Zach smiled. "Wanna?"

I smiled back. The possibility was not without interest. "I thought you wanted to eat dinner?"

Zach's eyes were twinkling. "Maybe I'd rather eat you. Can I?"

There was only one answer to a question like that. Just thinking about what his tongue had done to me last night made my pussy clench and my breathing hitch. Before I could get a word out, the doorbell rang.

"Ignore it," Zach said—a suggestion I heartily endorsed. But, obviously, whoever was out there, had no intention of being ignored. The bell rang again.

"Hold that thought," I begged as I slipped beneath his arm and ran to answer the door.

"Whoever you are, you have really lousy timing," I muttered as I peeked through the spy hole in the door.

My eyes widened when I saw who it was. "Derek? What's wrong?"

"Not a thing," he said, giving me a quick peck on the cheek as he breezed past. "Wow. Something smells good. Did you cook, Gabe?"

I stared at him. "What are you doing here?"

"Screenplay." He held up a familiar looking spiral notebook. "Don't you remember? We had a date to meet and work on it some more."

P.G. Forte

“We did not.”

“You forgot? Again? That’s twice in one week.”

“I didn’t forget. I—”

“Ah, so you do remember?”

“What?” I shook my head, hoping to clear the confusion. It didn’t help. “No!”

“Everything okay?” Zach poked his head into the hallway to ask.

Derek’s eyes flashed. The look he gave Zach could have melted steel. Then his face cleared. “You must be Zach.”

“Uh, yeah.” Zach glanced at me. He had that swim-away-fast look in his eyes. I knew that look, and I knew what it meant. Fish society runs on fairly simple rules. There are two ways to survive. Either you’re big, or you’re fast. Or you’re lunch.

“This is my friend, Derek,” I explained, hoping to sound reassuring by emphasizing the friend part. *Ignore the teeth*, I wanted to add. *He’s harmless. Any resemblance to a great white or a killer whale is purely coincidental.* Problem was, I wasn’t altogether certain that was the case.

“Oh, I’m more than a friend,” Derek asserted calmly.

We both looked at him.

He smiled at Zach. “We’re writing a movie together. Didn’t Gabe tell you? She’d play the lead, of course. It’s a great role for her. I think this could be her big break.”

Zach’s face cleared. “Cool.” He smiled at me sweetly. “Do you two need to work? I can come back later if you’re busy.”

“No,” I answered, just as Derek inquired, “Were you in the middle of something?”

“Yes,” I said, aware that they were both starting at me.

Derek’s lips curved up in his usual half-grin. “Well, which is it, Gabe? Yes or no?”

“I’m having dinner with Zach,” I reminded him. *And great sex afterwards.*

“Maybe I can join you?”

I knew Derek was talking to me, but his gaze strayed to Zach, who naturally felt compelled to answer. “Yeah. I’m cool with that. Unless there’s not enough to go around?”

Once again, they both turned toward me. As if I was the one with all the answers. I gritted my teeth and smiled. “There’s plenty.”

What’s Derek up to?

That was the question that plagued me throughout dinner. He and Zach seemed to be hitting it off. I didn’t know why that surprised me so much, but it did. And I really didn’t understand why I felt left out. I should be happy about this. But I was back to feeling moody again. I guess it’s just hard to get too happy when you know you’re being lied to.

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

That was the bottom line. I knew Derek hadn't forgotten about my dinner with Zach. And I'd bet anything that it hadn't slipped his mind that I was hoping to have the most incredible sex of my life right *after* dinner, either.

Sex never slips a Scorpio's mind.

"Are you here to play chaperone?" I'd demanded when I got him alone for a minute in the kitchen just before we all sat down. Last night on the phone, he'd cautioned me to stop rushing, to take things slow. Now, I expected to get the full lecture.

Instead, he gave me one of his enigmatic, pitying looks. "Hardly. More like the reverse."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Think about it," he advised as he picked up the extra dishes I'd just taken from the cabinet for him, and headed for the table.

I'd been thinking about it all through dinner and was still at a loss. Was he here to watch? Did he want to join us?

My fork slipped from my fingers to clatter on my plate as the thought hit. Did he?

I glanced up. The guys had stopped talking. They were both staring at me. I was pretty sure I must be wearing that swim-for-the-shallows look in my eyes now, too.

"Everything okay?" Zach's smile was gentle, inquisitive. His gaze took in the drops of lemon sauce that splattered the table before returning to lock with mine.

"What's the matter, Gabe?" Derek asked. "You finally figured some things out?"

My gaze shifted to his face. "What do you mean?"

His dark eyes gave nothing away. "Well, you looked like you were thinking pretty hard. I thought that maybe you'd had a revelation. Like you'd suddenly discovered what *forty-two* means."

"No," I replied. "Nothing like that."

"You sure? Maybe you've figured out what you really want then? Is that it?"

I picked up my fork and resumed eating. "It's nothing. I was just being clumsy."

"As you wish," Derek said softly.

I nodded, but kept my eyes on my food. *Yeah, I love you, too—but not like that!*

I know fish usually go with the flow, but I really wasn't sure about *this* flow. I mean, sure I've had fantasies about being shared by two men, who hasn't? That didn't mean I wanted to try it in real life or with real people.

Which didn't mean I wasn't going to think about it...

Zach would start it. He'd channel his inner Leo and do something suitably dramatic, like sweep all the food from the table with a single swipe of his hand.

"Ever do it here?" he'd ask, standing at the end of the table, daring me to play along.

P.G. Forte

I don't take dares—unless I want to. And, oh, did I want to.

I climbed on top of the table, having already mysteriously lost most of my clothes. Purring like a big cat, I crawled toward him. Derek's eyes widened, I could feel the heat of his gaze as I passed him. I could feel his hot breath on my skin and my nipples grew harder.

Then I reached the end of the table and slid between Zach's legs. They both watched me as I lay back on the table, stretched my arms above my head, and arched my back. "Where do you want me?" I murmured mischievously.

"Right here, baby," Zach replied, running a finger along the thin strip of wet satin that covered my pussy. "Right now." He hooked a finger under the lace strap at my hip and tugged, but nothing happened.

"Try this," Derek suggested, handing him one of my steak knives.

"Trust me, baby?" Zach asked as he slid the knife under the lace.

I nodded, and then held my breath as he cut the panties from me with sure strokes.

"I can't sit here and watch," Derek muttered, getting up.

I didn't see where Derek went. Zach was running the point of the blade lightly up my stomach and doing a good job of distracting me from anything else. Carefully, he slipped it beneath the front clasp of my bra. One slice and the bra fell open.

Suddenly, "These are mine," Derek growled possessively, leaning over my shoulders to palm my breasts. "I saw them first."

He was standing so close that I could smell the musky scent of his cock. It made my mouth water. I tipped my head back and looked at him. "You remembered?"

His eyes warmed as he returned my smile. "Natch."

"Snatch?" Zach sounded faintly annoyed as he looked up at Derek from between my legs. "Dude, wait your turn. Learn to share."

Derek's eyes glinted. "I've got plenty to share." The tip of his cock nudged at my cheek. "Open up."

I shivered as Zach dipped his head to take my clit in his mouth.

I shivered again as Derek framed my face in his hands and guided his cock between my lips. Then his hands slid back down to my breasts. I writhed in ecstasy for a moment before another thought hit me. There was still one thing missing.

Luckily, I had all that yoga training to fall back on. I braced my hands against the table and slowly went into a modified Plough posture, bringing my legs over my head, and my feet into perfect position—right in front of Derek's face.

I released his cock from my mouth long enough to beg, "Please?"

His eyes smoldered. "As you wish," he murmured just before his lips closed on my big toe...

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

The sound of Zach's chair scraping against the floor brought me back to reality.

"What's going on?" I asked, feeling my stomach flip as Zach got to his feet. I eyed them both nervously. *Fantasy, guys. It was just a fantasy.*

Zach rounded the corner of the table, and gave me a kiss. "I gotta go. You don't mind, do you, Gabe?"

"Mind what?" It took a minute for my brain to kick into gear. *What the hell?* He hadn't said *babe*, he'd said...*Gabe*. "Where are you going?"

"To the concert," he said, naming one of the groups that I'd mentioned to Derek last night. I felt my eyebrows crawl right up my forehead when he added, "I know its last minute, but Derek just gave me a ticket for it."

"He did?" Dumbstruck, I turned and looked at Derek. "You did?"

Derek shrugged. "A gift from a client. I wasn't going to use it. Seemed a shame to let it go to waste."

"Gabe?" Zach asked again. "You don't mind, right?"

See what I mean about Pisces and the flow? Of course Zach would take Derek up on his offer. Of course he'd go along with whatever suggestion he was given. He didn't know how important this dinner was to me. But Derek did.

Of course, I was a go-with-the-flow Pisces, too. I smiled brightly at Zach. "Go ahead. Enjoy yourself."

"I'll walk you out," Derek said. I was still smiling brightly as they left the room together.

"What the hell are you doing?" I demanded when Derek came back alone.

He looked at me for a moment before answering. "Come on, Gabe, you're not stupid. You know the answer to that, don't you?"

"You're supposed to be my friend," I reminded him.

"Being friends was your idea."

I felt my eyes narrow. *Liar!* I remembered quite distinctly which of us had first used the F word. It was definitely him. Way back in the beginning, in typical Scorpio fashion, he'd given me a choice: we could be friends, or we could stay the hell away from each other. "You're deliberately trying to mess things up between me and Zach. Why?"

"Because you don't belong with him. You belong with me."

"I don't sleep with my friends."

"Fine. Let's not be friends then."

Pain stabbed at my heart. That was exactly what I'd been trying to avoid. Losing Derek's friendship was more than I could bear. Luckily, Pisces are good at ignoring

P.G. Forte

unpleasantries, so I did. “I can’t believe you’re trying to get me to cheat on Zach with you.” I really couldn’t. Derek hadn’t even tried that when I was with Bobby—who would have deserved it. Of course, back then he was still with Claire. Not for the first time, I wondered why they’d broken up.

“Cheating?” Derek looked surprised. “What are you talking about? I don’t want you to cheat on anybody.”

“You don’t?”

He shook his head. “Hell, no. I want you to stop sleeping with him altogether.” I must have looked as surprised as I felt, because after a moment he shrugged a little and added. “Okay, look, he seems like a nice guy. You can still be friends with him, if you want.”

Unfortunately, this was not the right thing to say. “I can? Why, thank you—Master.”

Nine out of ten times Pisces will do everything we can to avoid confrontation. We’re peaceful. Compassionate. Willing to see everyone’s point of view, to take everyone’s side, to give everyone the benefit of the doubt. We’re nice people. Really. But if you happen to catch us on that tenth time—watch out.

Scorpios, on the other hand, are secretive, manipulative, deceitful, jealous, obsessive, and obstinate—and that’s all the fucking time! Which is exactly what I told Derek, in no uncertain terms. Then, just for good measure, I listed a whole bunch of reasons why I—or pretty much any woman I could think of—would prefer someone like Zach to someone like him.

“Okay, fine,” he snarled quietly when I was finished. “I get the point. But, there’s just one thing.”

“What’s that?” I snarled back, a little less quietly. I was seething with anger, hurt, resentment, frustration, pretty much anything you could seethe with, in fact.

“Next time you have a problem, don’t call me for help.”

Never let it be said that Pisces can’t give back as good as it gets. “I won’t. I’ll call a *friend*.”

I crawled into bed right after Derek stormed out. I opened my night table drawer, pushed aside the chocolate and pulled out my vibrator, intending to fuck myself into a better mood and a good night’s sleep.

After no more than a few minutes, I gave up the attempt. I was *not* in the mood to fantasize about Derek tonight. Unfortunately, I was also not in the mood to fantasize about anyone else either.

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

Chapter Seven

I've told you that dog walking has good days and bad days, right? Well, Wednesday was bad. It was raining—one of those slow, dismal drizzles that never lets up. It was gray, it was muddy, it was disgusting. It was perfect really, it completely matched my mood. The trail was slick, treacherous, annoying...a lot like a certain Scorpio I could've mentioned. And the dogs, not just Harry, but the rest of them as well, were as wired as an ADD playgroup on a sugar high.

That was for starters. As everyone knows, days that start off bad generally get worse before they get better. Or else they just get worse and stay that way. Today was no exception.

The next thing that happened was that Harry got lost. I blamed that on Derek, too. If I hadn't been obsessing about the previous evening, I might have been paying attention. I called. I whistled. I offered treats. I did everything I'd been trained, or could think of, to do. Then, while I was pondering my next move, the earthquake struck.

Oh, not the big one, of course. This was a mere four point eight. Strong enough to knock me off my feet, but that was about it. And shortly after the ground stopped shaking, I found Harry. So, you might've thought my day was improving, right?

Wrong.

Harry was at the bottom of the ravine. It was muddier than usual, and he couldn't get back up the way he'd gotten down. That wasn't the problem. The earthquake had dislodged a dead tree that had been lying along the slope. Somehow, when it shifted, Harry's collar had gotten snagged on an exposed root. He wasn't hurt, but boy was he stuck.

For all our dreamy otherworldliness, Pisces are very practical at heart. There was no way I was wanted to go down there after him. I tried calling Pooch Camp for backup, but the earthquake had knocked out their phone lines. So, I did what any sane person with an emergency would do. I called 911.

Here's a piece of advice. If you happen to be a sensitive, compassionate Pisces, one who cares about animals and expects other people to do the same, and if you happen to be having a really crappy day in the first place, don't call 911 when your dog gets trapped in a muddy ravine. Not unless one of you happens to be dying. I got yelled at for a good two minutes. As busy as they claimed to be, what with the earthquake and all, I'm surprised they had even that much time to waste.

P.G. Forte

I'm not going to say that what I did next was smart, but I still think it would have worked...if it weren't for the rain and the mud, the tree, the aftershocks. And the fact that it was Harry I was dealing with.

I went down to get him. You probably already saw that coming, huh?

I could tell from the way he whined and wriggled that he was grateful to see me. It took less than a minute, and only a moderate amount of pressure to get him un-snagged. He was so happy to be free that he jumped up and tried to lick my face.

Of course, he knocked me down. Of course, his jumping caused the tree to shift again. Of course, I ended up with my foot trapped beneath the trunk.

Bet you saw that coming, too.

So there I was, lying in the mud with the rain beating down, being trampled on by dogs. Yet I knew there was still worse to come, because I needed help, and there was only one person I could think of to call.

Now, Aries will rage 'til they're blue in the face. Geminis will cut you with words. Leos will bluster and put on airs. But *no one* holds grudges like a Scorpio.

"What is it?" Derek snapped when I reached him. And didn't that just figure? The one time when 'what's wrong?' would've worked.

"I need you," I said, and I bit my lip because clearly *that* was the wrong thing to say.

He snorted. "Oh, you need something all right, I'm just not sure it's me."

"Derek, please. I'm really stuck."

"Sorry to hear that. Why don't you call Zach?"

"I don't have his number!" This time I cringed. It *really* was the wrong thing to say.

"Try information. I doubt he's unlisted."

"Don't hang up," I begged. "I don't know what to do. The dogs are going crazy, I'm at the bottom of the ravine, there's this tree on my ankle that I can't lift and—"

"You're *what*?" Derek's voice cut across my explanation. "Where are you?"

"Runyon Canyon. The Western trail."

"I'll be right there."

I'll say this for Scorpions, they move damn fast when they want to. But even a few minutes can seem like an eternity when you're trapped under a tree. You can do a lot of thinking in that time. A lot of thinking.

By the time Derek slithered down the slope to land in a wet, muddy heap beside me, the only thing I could say in favor of his appearance was this: I looked worse.

"Are you okay?" he asked, as he looked me over.

I nodded, although that wasn't altogether true. "I've been better."

Improbably, a smile curved his lips. "I have to admit, I like the look."

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

Considering that ‘the look’ consisted of a soaking wet T-shirt, coated in mud, and plastered to my chest, I wasn’t surprised. “You would,” I muttered, sniffing a little as I blinked back tears.

His smile disappeared. “You’re crying? Are you hurt?”

I shook my head. The concern in his voice only made the tears fall faster.

“Gabby? Sweetie? What’s wrong?”

“Just get me out of here,” I begged.

It seemed like in no time at all Derek was unlocking the door to my apartment.

I sighed in relief. “I’ll be fine now.”

He nodded and followed me inside. “I know.”

“You don’t have to stay.”

“I know.” He glanced at the table, where the remnants of last night’s meal still lay. “You didn’t eat much last night, did you?”

“No,” I sighed and averted my eyes. It was too painful to look at or think about.

“Any breakfast this morning?”

I shook my head. I hadn’t been in the mood to eat. I still wasn’t.

“How about you go inside and get cleaned up and I’ll fix you something?”

“Derek, you don’t have to do this,” I told him.

Gently, he pushed me toward my bedroom. “Yes. I do.”

There’s something about a gratin of just about anything that really hits the spot on a cold, rainy day when you’re feeling like shit. Especially if you eat it while tucked into a warm bed. It might have been a little early for the wine, however.

“Are you trying to get me drunk?”

Derek shook his head. “Not much point in that, is there?”

I was going to suggest, again, that he could leave if he wanted, but I didn’t want to insult him. Scorpios can be very sensitive...in their own fashion.

Derek borrowed my bathroom for a quick shower while I was eating. Then he put my plate and glass away, and came and sat on the bed. He hadn’t put his muddy shirt back on. His chest was all smooth muscle and tanned skin, sheened with moisture, totally delectable. I was having a hard time not staring at his tight abs or the narrow line of dark hair that disappeared into his waistband. I was having an even harder time ignoring the liquid heat pooling between my thighs.

P.G. Forte

“You know, it’s a misconception that Tantric Yoga is all about sex,” he said quietly. “It’s not. It’s about accelerating spiritual growth. It’s about raising Kundalini. It’s not really about orgasm at all.”

“I know that.”

“It can take years of practice before a Yogi is ready to join with a partner, someone who complements him, who makes him whole. And then it could be years more before those partners are ready to join with one another in Maithuna.”

I nodded.

“Even then, the primary goal is to avoid orgasm. To channel all that sexual energy and use it to reach enlightenment.”

“It sounds lonely,” I whispered, raising my eyes to his face for the first time since he’d sat down.

He looked a little wistful. “Maybe it is.” He shrugged. Then he looked at me. “So, is that what you’re interested in learning about?”

I shook my head. “There’s more isn’t there?” I’d heard stories. My cheeks flamed. “What about...Amrita?”

“Ahh.” A faint smile curled Derek’s lips. “The nectar of the Goddess. I see.” For a moment, his eyes glowed with heat. Then the fires were banked, but the smile still remained. “That’s what you want to know about? Prolonged orgasmic bliss? Female ejaculation? Coming so hard that you faint? They say it’s...quite a cosmic experience.”

I’d heard that opening oneself that fully, being touched that deeply and intimately by another person could cause you to cry uncontrollably, or to laugh; could lead to an emotional release unlike any other. As I’ve said, I did a lot of thinking out there under that tree. I knew there was only one person I wanted to touch me like that.

“Show me.”

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

Chapter Eight

Derek lifted one of my hands to his lips and kissed my palm, my wrist, my fingertips. “Are you sure that’s what you want?”

A flush climbed up my chest to my face, and I swear I nearly came right on the spot. Speaking was too difficult. I nodded.

Unfortunately, nodding does no good if no one’s watching. Derek looked at me questioningly. “Well?”

“Yes.”

He released my hand and slowly slid the bedcovers down my legs, his gaze following right along. I had to take a deep breath. My toes curled in anticipation of what was coming.

“Relax,” he ordered, but since he was sliding his palm back up my leg as he said it, there was no hope of that happening.

He took hold of my nightshirt next. “Have I mentioned that you have *the* most beautiful breasts I’ve ever seen?” he asked, pulling the garment over my head and tossing it on the floor.

My nipples grew tighter. My breasts ached for his touch. I’d been waiting so long...

But he only looked. “So gorgeous,” he murmured. Then he stood and hooked his forefingers beneath the strip of lace at either side of my hips. “Lift up,” he instructed as he tugged my panties down my legs.

“What about you?” I croaked when I found myself naked in front of him.

Resting his hands on my ankles, he paused and glanced at my face. “What about me?”

“Aren’t you going to undress?”

His hold on my ankles tightened and he spread my legs wide. “Don’t worry about what I’m doing.”

“Not possible,” I gasped as he slid between my thighs.

He peeked up at me, brown eyes glinting. “You’re an actress. Think of it as taking direction.”

I would have argued, but his lips closed around my clit, and for a time, I stopped thinking at all. After a few minutes, he replaced his mouth with his hand, slid two fingers inside me, and began to stroke with steadily increasing pressure. Heat spread low and fast, like a huge, warm wave, swelling to a crest-- *Oh, God*, I thought suddenly, *I have to pee*.

P.G. Forte

“You don’t have to pee,” Derek murmured.

I looked at him, amazed. I’d heard Scorpios were intuitive. Was he reading my mind?

He smiled. “That’s how it feels, right?”

I nodded.

“It’s supposed to. Ignore it.”

“Easy for you to say,” I muttered squirming a little, as I imagined myself wetting the bed.

He stopped and regarded me sternly. “If you want me to teach you this stuff, you have to be willing to do what I say.”

I knew he enjoyed calling the shots but, truly, the submission gig had never been a big turn-on for me...until that moment. I fluttered my lashes. “Yes, Sensei,” I murmured demurely.

Derek chuckled. “Don’t make me laugh,” he said...or ordered...hell, maybe it was a threat...I don’t know because he began to stroke inside me again and the heat rose even faster than before.

“Close your mouth,” he said a minute later.

“What?”

“Haven’t I taught you anything about proper breathing techniques?”

Yoga is really big on nose breathing. So, I clamped my lips together obligingly, took a long, deep breath, and immediately felt a rush of heat all through my body. My legs started to shake.

“Open your eyes,” Derek murmured. “Look at me.”

I did, and I swear time stopped. The heat was everywhere now, and when I felt his fingers pull out of me, I wanted to cry. “Don’t stop now,” I begged him.

“Shh. Do you have any condoms?”

I had to think for a second. “No.”

Derek nodded. “Right. Me, neither. Do you trust me?”

Reluctantly, I nodded.

“Then, listen. I’m going to fuck you now, but I’m not going to come. So it’ll be okay. Believe me?”

Now, I know what you’ve heard. Pisces are gullible, naive and far too trusting, right? Well, you know what? Sue us. Nobody’s perfect. I nodded again.

A smile warmed his eyes as he stripped out of his pants. I barely had time to register the fact that he was tanned all over and that the erection jutting out at me was even heavier than I’d been imagining, before he’d slipped between my legs again and bent his mouth to mine. I blinked in surprise. It was our first real kiss. All sex and sensuality—not something friends would share, not even in their fantasies. Yet, nothing had ever felt more right. I wrapped my

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

arms and legs around him, wanting to melt right into him. My skin was so sensitized that just the feel of his body, so solid, so warm, all mine to enjoy, nearly sent me over the edge.

He lifted his head and our eyes locked as he slowly thrust into me. My eyes slid shut again. I started to shiver.

“No,” he murmured as he pulled back out. “Not like that. Focus.”

Groaning, I forced my eyes open once more. Successive waves of hot and cold chills chased themselves over my body as he thrust into me again and again. I think I stopped breathing and I know my nails were digging into his shoulders hard enough to break the skin, but I didn’t care. A feeling was welling up inside me that could only be love. A huge, bright bubble that pushed itself to the surface and erupted from my throat in a sob. Tears streamed from my eyes and I clutched Derek tighter as my body convulsed. Joyful. Ecstatic. Inconsolable.

I don’t know that I passed out, but my mind definitely went blank. Next thing I knew, he was kissing my neck, my shoulder, my breast; whispering words I couldn’t hear.

“Oh, my God,” I murmured, fighting for breath.

Derek lifted his head and smiled. “So, what d’you think?”

I’m not usually at a loss for words, but this left me speechless. “The earth moved.”

His lips quirked. “I’m pretty sure those were aftershocks from the earthquake, but I’ll take it as a compliment just the same.”

He kissed me again, and then pulled carefully away and got out of bed. I blinked in surprise as he reached for his clothes and started to dress.

Considering how amazing it had been, *that’s it* seemed a little inappropriate. But still—“That’s it? You’re leaving?”

He smiled faintly. “Work.”

“But...you didn’t come?”

He shook his head. “No.”

“Why?”

“Because. Today was about you. Besides, we don’t have time for the full session right now.”

I think I gaped. “The *full* session?”

His eyes turned smoky. “Yeah. The big one. That’s where you come a couple more times, and then we both come together and pass out in each other’s arms.”

“Oh.”

His smile widened. “That sounds worth waiting for, doesn’t it?”

I nodded yes, but what I was really thinking was: *more waiting?*

“There’s something I’ve been wondering about,” I said as I watched him finish dressing.

P.G. Forte

He looked at me. "Go on."

"Why'd you leave Claire? What changed? Was it something she did?"

His eyes widened, as though the question surprised him. "It had nothing to do with her. Claire is...Claire. I don't think she'll ever be anything different. I wouldn't want her to be. What changed was I'd fallen for you. Staying with her would have been dishonest."

I sighed. It was as I'd hoped. And what I'd feared. But it was never what I'd intended.

"I'm sorry."

Derek shrugged. "It happens. Look, I've got a class to teach now, so—"

"Why didn't you tell me any of this sooner?"

His jaw clenched. "I tried to. You wanted to be friends."

There was that word again. "What happens now? Can we still be friends?"

He shook his head. His voice was as cool as marble and his answer was pretty much what I'd expected.

"I don't think so."

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

Chapter Nine

"I'm sorry," I told Zach the next day.

He shrugged. "It's okay. I kind of figured it was coming. I saw how things were the other night." He looked at me for a moment, and then smiled. "Besides, we'll always have the refrigerator."

I stretched up on my toes to kiss him good-bye. "Thank you."

He pulled me in for a hug and kissed me back. Then he kissed me again. I think I've mentioned that he's really good at that. "Mmm. Thank *you*. Still the best birthday present I ever had."

"I'm glad," I said as he let me go.

I turned to leave.

"So, um...I guess this means you'll be keeping your blinds closed from now on?"

I glanced at him over my shoulder and smiled. "You never know. I might forget sometimes."

He smiled back. "I'll look forward to it."

I know I've said that a modern woman wouldn't sit at home and wait for love to find her. But there are some things that only come in the proper time, like when the tides turn or when the seasons change. And, sometimes, after you've done everything you can think of to make things happen, there's nothing else you *can* do, except sit back and let what you want come to you.

I really do hate waiting, though.

I waited until I knew Derek was teaching a class, then I left a message on his answering machine; one I knew he'd only respond to if he'd been lying the night before. It might sound odd, but I was hoping that was the case. I had to believe we were still friends that we weren't really giving anything up, that we'd only added a new dimension to what we already had.

The message was short. Three little words. "I need you."

He must have checked his answering machine right after class, because it was only a few minutes later that he was ringing my doorbell.

P.G. Forte

“What’s with the message?” he asked as I let him into my apartment. “What do you need?”

“A friend?”

Derek’s eyes flashed—not in a good way. His brows drew together. “I thought we covered this? I told you. I don’t want to be friends.”

“I know. But—”

“You don’t sleep with your friends. I don’t know how many times you’ve told me that, but I got the message, okay?”

I took a deep breath, and asked, “What if I made an exception?”

Derek looked at me for a long moment. “Exceptions are good,” he murmured and pulled me close.

I nestled against him, feeling happy, relieved, loved. “I’m so glad you came.”

“But, I didn’t come—yet.” He raised his head and smiled wickedly. “Are you ready for the big one?”

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

Chapter Ten

Well, that was the question, wasn't it?

Call it stage fright, call it performance anxiety, call it opening night jitters. Call it whatever you want. Suddenly, I was nervous as hell. I'd been building this whole thing up in my head for so long, waiting, hoping. What if I was disappointed? Worse, what if Derek was disappointed? Worst of all, what if I had been right and we ended up wrecking our friendship?

Derek stopped in his tracks just a few steps into the bedroom. Glancing around, he eyed the preparations I'd made: the Champagne colored satin sheets, the Vanilla Musk scented candles, the gardenia blossoms floating in bowls of water. "Verrry nice," he murmured as he wrapped his arms around me from behind and trailed kisses down my neck. "You've been thinking about this, haven't you?"

I nodded. "All day." In fact, it had been hard to think of anything else. And now...I could feel his cock pressing into the small of my back. I closed my eyes and pressed back. I wanted to cant my hips and grind against him. I wanted his hands on my breasts. I wanted to stay wrapped in his arms forever.

But he was already releasing me, moving toward the bed. He ran his hand over my new sheets and nodded approvingly. "I like." Next, he lifted the lid of the fondue pot I'd set up on my dresser, and peered inside. "What's this?"

"White chocolate fondue. I made it for the dinner you messed up the other night."

"Good thing, too." He dipped a finger into the melted chocolate for a quick taste. Then he looked at me and his smile disappeared. "Oh, come on. Don't tell me you're still holding that against me?"

I shook my head. That wasn't the problem. The nervousness was back.

Derek's eyes were troubled as he walked back to where I stood. "What did you expect me to do? Nothing? I'd tried that. It was killing me. I couldn't stand by and watch you waste time with another loser."

"Zach is *not* a loser," I blurted in the instant before I realized that the smarter thing would be to say nothing. Zach was sweet and fun, but did we really want to discuss him now?

Derek nodded. "Okay, well, maybe not. But that would have been even worse, wouldn't it? You might have stayed with him for months, if that was the case. For years. Forever." His

P.G. Forte

voice was matter of fact, but his face was grim and his words tore at my heart. “I wanted you with me and you just weren’t getting that.”

Pisces are nothing if not compassionate. Abandoned puppies, orphaned children, wounded men; we want to save them all. Derek was looking very wounded, and it made me forget all about being nervous.

“I’m with you now, aren’t I?” I asked as I closed the distance between us and framed his face with my hands, intending to reassure him with a simple kiss. But he pre-empted my kiss with one of his own, sweeping me into a tight embrace, molding me to him, slanting his mouth over mine. I opened my mouth on a sigh and his tongue swept in. There it was again. A rush of heat. A feeling of home. The been-here-done-this, déjà vu feeling that only being with a soul mate can give you.

A man’s kiss is his signature. Mae West said that. Pretty insightful for a Leo. I felt like my soul had known Derek’s kisses in a dozen different lifetimes. If we’d done this months ago, it might have saved us both a lot of waiting.

I could have gone on kissing him all night, but too soon, he was pulling away. We took turns taking off each other’s clothes; slowly, deliberately, breaking eye contact only when the need to see or to taste what we were uncovering became too overwhelming to ignore. I was right about the tan. I was right about a lot of things.

By the time we were both naked, I was shivering, but not from cold. My nipples were hard, my pussy was throbbing, and my chest heaved with every ragged breath I took. Derek’s breathing, on the other hand, was steady and even. Calm. Only the clenching and unclenching of his hands betrayed his excitement. Well, that and his cock. Thick, swollen, corded with veins, I didn’t know where I wanted it first, but I knew exactly when—now—no more waiting.

I lay down on the bed and reached for him, aching to feel his arms around me. I had a box of condoms ready on the nightstand, but we could deal with that in a minute. First, I wanted to feel Derek’s weight on top of me. I wanted his lips on mine again. Instead, he skipped my arms, sank to his knees, and took me with his mouth.

I groaned, only partly in disappointment. The way his lips teased my clit was certainly nothing to complain about. In fact, it was nothing short of amazing. Better than any fantasy. Then he reached for my breasts and his arms pressed against my thighs, pushing them open. I felt myself spread wide and held immobile—exposed—his for the taking.

I had braced myself on my elbows to watch, now my heart thudded in my chest, and as his hands traced over my midsection I arched into them, moaning as they closed on my flesh. He paused and raised his head. His gaze, heavy lidded and dark, lingered on my breasts where his thumbs circled and rubbed the already swollen peaks.

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

His glance moved higher, and when his eyes connected with mine, I fell into his gaze. Satisfaction and desire laced his smile. I shuddered as my sex flooded with liquid warmth. Heat blazed in my cheeks. Derek's eyes grew even darker. His nostrils flared, as though he smelled my arousal.

He dipped his head once more. The first touch of his tongue on my clit had me crying out. I came almost too quickly; sharp, hard, explosive, and I was still shaking as Derek's hands slid away from my breasts to cup my ass. His fingers curved into the crease and he lifted my hips toward his mouth. He lapped noisily at my pussy, and the sound alone was almost enough to make me come again. My toes curled, my fingers twisted in the sheets. When he thumbed my labia wide and licked inside me, it wrenched another strangled cry from my lips.

He glanced at my face again and grinned. Then he flicked his tongue once more across my clit and slid up to lie alongside me. "How's everything up here?" he asked, eyes sparkling.

I had no words, so I kissed him, loving the feel of his arms as they finally tightened around me, of his fingers as they splayed across my back, drawing me closer. I'd wanted to be held like this for so long—ever since I'd first seen his muscles, I think. I slipped my own arms around him and reveled in how good he felt.

Our legs tangled, our tongues touched, and when Derek's hand drifted down to my ass, his fingers feathering soft touches along the crease, I rocked my hips back to give him more. He inhaled on a shuddery little sigh, hands clenching as he pulled me tight against him. His erection nestled against my thigh, rock-hard, just starting to weep. My sudden desire to take him in my mouth and learn his taste as it exploded on my tongue left me breathless.

I prodded his chest until he pulled back to look at me questioningly.

"Your turn now," I murmured, resting my head against his arm and smiling up at him as I grazed my fingers down his chest and stomach, loving the way his muscles trembled at my touch. "I want to taste you."

"I want that, too," he said taking hold of my hand and stopping me before I reached his cock. He laced his fingers through mine and stretched my arm above my head. "But not just yet."

He slid his arm out from under my head and clasped my wrist while he kissed me even more deeply. His legs hooked around mine, pinning me to the bed with his thigh. Chills raced across my skin as his free hand slid down my arm to gently trace the curve of one breast.

When he lifted his head to watch what his hand was doing, I nearly whimpered with frustration. What it was doing was causing my sex to ache, and throb and cream. My legs were pressed tight together, and yet I could still feel trickles of wetness seeping from between my labia and sliding down the crease of my butt. At this rate, I'd soon be lying in a pool of my own juices.

P.G. Forte

"Derek, please," I begged, bucking my hips against his restraining leg.

The corner of his mouth was twitching again as he dipped his head and curled his tongue around one nipple. "Hmm? Please...what?"

Please fuck me! Well, okay, that's what I wanted to say. But Pisces aren't known for being that direct and, although I was quickly getting there, I wasn't that depraved...yet. "I want you."

"I'm glad," he murmured, taking my nipple between his lips and suckling it. I was keening with need by the time he pulled back and laved the tip with his tongue. His gaze was tender as he smiled at me. "Relax, okay? Just enjoy"

"I am. But—"

"Shh." He stopped my protest with a finger across my lips. "Please. Let me love you like this. I've been waiting, too, you know."

Yes, and you're still waiting, I thought, biting down on my lip to hold back the words. Obviously, one of us had a rather large, unexpected, masochistic streak. And it wasn't me. I blame it on Pluto. There's something dark and twisted about Scorpio's ruling planet.

Still, if that's really what he wanted, who was I to argue? "Okay."

"Want more?"

I nodded.

"Good," he said, scissoring his legs suddenly, to push my legs wide, and then skimming his hand down over my stomach. His fingers flitted lightly across my clit and then buried themselves in my pussy.

He'd been lying about the aftershocks. It wasn't the earth that had been moving at all the other day. Once again, my own private, internal temblor started as soon as his fingers curved inside me. Three fingers inside, his thumb nudging my clit, his pinky trailing over my slick perineum, each slow stroke released a fresh flow of fluid spilling into his hand.

"Omigod," I gasped as the pleasure intensified.

"Mmm." Derek nuzzled my neck. "So sweet. Can you feel how wet you are?" his voice rough, faintly trembling.

Eyes closed, I nodded. I felt dazed with heat. I felt molten.

Derek's hand continued to move, stirring up delicious, hot waves that rippled outward from my melted core to every extremity. "You're a goddess," he murmured. "*My goddess.*"

I opened my eyes and stared at him, questioningly.

His lips twitched. "What? You didn't know that?"

I shook my head. I don't know what answer I would have made, but before I could say anything, his pinky dipped into my ass, and just that tiny bit of added pressure pushed me over

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

the edge. The waves rolled and crested, engulfing me as I came and kept on coming—so hard it should have hurt.

Next thing I knew, Derek's arms were around me, holding me close, and tears I couldn't recall crying, tracked my cheeks.

"So beautiful," he whispered against my ear. "I could watch you come like that all night."

All night? "Hold that thought," I said, pushing away from him and sliding off the bed. For all I knew, he meant to do just that. Which was great, except for one thing: I wanted to give a little something back, too.

Derek rolled on his back to watch me. "Where are you going?"

I took the pot of fondue off the heater and stirred the white chocolate goo with one finger, testing the temperature. It was perfect. Hot, but not too hot. "It's your turn."

"I told you. That—" he said, breaking off to stare as I let a single white drop fall on the tip of one rosy nipple. His penis jerked. "That's not part of the plan," he rasped, still staring.

I smiled. "I'm an actress, remember? Think of this as improv."

His eyelids were at half-mast when I returned to the bed and straddled his legs. He drew in a startled breath as I tipped the pot and let a tiny stream dribble onto his cock. I sat back to admire my artistry. It looked so much like cum, I found myself licking my lips. "Mmm. Looks yummy."

"What are you trying to do to me?" he groaned.

"Just giving you ideas," I said, giving him a second helping too, while I was at it.

His cock jerked again, and some of the warm chocolate missed its mark, forming a puddle that spread from the base of his cock almost to his navel.

I clucked my tongue in mock dismay as I lowered my head to his belly and licked up the mess, swirling my tongue an extra couple of times in his belly button but taking care to leave his cock strictly alone. If he wanted to wait...well, then, I guess he could wait.

Derek's breathing was harsh, his eyes mere slits by the time I was done. Now we were getting somewhere. Smiling, I dipped my finger in the pot again, and then smeared chocolate around each of his nipples. *The shiny brown buttons already looked like mini M&Ms*, I thought as I leaned forward to take one in my mouth; now they'd taste like them, too.

I licked them both clean then licked my lips. "Good?"

He nodded, his eyes still trained on my lips.

"Want more?"

Something hot and primal flashed in his eyes as he growled, "Yes. Now."

"What's your hurry?" I asked, as I painted over my own nipples, loving the feel of the chocolate on my skin, so warm and silky. Loving the way his eyes darkened and his cheeks

P.G. Forte

flushed with heat. “Mmm, sweet,” I murmured, dunking my whole thumb in the pot this time, and sucking greedily.

“C’mere,” he rasped, reaching for me, but I eluded him long enough to plunge my finger into the fondue one last time, before putting the pot aside. I leaned forward again and traced over his lips with the chocolate, then leaned closer still. He clasped my head in both hands, sinking back onto the pillows, pulling me down with him. Chocolate smeared over both our faces and our chests as we collided, leaving us with no choice but to kiss, lick, and nibble at each other until it was gone.

Finally, I pushed away from him and sat up. I was breathless and flushed, and gloating over the fact that so was he. “Well, that was fun.”

He eyed me quizzically. “I don’t think we’re quite done yet,” he said, glancing down his torso.

“Hmmm.” I followed his gaze, smiling smugly at the sight of his cock, still making no move toward it. “Looks nice, doesn’t it?”

Derek all but gaped in disbelief. “You’re going to make me ask for it, aren’t you?”

I smiled innocently. “Ask for what?” I was pretty sure what was coming next, and he didn’t disappoint me.

“Gabby?”

“Yes, Derek?”

“Would you suck my dick, already? Please?”

My smile grew wider. “I thought you’d never ask.”

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

Chapter Eleven

“Oh, Jesus,” Derek moaned as I swirled my tongue around the head of his cock. I smiled. I loved the contrasting tastes and textures. I loved the husky timbre of his voice. I opened my mouth wide and swallowed what I could of his shaft. I loved the way he filled my mouth. I loved the thought of his cock gliding deep into my wet pussy. But mostly, I just loved him.

I couldn't believe how close we'd come to missing this. I couldn't believe how stupid I'd been all these months. I cradled his balls in my hand as I swiped away the last of the chocolate, and then ran my tongue down the length of him, just barely nipping at the delicate skin in the juncture where his cock met his sack.

“Stop,” he groaned, twisting away abruptly and reaching toward the nightstand. “That's enough.”

I glanced up, surprised and disappointed. “Was that too rough?”

He shook his head. “No. It was perfect. Here.” His fingers were trembling as he handed me a condom.

I took it reluctantly. I didn't really want to stop. I licked his swollen head again, with its velvet skin and dripping slit. He was teasing me with that tiny taste. I wanted more. “We don't need this yet, do we? I could take you in my mouth.”

“Please,” he gritted, his teeth clenched. “I *need* to be inside you. Now.” His voice sounded tight but determined.

“As you wish,” I sighed, feeling almost jealous of the latex sheath as I unrolled it over him. He could have at least let me finish what I'd begun because, this way, hot as he was, he was liable to come too quickly and disappoint us both.

I guess I should have known better.

Derek surged upward, coming to his knees so abruptly that I fell backwards. He grabbed hold of my ankles and pulled me toward him. My butt slid along the slick satin of the sheets until I was pinned beneath him. I could feel his whole body trembling with tension as he carefully aligned himself with my opening and then paused. I looped my arms around his neck and waited, barely breathing.

P.G. Forte

He looked at me, his face stark. “You know what this means, don’t you? You. Me. What we’re doing. You know this is how things should have been all along?”

What, with you on top? But I stopped myself before I could say it. I’ve told you how unexpectedly sensitive Scorpios can be, and something told me this was no time to make jokes. Besides, I knew what he was really asking. I nodded, reaching out to feather the hair at his temple. “I know.”

He held my gaze as he thrust into me. We both sighed in amazement. Then Derek’s eyes shuttered closed and he began to move slowly, deeply, deliberately.

Considering that I had already come twice, I really hadn’t expected to be ready again so soon, but incredibly, I felt my muscles tightening almost at once. “Yes,” I whispered, only partly from pleasure. Mostly, it was in answer to his question. I knew what we were doing, what this night meant—to both of us.

His eyes gleamed as he opened them and smiled at me. “Good.” And I knew he wasn’t talking just about how he felt.

He picked up the pace until we were both rocking in frantic tandem, racing for the peak and reaching it together. We jerked hard against each other as the tremors slammed us again and again.

Gradually, our movements slowed, our breath returned. Peace, contentment, and exhaustion settled over us like a heavy cloud. Derek collapsed next to me. I half turned to snuggle into his embrace.

“I love you,” I thought I heard him say.

I think I nodded. I think I smiled. I think I answered, “You’d better.”

But, then again, I may have already been asleep and dreaming of the big one.

Well, that was several months ago. Derek and I are still together, of course, and ecstatically happy to be so. I have it all now. Love, friendship, and really hot sex. All with the same great guy. I’m not waiting for anything anymore. Oh, except for one little thing.

Our baby.

He or she—we want to be surprised—is due in March. I’m really hoping for another Pisces.

WAITING FOR THE BIG ONE

About the Author

P.G. Forte wrote her first serialized story when she was still in her teens. Documenting the very exciting and (sadly) completely fictitious adventures of she and her friends, the sexy, adventure tales were very popular at her oh-so-proper, all girls, Catholic High School, where they helped to liven up otherwise dull classes. Even if her teachers didn't always think so.

A lot of years have passed since then, but she's still at it, penning novels and novellas in the romantic suspense, psychic fiction and erotic romance genres.