



*Aliyah*  
BURKE

AN *Unlikely*  
ENCOUNTER

*Love's First Encounter*

An Unlikely Encounter  
*by Aliyah Burke*

**Red Rose Publishing**

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Dedication:

This book is dedicated to all the angels who helped me.  
You know who you are. And of course, the real life Jake.

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## Chapter 1

*Ah, shit! I was really hoping I was imagining this.* Dark brown eyes moved from the left to the right, blinked and shifted both ways again. The images were still the same. Most were curious and amused.

The shoulders squared themselves assuredly. She may be embarrassed beyond anything she believed humanly possible, but it wouldn't show. She *refused* to let it.

Her gaze met a robin's-egg blue one that contained the most amusement she had seen yet. They were almost mocking as they stared unabashedly at her. And then winked.

With a sharp inhale, she tugged down her jacket, met many gazes and readjusted her breasts in an almost mocking gesture. As the eyes watching her grew larger, Torrye Melissa Jamieson turned and holding her head high, walked out of the airport restroom. The men's restroom.

As the door swung closed behind her, loud cheers and whistles filled her ears. Her pace remained quick and steady as she moved through the large airport and onto her next gate.

"I can't believe I just did that," she muttered to herself. Granted she had been half stumbling as the lights inside the building only served to increase the headache pounding through her skull. All she had wanted to do was splash some cold water on her face to hold the pain at bay and get her to the gate.

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However, when she finished wiping the water off her face, it was only men looking at her. She wanted to melt into the floor until that one gaze met hers.

He was obviously checking her out in a much more thorough way than most were. The man had been tall and leaning against a wall.

His clothes fit him beautifully. A dark green shirt, blue jeans, cowboy boots, and an aviator jacket covered him sinfully. His hair was the color of a tarnished sunset and even in the florescent lights of the bathroom, it gleamed. The collar of his jacket hid the true length of it from her. And his eyes were a piercing Prussian blue.

The man had the audacity to wink at her as he ogled her. After she shoved up her full chest, he saluted her with two fingers.

Finally reaching her gate, Torrye Jamieson sat down. There were very few people around. All the better, it would be quieter then. Getting a tighter grip to her bag, she glanced at her watch. Still at least two hours before the flight.

"I *hate* layovers," she bemoaned as she closed her eyes, praying her headache wouldn't come back.

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Niall couldn't get that woman out of his head. Standing at the sink she had recently vacated he replayed over the scenario that had just happened. He had just walked in to wash his hands after catching a bite to eat. The men in there were acting a bit strange and when he came around the corner he found out why.

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A woman stood at the sink in the restroom. Niall had leaned against a corner and watched, immediately intrigued by the determination he saw on her face. It didn't take a genius to figure out she was horribly embarrassed but she didn't stammer out an apology.

No, instead this brown vixen actually grew haughty as she picked up on his gaze that was more than inquisitive. Especially after he winked at her.

Her skin was a gorgeous shade of dark sienna. She had been wearing a pair of tight black jeans, which cupped her bubble butt to perfection. Her jacket rested at her waist and was dark blue in color. The light gray of her shirt showed a bit in the reflection.

Her hair was wavy, dark in color with lighter streaks through it, like the color of warm honeyed caramel. It hung down past her shoulders.

His gaze took on a possessive quality as it moved over her body. He could feel his body reacting to hers from a distance. As he glanced at the others there, he could see their looks turning from surprise and amusement to lust, and Niall didn't like that in the least.

His growing anger had changed to respect for the woman as she acted like nothing was wrong, adjusted her lovely cleavage and strode out of the room with her head held high. The men left behind began cheering as she left and here he was standing at the sink she had used, imagining that he smelled the faint lingering scent of her perfume.

As he walked out of the restroom, he glanced at the watch on his wrist. Time to make sure his plane was still leaving.

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The late January snow they were getting was unbelievable. I mean, it was Canada but there hadn't been a storm like this in a long, long time. He had been up here in Edmonton visiting some friends and getting some awesome winter sporting in. Unfortunately, now it was time to get back to work. He hated that, but he had to make a living so he could continue to travel around the world.

Moving through the airport, Niall readjusted the backpack he carried over one broad shoulder. He wove in and out of people that were milling around. Off one concourse and onto another he finally arrived at his destination. The place was nearly empty. As he walked to the screen to see if the flight was on time, he heard an announcement over the speakers for their area, first in French and followed in English.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, we regret to inform you that Flight 9863 from Edmonton, Canada to Buffalo, New York has been canceled due to foul weather conditions. We apologize for this inconvenience. A reconnecting flight will depart as soon as conditions improve."

Torrye sat up at the announcement that jarred her from her light slumber and rubbed her temples. This was not what she needed right now. At least she had a seat near a heater. Slowly her eyes opened and she witnessed people running around yelling and trying to figure out what they were going to do. The cries of dismay grew to a small din as the news spread throughout the whole airport. Apparently she wasn't the only one missing a flight. Glancing out the window, she gasped at the fury raging out there.

The airport was shut down.



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She was stuck.

"I will not panic," she whispered to herself as she pulled out her cell phone and called home. Leaving a brief message stating the situation, Torrye tugged her bag closer and propped her feet up on it.

Thinking through what she carried, she realized she would be okay. There was food in her bag and she was warm and had her fleece blanket that she had taken to the hockey game in there as well.

"Of course *you* would be calm," a deep masculine voice broke her thought process. "But then, after facing down a restroom full of men, I can't imagine what would make you nervous."

Torrye warily glanced up at the shadow of the man that stood over her. It was him; the one with those damn blue eyes. The one who had mocked her.

"What do you want?" she snapped, not in any mood to play games surrounding her embarrassing moment.

Those blue eyes sparkled with good humor. "I wanted to know if that seat was taken." He pointed at the chair next to her, with a long tapered finger.

"What's wrong with the other chairs?"

"I am partial to that one." His eyes held hers.

More people began to file into the sitting area and began to claim seats for sleeping. "Whatever," she shrugged.

"Still so gracious," he joked as his lean body settled next to her.

"What exactly does that mean?" Torrye demanded.

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"Nothing." He set his bag on the ground next to hers and tipped his head to meet her gaze. "Look, since we are about to spend the night together, let's get off on a better foot."

"We are *not* spending the night together," her words came out in a low hiss.

One half of his mouth slid up to reveal one hell of a sexy grin, and a dimple in his right cheek. "Yes, we are." He sent her another wink that inflamed her blood. "And I am looking forward to it. Although, I figured something a bit more romantic for our first date, but then we met in a bizarre way, why should our first night together be different?"

## Chapter 2

The blinding pain in her temples chased away any response she may have had. Groaning, she clasped her hands over her eyes, trying to block out the light and some of the sounds.

Niall frowned. His mystery woman looked to be in intense pain. "Hey, are you okay?" he asked leaning down closer to her hunched body. She smelled like oranges and cinnamon.

"Fine," she groaned faintly.

"What can I do?" he questioned softly as his hand sank into her hair to brush it away from her face, so he could see her eyes when she looked at him. It was like pulling raw silk over his skin.

"Shoot me and put me out of my misery."

That brought a smile to his face. "I'll be right back. Don't go anywhere. I'm leaving my bag with you." One more stroke of his hand along her face and he moved away from her.

Torrye felt his absence immediately. Still, she grabbed his bag and placed it between her legs so it rested upon her carry-on. Her head was pounding and as the area grew more crowded, the louder it got.

"I don't know where to sit. It looks like everything by a heater vent is taken." The scratchy voice brought Torrye's head back up. An old couple stood there on shaky legs. They both looked exhausted and as her eyes scanned around, she noticed there were no seats available for them.

"Here," Torrye said. "Take my two seats. There is a heater vent near."

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The old man looked at her and sent her a small smile. "Thank you, honey." Turning to his wife, he added, "Come on, Bonnie, this lovely lady is giving us her seats."

Struggling not to wince from the pain, Torrye stood and gathered her bag and that of her mysterious stranger. "There you go," she mumbled gently.

She noticed a spot by the wall and stumbled toward it. Torrye sank to the floor and immediately felt colder. With her back to the outside wall, she was feeling the arctic blast through the barrier.

Her eyes were heavy with fatigue and pain, but she tried to keep them open to watch for the man who left his bag with her. It didn't work, soon they drifted closed and she was dozing again.

Niall carried the damp cloth in his hand as he hurried through the crowd that seemed to triple in size since the announcement hit. As he strode into the gate area, his gaze immediately fell to where he left his dark beauty. She was gone.

In her place sat an old couple. Striding to them, he waited for one to acknowledge him. The old man looked up at him with runny eyes. "Yes?" he asked.

"I'm looking for the woman who was sitting here," Niall explained. "Did you see her?"

The gray head nodded. "That lovely black woman?" At the answering nod of the tall man before him, he said, "She gave us her seats. I saw her heading over to the wall over there. Thank her again when you get back to her. Your wife is a

wonderful woman; no other person would give up their seats for us."

Niall smiled. *My wife.* "I'll be sure to let her know. Thank you very much." His long strides took him over to the wall where he saw her slumped over, her arms wrapped tightly around his suitcase.

Crouching down beside her, he frowned as he felt the chill along the wall. He exchanged suitcase for his lap and as her head settled upon his thigh, he felt more protective than he had ever in his entire thirty-eight years of life.

Her suitcase was placed between the wall and her back. The damp cloth he had in his hand he positioned on her forehead. Leaning back against the wall, Niall was grateful for his thick aviator jacket. His gaze took in the myriads of people getting settled in. It was a red-eye flight anyway and so most were exhausted.

Soon the place was relatively quiet and he slowly relaxed as his hand continued to stroke her soft hair as she slept on.

Torrye awoke with a yawn. Her head was no longer on her bag, but on a rock-solid thigh covered in blue jeans. The pain was gone from her head. Touching her forehead, she took off the cloth resting there.

She saw that most people were sleeping, some were up on their computers but the place was quite silent. Torrye felt a weight on the side of her head, and she slowly moved the hand that lay there off, to settle upon the thigh, she had just gotten up from.

It was her unidentified man. Thick lashes the same burnished shade of his hair rested upon his tanned cheeks.

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Torrye smiled as she got the chance to look him over. He had a Romanesque nose, firm lips, and a chin that showed he would be full of determination. The stubble covering it only added to the allure.

Opening her suitcase, she took out her blanket and covered him up before standing and heading off to the restroom.

Walking quietly back through the sleeping bodies, Torrye stopped at the window and stared out at the fury of snow that still fell. It would be a miracle if she could leave later on today.

"Feeling better?" a hushed masculine voice asked.

Torrye glanced down and saw those beautiful blue eyes looking up at her. That perpetual sexy half-grin on his face. "Much," she whispered. "Thanks for taking care of me." She sat beside him, not arguing when he covered her with the blanket as well.

"So, do I get to know your name now?" he queried as his arm dropped around her.

She laughed gently. "Torrye. My name is Torrye Melissa Jamieson."

"Nice to meet you, Torrye Jamieson. I'm Niall O'Cinneide."

"A pleasure, Niall." Torrye found herself snuggling closer to his hard physique. Even though she knew what she was doing was so wrong on all fronts, it felt so right being next to him, letting him hold her.

"So, now that we are married, what's next for us?" his teasing voice questioned.

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Tipping her head back so she could look at his face, Torrye asked, "Now what are you talking about? Married?"

His free hand caressed the side of her face, sending jolts through her. "Well, that lovely old couple you gave our seats to, believed we were married. And there is an old Native American custom that says if you share a blanket, you are married."

One black brow rose. "Which custom?" Torrye demanded.

He flushed. "I don't know, but there is one, and I am going by that."

She shook her head. "Nope, if you don't know who that custom belongs to, you don't get to use it."

A glint grew in his gaze. A warning that told her she shouldn't expect that to work on him. His thumb swiped across her full lips seconds before his mouth descended upon hers.

The heat wave that flowed between them blindsided her. As his tongue traced the feel of her lower lip, she quivered. Niall slid his tongue into her mouth and swallowed her groan with pleasure. He tasted so delicious, it was not even fair.

Torrye met and danced with his seeking tongue with her own. Soon they were both breathing much faster and wanting to be away from prying eyes. He tasted like mint and she craved so much more than that.

Instead she stiffened as the reality of what she was doing filled her. Torrye tried to move a bit away from him only to halt as he tightened his hold on her. This was so not how she acted. This man made her do things she wouldn't usually even dream of doing.

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Drawing back, Niall glanced down at the woman with the flushed face. Her beauty took away the small bit of breath that the kiss hadn't sapped. Swollen lips, heavy desire-filled eyes met his gaze as he smiled at her.

He still shook with the aftershocks her mere touch brought him. Her succulent taste still foremost on his taste buds, and he longed for another taste.

"Tell me you aren't married," he ordered.

"I'm not married." Torrye blushed.

"Don't go anywhere. I'll try to behave myself."

For a while they sat there and controlled their heart rates and breathing. Every passing second telling them that this was something unique and special that didn't happen along everyday.

"Tell me about you," Torrye pleaded, curling closer to his body.



### *Chapter 3*

"So what, you want a man to ride up on his white horse and take you away?" Niall asked as they walked down towards the bathrooms.

Torrye scoffed. They had spent the past few hours talking about their lives. She had found out that he worked as a foreman on an oil rig out in the Gulf of Mexico. Well, that explained his bulging muscles. "Not exactly."

"Well, than what are you looking for? I would have assumed that one such as yourself would already be married and have a family."

"One such as myself?" Torrye halted and looked directly at him. "Care to explain that further?"

Niall stopped and took in the view before him. This woman had such fire, such passion lurking in her eyes. A challenging spark filled them as she waited for his answer. Her lower lip begged him to suck it into his mouth and the way her clothes hugged her made him want to take them off and enjoy the treasures that lay beneath.

"Just that you seem like the type of woman any man would love to have on his arm, so why aren't you taken?"

"Taken? I'm not a piece of property, you know."

The husky pitch to her voice turned him on more than he cared to admit. His penis grew as hard as granite as he envisioned her naked beneath him as he slid into her body. That husky voice would be emitting screams and moans.

"Oh, I'd love to claim you. Put '*Property of Niall*' all over that firm ass of yours," he spoke in a smooth tone, full of promise and threat.

Torrye shuddered. Since she met him, her body had cried out for his. She had known him for less than six hours. But that didn't change the sexual sparks that flew between them.

So with a push from the devil that normally lay dormant in her, Torrye cocked an eyebrow and taunted him. "I don't know if you are man enough."

Those stunning blue eyes narrowed as he listened to her words. "Be careful, Torrye. I have no problem showing you just how much of a man I am."

With a shrug and a fake yawn, Torrye continued to walk towards the bathrooms. "Blah, blah, blah. Men are nothing but talk."

Niall stood frozen for a moment. Then he moved into action. Latching onto her arm he drug her into the *Family Restroom* and after a quick check to make sure they were alone, he locked the door behind him and jerked her into his arms.

"Sweetheart, I am so much more than just talk," he vowed as his mouth descended hungrily over hers.

Torrye immediately arched against him as her hands dug into his thick hair that rested below the nape of his neck. The intensity between them exploded into an inferno.

Niall backed her up so she leaned against the door. His hands shoved her jacket open and jerked her shirt free of her pants and underneath the material.

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Moving them up her soft torso, Niall almost lost the slim hold of his control. She was so smooth, firm but it was a most assuredly feminine body.

Torrye whimpered as his work-roughened hands slid over her belly and up toward her breasts. Each touch sending a shockwave of awareness, of the man with her, clear to her soul. Her fingers tightened in his hair as she sucked his tongue into her mouth.

Niall released a groan of pure pleasure. His whole body tingled from touching the goddess in his arms. He settled his hands around her waist, lifted her, and encouraged her to latch her legs around his hips. She did.

"Torrye," he mumbled against her plump lips.

"What?" Her voice was throaty with desire.

"If you want me to stop, you have to tell me now." His tone was strained as he battled to control his desire.

Common sense told her it was a dangerous game she played. Lust for this man won out. Pulling back, she placed her pooling gaze upon his, and Torrye licked his lips. "I don't want to stop."

Niall saw the desire burning in her eyes, but beyond that he saw trust. She trusted him. The waves of emotions that poured through his body nearly buckled his knees.

Closing the distance between their mouths, Niall kissed her again. His tongue plunged deep into her mouth, sweeping around, leaving no space unexplored.

Each stroke of his thick tongue made Torrye squirm against him. Her body growing damp as it cried out for more of his sensual touch.

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Niall stood her back on her own feet. His hands made short work of removing her jeans and boots. Before him, she stood in her jacket, shirt, bra, panties, and socks. She met his gaze and licked her lips.

He knelt before her, taking a hold of the sides of her damp bikini underwear. They were hot pink and satin. Slowly, Niall pulled them down.

Biting the inside of his cheek, Niall found himself looking at her glistening crux. It was bald with the exception of a strip of hair in the middle, short and neatly trimmed.

Unable to stop himself, Niall leaned forward and put his mouth over her core. The smell and her flavor was one hell of a heady combination.

"Oh, God," she gasped. Niall felt her body quiver beneath his touch.

His tongue ran up between the shaved lips, circled around her already sensitive clit and back down. Strong hands gripped her hips as he began to feast upon her like a starving man. Torrye slumped back against the wall as Niall licked, sucked, and fed upon the juices her body willingly shared with him.

As she shuddered with another explosive orgasm, Niall pulled away, took his hard erection from his pants and sheathed it deep within Torrye's velvet warmth in one furious stroke.

Immediately, her body shuddered around his with the explosive force of another orgasm. His thick cock was gripped by her tight muscles and he tried to control the emotions raging through him.

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Niall gritted his teeth as he felt her body convulse around him. His strong hands secured her legs once again at his waist as he began to move within her.

Entering. Withdrawing. Each stroke sent impulses through them both.

Bracing one hand along the wall near her head, Niall leaned in and kissed her. Kissed her so thoroughly, her eyes opened and then shut once again. His hips continually worked a steady rhythm.

Torrye was in a place she had never been before. Bliss. This man sent her there. This man who was kissing her so perfectly in cadence with the way they were having sex. Every hair on her body was fire.

He pulled back from her mouth and latched his lips tightly around her right breast. Sucking it into his warm mouth, shirt, bra, and all.

Her body clamped tighter around his cock as a result. His mouth was relentless. Tugging, nipping, and grazing the pebbled nipple as he increased the intensity and speed of his thrusts.

Just as suddenly as he inhaled upon her breast, he let it go, grinning satisfactorily as the soaked shirt he left behind. "Torrye," he whispered as his deep strokes grew shallower and slower.

Her dark eyes opened full of craving to find the pinnacle she so longed for. "What?" she moaned in frustration.

"Say my name. Just once." His eyes held hers.

"Niall." Her voice was sultry and full of desire. Her one word struck a chord in his heart and it swelled as he moved

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inside her. Her dulcet tone, speaking his name as he buried deep within her. That was what he had wanted to hear.

"I'm almost there," he confessed, pressing his lips against hers again.

"Harder, please," Torrye begged, tightening her legs around his waist.

Niall complied. Placing his face into the curve of her neck, he smelled her natural scent, and shampoo. Of their own accord, his teeth nipped her sensitive skin. They grazed along her neck until he just began to suck.

Torrye eagerly met each pounding thrust he delivered to her body. Her fingers dug into his thick aviator jacket and as her head fell back to the wall a cry of gratification erupted from her mouth.

Niall felt her muscles milking him as she came hard around his firm cock. "Oh, Torrye," he moaned. He drew back and plunged deep into her and came with a rush, covering her womb with his semen.

## Chapter 4

For a moment they remained joined. Heavy breathing filled the airport bathroom as they gathered their emotions and breaths. Finally, Niall lifted his head, used one hand to tip her face to his.

Threading his fingers into her hair he reveled in the silkiness of it caressing his hand and asked, "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine. A bit chilled." Her voice was still deep with aftermath.

Brushing his mouth tenderly over hers, he said, "I'm going to set you down."

Torrye couldn't believe how empty she felt after he had withdrawn from her body. The loss of the physical connection hit her more emotionally than she would ever have expected. That warm, contented feeling that surrounded her disappeared as the reality of what she had just done, filled her.

*What did I just do?* She grabbed her discarded clothes and a wet paper towel before disappearing into the lone bathroom stall.

Niall witnessed and didn't like the expression that had filled her beautiful face. He cleaned himself up, and unlocked the door before making sure their luggage was near him as he waited for her to reemerge.

A totally put-together Torrye walked out of the stall. Her gaze met his, but only briefly as she walked to the sink and washed her hands. Tugging on her jacket, she turned and stopped as the door opened.

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A young woman and her child walked in. Her eyes glanced between the two people in there. Niall smiled at her and immediately went to Torrye. "Are you feeling better now, honey?" he asked as he slid his arm around her waist.

Understanding what he was doing, she nodded. "A bit. Thank you. I'm ready to go." They got their luggage and walked out of the restroom and headed back to their space by the wall at the gate.

Once out of the restroom, Torrye moved away from his touch and refused to look at him. At a corner in the journey, Niall halted her with a touch. Her dark eyes met his in silent question.

"Why are you acting like you don't know me?" he demanded as his hand tightened around her arm.

"I don't know what you are talking about," she countered.

"Bullshit, Torrye! You haven't once looked at me since we left the bathroom. What gives?" He shook her slightly as she tried to look away. "No, damn it, look at me."

"What is your issue?" she demanded even as her eyes rose to stare at him. *I'm embarrassed about how I acted and my feelings toward you.*

"I'm not letting you ignore what just happened between us."

"Look, we don't know each other. We are two strangers who met in the airport. There is no reason to pretend there is anything more to it." Jerking free, she disappeared around the corner and out of his sight.

Dropping his head to rest on the wall, Niall spoke out loud. "I don't think so, Torrye Melissa. I don't think so at all." With



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a smooth motion, he stood and headed back to where he knew she was.

As he walked into the gate area, he realized he was wrong. She wasn't there. His intense gaze scanned the whole section. Torrye was nowhere to be found. Panic and fear filled his body followed quickly by anger.

How could she run away from what they shared? Damn it all, he had been so close to admitting he loved her as he came within her body. Never before had anyone allowed him to get anywhere near the feeling he got when being in the presence of Ms. Torrye Jamieson. She was "the one" that he had heard his mother speak about, the one woman who made you hear music when you kissed, and whose touch you craved more than your next breath.

Swearing under his breath, Niall found a space by the wall and watched for her to return. He knew she would be back at some point, for this was her flight.

Torrye sank down on the chair. Her mind was awl with the possible ramifications of her actions. She could be pregnant; she could have picked up an STD, any number of things. And yet, her mind couldn't seem to move past the way her body felt and responded in his arms and to his touch.

Her cell began to vibrate. "Jamieson," she said. It was her brother. For the next fifteen minutes she convinced her big brother, Dominic, she was doing just fine up there in Canada and would be leaving on the first available flight she could. Hanging up with him, Torrye snuggled deeper into her jacket. The faint smell of Niall, still lingered on the material, and

closing her eyes she imagined him next to her with his arms around her.

"Excuse me, Ma'am."

The noise jolted her from her uneasy catnap. Torrye glanced up to see a security officer standing in front of her. "Yes?" *Was it possible they knew what I was doing in the restroom? Or rather who I was doing?*

"There is a message for you at the information booth. Will you come with me please?" The man had a kind expression.

Nodding, Torrye stood and gathered up her bag. "How did you know where to find me?" she began to walk with the guard.

"When the call came in we checked your flight and some of the attendants remember seeing you head in this direction, so we began looking."

Torrye was amazed. "We?"

"A few guards." He paused for a moment to answer his radio. "Sorry about that."

Still a bit sleepy, Torrye just waved it off. They walked past her gate and she didn't even know that Niall had spotted her as she moved along with the uniformed man.

At the counter, Torrye waited while the guard explained who she was. The lady smiled as she picked up the phone. It took about two minutes before she heard a deep voice behind her.

"Little T," the masculine voice boomed.

Torrye turned and squealed as she saw who stood behind her. A cousin of hers that had been sent over to Iraq for two years. Trevor Gerard.

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"Trevor! Oh, my God! It is so good to see you." Without missing a beat, she launched herself into his arms totally confident he would catch her.

"Hey, yourself." He pressed a kiss to her lips and set her on her feet as his finger tapped the end of her nose.

Torrye scrunched it and grinned. "You look great. I'm glad you're home."

He nodded solemnly. "Me, too."

"What are you doing here in Canada?"

"I was visiting a friend." He winked. "Nothing I need to tell you about."

Smacking him on the arm, Torrye just shook her head. "I'm sure I don't *want* to know about it. How did you know I was here?"

"Dominic called me. Said you probably needed some looking after, since you were alone." He smirked at the thunderheads brewing in her eyes. "His words, Little T, not mine."

"I can take care of myself," she snapped. *Sure, Torrye. That's why you were getting pounded against the wall of a restroom by a guy you barely know.*

As if he could read her thoughts, Trevor's eyes narrowed and she was faced with the Marine in him. "What have you been doing?"

"Nothing! I'm stuck in an airport. What do you think I've been doing?" *Again, I think the question is more, who not what.*

Eyes that were wise beyond their years just stared at her. Reaching for her arm, he tucked it into his and said, "Get

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your suitcase. I'm flying out with you in the morning. We can stay together before the flight leaves."

Panic surfaced. What if Niall saw Trevor? Would he say anything? Would she? It wasn't worth taking the chance. Picking up her bag, she said, "Let's get something to eat. I just woke up and I'm starving."

"I'll let it go for now, Little T. But you will tell me who it is you are trying to hide from." He chuckled at her bemused expression. "I've known you since you were born. Do you really think you can keep something like that from me?"

## Chapter 5

Niall growled with anger as he watched Torrye jump into that man's waiting embrace. His fists clenched as he saw the way they familiarly held and joked with each other. The man was tall and looked about as strong and fit as Niall was. He had a shaved head and the clothes he wore seemed to mold to his body. It was a tall, fit, and handsome Black man that held Torrye in his arms.

Unable to overhear the conversation, he followed them as they walked the opposite direction of where the gate was. His rage grew by leaps and bounds as he saw them sit down in an eating area and order a meal. The way she looked so comfortable with that man, tore at his gut. Especially after realizing how she made him feel. This was too much of a coincidence for him to ignore. After their meal had been delivered, Niall watched as they continued with their friendly banter.

Torn between heading over there and demanding an answer and leaving without looking back, Niall chose to go back to the gate and wait. His emotions were too unpredictable right now for him to get into a confrontation. The scowl on his face would have sent the devil into hiding and everyone he came across gave him a wide berth. Still in a foul mood, he sank into a cold metal chair at the gate and tried to come up with a game plan.

It was well into the afternoon, before the passengers of flight 9863 were allowed to board their plane for Buffalo, New York. Niall remained in his chair as his gaze kept a lookout for

the beautiful Torrye. When they announced for the first-class passengers to board, Niall saw her. She walked next to that same man and they chatted as they stood in the line at the gate.

His powerful and concentrated gaze held hers as she looked around the gate area and met his. As she faltered for a moment, he mouthed at her, *"It isn't over between us."*

Torrye swallowed. Her eyes were snared by those blue ones that had seen into her soul. She shivered as she made out what he mouthed to her. Trying to maintain her composure she shook her head but he just smirked arrogantly at her as his eyes stripped away all of her clothes and made love to her right there.

Niall was well aware of his effect on her; he saw her tremble and knew they would meet again. It wasn't until the man with her spoke into her ear that she could find the strength to tear her gaze away from his. Then she didn't look back as she moved into the telescopic corridor leading to the plane.

As he boarded the aircraft, he found her immediately in her seat. She had a drink in her hand already. Niall made sure that he brushed up against her as he moved past, sending those explosive impulses through them both.

He heard her whimper and couldn't help stopping and leaning down to her. "Excuse me, I didn't mean to bump you." His warm breath teased her ear.

"That's fine," she managed to mumble even as her body betrayed her by flooding with wetness.

"We aren't done, Torrye," he whispered as he rose and continued along his way to his seat.

In one gulp, Torrye drained her drink. All of her emotions were going haywire and she needed to calm down. At the raised brow of her cousin, Torrye just shook her head and said, "I need to get some sleep." Putting her pillow on his shoulder, she covered up with a blanket and attempted to do just that.

For the entire flight, Niall tried to figure out how he was going to get to talk to Torrye again. He was only in Buffalo for a day and then he was heading home to Texas. As the plane taxied to a stop at the airport, he cursed. He didn't stand a chance of catching her.

Still, he moved fast and was one of the first off. As he walked through the gate he caught sight of her walking with that same man. His body had the same response, anger.

Using his height, Niall moved swiftly through the crowd and as they made it to the baggage area, he was close enough to see Torrye get lifted off the ground by another handsome man.

Stopping dead in his tracks, Niall counted to ten before he continued on. Punching someone in the face wasn't a good way to make a first impression. Not a small man at six-three, he still felt small as he approached the two men standing with his Torrye.

"Excuse me," he said in his thick Texas drawl.

The two men glanced at him and frowned, immediately closing ranks on Torrye. Niall could see the panic flash across

her face as she recognized him. "What?" Both men asked as one.

Ignoring the behemoths at her side, Niall focused on his gorgeous Torrye. "I believe you dropped this at the gate yesterday. Your book."

Torrye opened her mouth in shock. She hadn't had a book but her hand reached out slowly to take it. Trevor reached for it first. "Who are you?"

This time Torrye spoke. "Trevor, be nice. This man helped me last night when I had a migraine. He made sure I was safe and watched over my bag, while I slept." Her eyes, the color of dark milk, met and held the amazing blue of his. "Thank you for everything."

"I couldn't leave a woman defenseless. It was my pleasure. But, don't forget your book." He held it out toward her again. Her hand took it and slipped it into her jacket pocket without looking at it.

"Who are you?" Trevor demanded.

"My name is Niall O'Cinneide." The Texan answered offering his hand.

The reluctance was there as a hand was offered in return. "I see. My name is Trevor Gerard, I'm her cousin. And this is her brother, Dominic. We are grateful that you helped keep her safe." Dominic shook his hand second and agreed.

It was obvious to all that while he was paying attention to the men, his eyes constantly kept drifting back to rest on Torrye. He didn't hide his fascination with the dark-skinned beauty between them.



Dominic and Trevor were both extremely protective of Torrye. She was the only female in the family, so all the cousins along with her brother, Dominic, treated her like she was inside Fort Knox and they were the defenses. So as her big brother, Dominic was ready to hit the man who kept looking at his little sister.

At least, that was until he saw that Torrye was having a hard time keeping her eyes off of Niall in return. That was the only thing that stopped him because he had never seen his sister look at a man remotely close to that before. Ever.

Torrye had many boyfriends, and according to her they were all just okay. But this man she had just met in the airport, she couldn't take her eyes off of. He needed to ask her a bunch of questions.

"Thanks again, man." Dominic stuck out his hand again. "I don't know what I would do if *anyone* ever took advantage of my baby sister."

Torrye flushed as she remembered just what Niall had done to her. "Thank you," she mumbled. She licked her lips and almost moaned at the answering flare of passion in his gaze.

"My pleasure. Totally my pleasure," he promised. Niall shook all of their hands, saving Torrye for last, to linger over. He let his middle finger tease the inside of her wrist as he slowly let her hand go. "Safe journey, Ms. Jamieson."

Hefting his bag, he tossed it easily over his shoulder and he moved off to be swallowed up by the crowd.

"Good bye, Niall." Her words were almost tortured as she felt a part of her soul close up in sorrow.

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Both men glared down at her and demanded, "Tell us what the hell happened between you and Mr. Texas there."

## Chapter 6

"What the hell are you talking about?" Torrye cried out in dismay. "I just got back."

Heather Kisman shrugged. "I'm well aware of that, but you are the best one we have Torrye. This will be our first hotel of the chain to be opening in Texas and we want you to oversee it."

Texas. Niall lived in Texas. Shaking her head, Torrye just stared at her boss. "Surely there is someone else who can go."

"Did you and Jack have plans?"

Torrye arched a brow at that. Jack was her new boyfriend. Valentine's Day was just around the corner. Of course they had plans. "For Valentine's Day. And I am assuming I won't be back by then, will I?"

At least the woman had the grace to blush and look ashamed. "No, I'm afraid you won't. It shouldn't be much past it. Maybe the two of you can do something when you get home."

*Maybe you should just admit to the damn world you are a lesbian and date your woman in public, instead of hiding behind the pretense of having a 'business meeting' with Carol.* "I guess that is always an option," Torrye mumbled as her dislike for this job grew.

"I would go, but I have business meeting with Carol." The woman said by way of an excuse.

*Right. I'm sure you do.* "Whatever," she snapped. "I'm going home. I'm done for the day. I have to get ready to go

to Texas. Have the files delivered later on." Without waiting for another word, Torrye spun around and headed out the door, letting it slam behind her.

As she walked up the steps to her building, she frowned. Home less than a day and she was going again. Well, the money was good and she loved seeing a hotel bloom under the proper care and tutelage.

Her phone was ringing as she entered the studio she called home. "Jamieson," she said.

"Hey sweetheart." It was Jack. He had finally asked her out. They had one date under their belts now. And he was already possessive and demanding.

"Hey, Jack." Her voice lacked the cheer it should have had hearing him.

"Are we still on for tonight?"

"Sure. But I'm going out of town again, tomorrow and this time I won't be back until after Valentine's Day."

The rumble of disappointment filled the line. "You're standing me up?" he thundered.

"No, I'm leaving town on a business trip." Torrye frowned as his voice took on an unpleasant quality.

"Where the hell are you going now?"

"Texas."

"You need to get a different job. You are gone too much with this one." His order fell on astonished ears.

"I don't like the sound of that. I know I travel a lot with my job, but you knew that when you asked me out. I'm not quitting for you. We have been out on *one* date. And that is

all it will be. Forget about tonight, I never want to see you again!" She slammed the phone down.

Storming over to her bed, Torrye flopped on it. "What the hell is wrong with me? Why can't I keep a man? Why can't I find a man worthy of keeping?"

Covering her head with a pillow, the image of Niall O'Kinneide filled her mind. One week and she still couldn't get him out of her thoughts.

On their own accord, her hands reached for the spy thriller that Niall had handed to her in the airport. Opening the cover, she pulled out the small sheet of paper that lay inside it and read it, although she had memorized each word.

Torrye Melissa Jamieson,

I don't know why you refuse to admit something happened  
between us.

I am not giving up on you ... or us.

We will meet again, and sweetheart,

I promise I won't let you run this time.

We aren't done.

Until we meet again, my sexy one.

Niall

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\* \* \* \*

Could his life get any worse? Niall stood looking at the smoldering remains of his apartment building. It was Thursday night and he had just lost the one place he called home when he was off the oil rig.

The manager of the building came over. "Hey, Niall."

"Tom," he responded.

"I'm sorry about this. But the landlord says he will put your month's rent toward a hotel if you are staying in one in town."

The place had been small, only five units in the whole thing. Cheap and quiet, just how he liked it. Niall spent money on his vehicle, and saved the rest. Since most of his time was out on the rig, he didn't see the need for a huge, lavish place to live. Now, he just needed one.

"Did he give any recommendations?" Niall asked.

"One, it's close to the beach. They just recently opened under new ownership. I believe the name is *The Pantheon*."

Niall nodded, he had seen that place being gutted and new things moving in. "Great. I'll go right now." *Assuming I can get a room, then I need to go shopping for some clothes and other items.*

"Good luck, Niall." The manager smacked him on the shoulder and went to talk to another renter who had just shown up.

Shaking his head, Niall climbed into his white three-quarter ton Chevy dooley. Starting the powerful engine, he drove off towards *The Pantheon*.

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He got a room in the hotel. It was a nice, clean room, and it had a king-sized bed. The staff had been extremely happy and helpful. The carpet was dark gold and the curtains were hunter green over white sheers. The bedspread had a bit of all the colors in it. The bathroom was large, with a walk-in shower and a sunken tub in the other corner. He would be fine here until he found a new place to live.

That settled, Niall turned his attention to going shopping and getting necessities. Once again, his mind wandered back to the dark sienna skinned woman he had met in the Canadian airport. She was always in his thoughts.

Niall stretched comfortably on his bed. This was a wonderful hotel. He had gone swimming in the pool last night and then hit his bed, surprised at how comfortable the mattress really was.

The staff was extremely efficient when he called down for breakfast. Even though it was five in the morning, they were cheerful and upbeat. That extended to the man who delivered his food as well, and he had even apologized for taking so long explaining that there was a staff meeting.

So at six in the morning, Niall walked out of the elevator and headed toward the lobby intending to go for a walk along the beach. A round of laughter halted him and he paused as he watched the conference room doors open. A large group of employees began to stream out.

Niall had never seen hotel employees happy like this before. He was hard-pressed to find any employees this happy anywhere. Every single one that met his gaze sent him a cheerful grin and a "Good morning," as well. He continued

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walking toward the lobby, and was passing the fountain when it happened.

Through the low din, one voice reached his ears and tripled the speed of his heart. It was like hearing a heavenly choir. The feminine voice stopped him dead in his tracks. That voice belonged to Torrye Melissa Jamieson.



## Chapter 7

Torrye stood at the front of the conference room and faced the majority of *The Pantheon's* employees. The staff seemed very knowledgeable and pleased with the new rules and regulations implanted by the new owners. Just the type of crew she liked to supervise, a happy and efficient one.

"Well," Torrye said, automatically smoothing down her jade-green business jacket. "I'll be around for two weeks while we get the rest of the kinks out. If there are *any* questions, concerns, or whatnots, please let me know. I am here to help. I realize we are still understaffed, so feel free to let me know if I can help out in anyway. My cell phone will be on 24/7 and all of you have the number plus I will be carrying a radio as well. We have a lot to do before we officially open on Valentine's Day when we have our big party. Thanks for all the hard work I know that each and everyone of you will be doing." She paused and sent a smile around the room. "That's it, and welcome to *The Pantheon*."

A round of applause and cheers filled the room before people began to file out. The head of security fell into step with her. As they left the room, Torrye waited a moment before continuing their discussion.

"Okay, Willis," she said lightheartedly. "I'll fax those ideas over to them immediately."

"Thanks, Ms. Jamieson," the man replied. "I just think it will make things much easier."

"I agree and I would imagine headquarters would view it the same. And that kind of initiative is what I love to see. Great job."

Willis smiled and broke off to head in another direction. Torrye grinned as she watched him leave before looking around the lobby of the hotel. He was an amazing find to head the security at the hotel; his mind was extremely sharp and he had a multitude of defensive moves he knew which he was going to teach his officers under him.

Greek replicas of statutes filled the place, it looked like the Pantheon found in Greece. The designers had truly made it to fit the look that one would find if they looked up the Pantheon in the encyclopedia. It was very lavish looking, but the hotel itself wasn't only there to cater to high-end clients.

Facing in the direction of the main desk, she froze. Standing by the fountain, was her airport lover. Niall O'Kinneide stood there, legs braced as if he were on a ship that moved across the water. His massive arms were crossed as he watched her with those eyes of china blue.

Torrye blinked and then blinked again. It wasn't possible ... was it?

Her tongue snuck out and licked her dry lips. The noise of the hotel faded into nothingness as all her attention and focus zoomed in upon the tall Texan who stood before her. Niall wore a white tee shirt that hugged his torso, similar to the way she had held him when they had been together. A pair of blue jeans lovingly conformed around the muscles he displayed in his legs. His hair was still shaggy and unkempt looking, all the while looking ruggedly handsome, touching

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the collar of his shirt. And she noticed a well-worn pair of cowboy boots on his feet.

One dark hand moved up to rest at the base of her throat. Her sable eyes were wide as she tried to figure out what to do. The man in front of her belonged here in *The Pantheon*, for he surely looked like a God to her.

\* \* \* \*

Niall was in shock as well. There she stood before him, wearing a nutmeg sheath skirt, a white shirt and over that was a green single-breasted jacket. On her feet she wore a pair of green pumps. Her thick luxurious hair had been jerked back tightly into a severe bun, not a single hair was allowed to escape. Niall could basically feel the pulse that beat underneath her hand in his own body.

All he could think about was kissing her full lips and unpinning her hair so it flowed about them as they made love. Watching the way her eyes grew smoky with desire as he enjoyed her body.

His mouth moved as he silently spoke her name. "Torrye."

His eyes moved up and down her body one more time before he took a step toward her.

"Ms. Jamieson," a front attendant called out, jarring her attention from him and over to the woman requesting her.

"Coming." Torrye allowed her eyes one more longing and heated pass over his rock-solid physique before her sure steps took her behind the desk.

Niall walked out the door, unsure of what else to do. He had to regain some control or he would be tossing her over

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his shoulder and taking her to his room. It looked like she worked here, but she had said she lived in Buffalo.

He headed for the beach and tried to figure out how he was going to handle this turn of events. The woman he had been focused on since the day they met had fallen back within his reach. And this time ... he wasn't letting her get away. He had meant every word he wrote on that piece of paper he had slipped into the book he gave her, and by all that was holy she was going to find out, just how serious he truly was.

\* \* \* \*

Torrye felt faint. She wanted to collapse. When she had found she was coming to Corpus Christi her initial reaction was panic, until she figured for two weeks it would be extremely unlikely that she would run into him.

*So, what happens? I run into him on her first day here and he is a guest in the hotel.* Biting back a groan, Torrye tried to concentrate on what Lisa was asking her. Her mind kept drifting to the handsome oil rigger who walked out of the door and into the early Texas morning. He looked even more gorgeous then when she had seen him at the airport.

Around nine, Torrye was walking outside the hotel. As she stopped to talk to some guests, her cell phone rang. "Excuse me," she said to the patrons. Flipping open the phone she spoke, "Jamieson."

Her dark eyes narrowed at the voice at the other end. Jack. Moving away to a private area, she hissed, "What do you want?" She listened in growing amazement and fear at

the words coming out of his mouth. Finally she growled, "Don't ever call me again, you bastard." Then she hung up.

Before she could digest that call the radio at her side went off. "Ms. Jamieson?"

"Go ahead." Torrye began walking back toward the entrance of the hotel.

"A guest would like a word with you in your office."

Nodding, she quickened her step. "I'll be right there. Thanks." Shoving the radio back into her pocket, she headed into the hotel. As she walked her features were schooled into a professional look, giving no indication of the call she had just received.

Pushing open the door to her office, Torrye entered the room and closed the oak door behind her. "Sorry to keep you waiting. What can I do for you?" she asked as her lithe body moved toward her desk.

The chair swung around and she was face to face with Niall. His blue eyes were on her face, his long, tapered fingers laced under his chin and one booted foot rested across the opposite knee. "Hello, gorgeous," his deep silvery voice filled the room and giving life to her soul.

"Niall." Her one word was drawn out with surprise and immediate craving.

His gaze burned her clothes away as he sat there. He was a nervous wreck internally. His emotions ran unchecked and ranged from wanton desire to fear of rejection. One fluid motion brought him up out of the chair and directly in front of her. Niall towered over her, even with her heels.

"I can't stop thinking about you," he confessed as he drew her into his embrace.

*And I can't stop thinking about you.* Torrye remained silent as his arms enveloped her. On their own accord, her arms slid around his lean waist and her head rested upon his chiseled torso.

In that instant, both of their worlds aligned properly. There was no stress, no fears of anything. It was as it should be. Harmonious. Soul mates had been reunited. There was no logical explanation for the way they felt. It was just as it should be, and they both knew it.

"I can't let you go, you know that, right?" Niall asked as his hands ran idly up and down her back.

Torrye panicked at those words, his note had said the same thing. Her body jerked away from his touch and she moved around her desk, nervously pulling on her clothes. Sitting in the tall leather chair helped her to focus.

"What can I do for you, Mr. O'Cinneide?" Her tone was brisk and professional. *Please give me the strength to deal with this situation without making myself look like some deranged idiot.*

## Chapter 8

Determination was the only thing in Niall's gaze as he turned toward her. His eyes had darkened to the color of sapphires and they refused to let go of hers. He took one step toward her.

"You can let me lay your body across this golden desk. Allow me to unpin that damn severe bun you shoved your hair into, so it floats around your shoulders. Let me gaze upon you naked and cry out my name as we make love."

Torrye felt her body grow wetter at his words. She unconsciously shifted her lower body in the chair to try and ease the throbbing ache she had for him.

Another step closer. "I want to make love to you, Torrye. Right here. Right now."

"No," she mumbled. "I'm working. If there isn't anything you need then I have things that require my attention."

Niall shook his head and took yet another step. "Come here, Torrye." The tone of his sexy drawl changed, from soft to commanding.

And she responded. Torrye stood, moved her chair back and walked around to the front of her desk. Just as it had been in the airport, there was no way for her to ignore the call his body had on hers.

Two of his long strides were all it took to close the distance between them. Niall licked his lips as he reached for her face. The second their skin met, his control snapped. His mouth descended upon hers with a ferocity that surprised her. Deep,

sweeping tongue strokes as he reexamined the recesses of her mouth.

Torrye purred as her body molded itself closer to the man kissing her senseless.

Backing her up against the desk, Niall pulled her skirt up; exposing her white thong underwear. He gazed at her face, down to her panties, back up to those eyes—that were smoky with passion—and winked at her.

"You have wonderful taste in clothes." His callused fingers tugged the damp panties down her legs. Torrye obediently lifted each foot so he could remove them completely.

Two fingers trailed lightly over her nearly hairless mound. Niall inhaled deeply as his cock surged against the confines of his jeans. His mouth watered at the image of leaning her back across that desk and feasting upon her delicious nectar.

A knock at the door brought them both rudely back to the here and now. Torrye jerked her skirt back down and hissed, "Give me my panties!"

Wordlessly, Niall brought them to his nose and inhaled. "I think I'll keep them. You can stop by my room and get them later. I'm in room 528." The shocked look on her face was priceless.

Blowing her a kiss, Niall walked over to the door and opened it, as he shoved her panties in his pocket. "Thanks for your assistance, Ms. Jamieson," he said, brushing past the woman who was ready to knock again. He disappeared without looking back once.



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For the rest of the day, Torrye walked around aroused. She didn't see Niall again, she remained close to her office, but she also didn't go put on another pair of underwear.

Heading into the elevator, Torrye smiled at the guests in there as well.

"Which floor, dearie?" a woman asked.

Before she could talk herself out of it, Torrye heard her own voice say very clearly, "Five please."

"Okay, that's our floor."

The ride was short and sweet. Torrye was the last one off and as she moved toward room 528, she passed an employee who smiled at her. Continuing to the end of the hall, she retraced her steps once the housekeeper had disappeared from view. Double-checking to make sure the coast was clear; she pounded on the door under the number 528.

It immediately swung open and Torrye found herself looking at a marbled chest. Niall wore nothing but a pair of jeans and they weren't buttoned just zipped. His tanned chest was covered in a moderate amount of dark springy curls. There wasn't an ounce of fat on him.

"Come on in," he offered.

Forcing her attention away from the beautiful torso in front of her. Torrye entered and shut the door behind her. "I'll take back my article of clothing, if you please."

He chuckled as she stuck out her hand. *It's not going to be that simple, sweetheart.* "Oh, no. it's not going to be that short a visit."

"I don't have time for this," she snapped.

Blue eyes narrowed. "Why are you running from me? Do you have a date?"

"That isn't any of your business." She swallowed as he encroached closer, his masculine scent wafting around her, making her lightheaded.

The smile was dangerous as he stopped before her. For a moment, his gaze raked boldly over her form before landing back on her face. Quick as a snake, Niall pinned her up against the door, one jean-covered leg shoving up her skirt as it wedged between her legs. His arms settled on either side of her head.

Torrye whimpered as she felt the moisture began to leak onto her inner thigh. Out of habit, she licked her lips and trembled at the look that seemed to burn in his eyes. One hand left the door and touched her cheek. The simple touch of his hand sent shivers throughout her entire being. Reaching around to the bun, Niall began to remove the pins that kept her look so severe.

The pins were dropped to the floor as, little by little, the thick silky hair fell free around her face and shoulders. His eyes were kind and tender as he looked upon her beauty. He used his fingers to comb through her hair, loving the gentle smell of her shampoo. Holding the ends of some strands of hair, he brushed them along his cheek, enjoying the silkiness along his skin.

Turning his head, Niall nuzzled his nose behind her ear. His teeth nipped tenderly at the sensitive skin as his breath warmed it. Pulling the edge of her ear into his mouth, he sucked on it.

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Under his touch, Torrye shuddered and trembled. Her legs giving out on her so it was the strong thigh, exposing her dark toned legs as it shoved up her skirt, which supported her entire weight. She shifted, grinding her damp core harder against his solid thigh, her wetness soaking through the jean material and onto his skin.

Niall licked along her jaw line and then he pulled back. His thick tongue tasted her over and over again. He moved closer and closer to her waiting mouth.

Torrye was in agony. She felt boneless and her skin felt like flames were licking it.

She was no dummy; Torrye knew there was some deeper connection between her and the oil rigger, Niall O'Cinniedie. At this moment in time, the most important thing was having him buried to the hilt within her. For he created a fire that only he could extinguish. Reaching up with arms that seemed extremely heavy, Torrye looped them around his neck. Her fingers wrapped around his thick hair. She turned up her mouth for a kiss. A kiss that never happened.

Her nipples were painfully hard as he stroked her body to a fevered pitch. "Niall," she panted as her back arched pressing her clothed chest closer to his bare one.

"Tell me, Torrye." His voice was strained as he tried to keep a rein on his emotions. "Tell me, you'll stay."

*Tell me you'll stay.* "I'll stay." Her words were low and soft but to Niall they had the effect as if he were standing on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier during flight ops, where you feel the power of the afterburners on an F-14 Tomcat. Every fiber in his being felt her words.

As if the Hoover Dam had busted and the water poured forth, overwhelming him with emotions, he shook. "I love you," he vowed as his mouth claimed hers.

Niall felt her body tremble, she was unable to respond verbally to him. But, his tongue was deep in her throat. He wanted to know how she felt by his declaration, but at the same time, he was scared. All of his own feelings were poured into that kiss. Her hands ran over the muscled expanse of his bared back as her skirt inched higher the more her legs spread out, positioning the apex of her thighs closer to the rough material of his jeans.

Niall used one hand to open her jacket. He groaned as her arms dropped from his back to remove her jacket. This act left her in a gauzy, sleeveless white shirt, which was starkly beautiful against her smooth, dark skin.

His hands slid up her bare arms, her silken skin electrifying his own senses. Niall lifted her off his leg and gathered her up into his iron-infused arms.

Moving across the dark gold carpet, Niall laid her gently across the made bed. "I am so sorry our first time making love wasn't like this."

"What do you mean?" Torrye placed her gaze on his face as she lay there on her back.

"I mean I am sorry I took you against the bathroom wall in an airport."

She reached up and touched the side of his face. "Then make it up to me now."

Niall leaned over her and pressed his lips to hers as his hand unzipped her skirt. "I promise."

An Unlikely Encounter  
*by Aliyah Burke*

## Chapter 9

Torrye closed the door behind her and heaved a huge sigh. She had spent the past five hours in the strong and loving embrace of Niall O'Cinneide. The things they did, the way she felt still made her knees weak. *Well, that was one promise he sure made good on.*

That man had made slow, tender love to every single inch of her body. And she had done the same to him. If she had believed the night in the airport had been amazing, and it was, but matched up to what she just experienced ... it was nothing compared to having him naked.

Torrye headed straight for the shower and stood under the pulsating spray, letting the water soothe her sore muscles. Her thoughts wandered back to room 528 and the man she left sleeping there. Niall had been on his back with one arm out to his side. The sheet settled barely above his waist, tempting Torrye to forget leaving and remove the sheet. His tarnished hair had gleamed at her in the faint light in the room before she had switched it off and snuck away like a thief in the night. Her hair was still down as she scrambled from his floor to the eleventh, where she was at.

Dropping her head against the sand colored tile along the shower wall, Torrye admonished herself. "I can't believe I did that ... *again*. Still no protection and still stupid for me to do." *But oh so wonderful to experience*, her brain taunted.

She turned off the water and stepped out of the steaming shower. Slipping on a robe, she walked to the main room and saw the light flashing on the phone.

An Unlikely Encounter  
by Aliyah Burke

Picking it up, she retrieved her messages. Fifteen minutes later, Torrye was dressed for another long day and heading toward the kitchens.

\* \* \* \*

Niall rolled over and his eyes flew open. There was no luscious brown body in bed with him. Sitting up he spoke out loud. "Torrye?"

Receiving no response, Niall turned on the bedside lamp. He instinctively knew he was alone in the room. Jumping out of bed, he shoved on his jeans, leaving them unbuttoned and headed for the door. Jerking it open, Niall leaned into the hallway and scanned left and right for any sign of her.

Nothing.

A young brunette woman walked past him, eyed him blatantly up and down before licking her lips. The message in her green eyes perfectly clear: *If you want me ... I'm yours.*

With a frown, Niall stepped back into his room and slammed the door. "Ouch! Shit!" he yelled as his foot was pricked.

Niall turned on the main light in the room and found it was Torrye's hairpin that jabbed him in the foot. They were all lying there from when he had taken down that damn bun her hair had been in.

*She left.* Uncertainty filled him as he showered and dressed. The pins were in his pocket when he left his room to head down for breakfast.

Walking along the bar that had the complimentary breakfast choices on it, Niall filled a plate and took it to a

table. A presence over his shoulder prompted him to look up. It was the same brunette from earlier.

"Mind if I join you?" her words came out in a slow drawl. Her slim body had slipped into a chair before her question had faded away.

Niall just arched a brow at her. "What do you want?"

"I noticed you earlier and I wanted a chance to get to know..." her words trailed off as she shamelessly gazed over his upper body. "...you better." The woman with a tanning bed tan leaned close and put her hand on his arm, her fingers moving familiarly across his naturally tanned skin.

Before he could move his arm he saw her. Torrye stood in the entrance to the room he ate in. Her dark gaze found him and easily spotted the woman's hand on his arm. Niall watched for some kind—any kind—of reaction from her, but got none.

She moved her eyes away from his, disinterested and nodded at something the man beside her said.

\* \* \* \*

Torrye was crushed. Seeing Niall with that woman touching him deadened a part of her soul. Only by the grace of God did she control her facial expressions and keep the pain and betrayal she felt hidden.

She turned her attention back to Marco, the hotel's new manager and what he was saying. Torrye knew she and Marco made an attractive couple. He was six-five, strong and all Italian. Short dark hair and sparkling brown eyes added to his allure.



An Unlikely Encounter  
by Aliyah Burke

Side by side they moved into the dining area. "I think all that will be perfect," Torrye said with smile.

"I may be out of line here, but that man across the room can't keep his eyes off you." Marco supplied the information with his deep voice.

"Humph. I doubt he can see anything past the brunette at his table."

Marco glanced at her, witnessing the hurt before it was wiped away. "I've known you for a while now, Torrye ... I'm not buying the '*I don't give a shit*' attitude." He touched her arm, encouraging her to meet his gaze. "But I would love to help you make him jealous."

She couldn't help it. The mischievous look in his eyes made her laugh. Covering his hand with one of hers, she smiled at him. "I've missed you, Marco."

"I know. I've missed you, too. Now let's go plan for this Valentine Day bash."

"Right behind you," she responded.

Without any further glances to Niall, Torrye headed back into the main lobby of the hotel.

\* \* \* \*

They were still together when Niall saw her again. His Torrye and *that man*. The one who had been standing beside her as she walked into the dining area. The man who dared touch her and ultimately made her laugh.

Torrye was dressed in a three-quarter length dark peach shirt and black dress pants. Niall frowned as he saw her hair was yanked back in a tight bun ... again. The couple stood off

to the side as they talked to each other. Occasionally pointing around, nodding, and laughing. When the dark-haired man reached out and placed his hand on hers, Niall headed towards them. His hand dug in his pocket as he approached and a low growl grew as he watched the smile leave her face the closer he got.

The two fell silent as Niall stopped before them. His blue eyes narrowed as they fell upon the masculine hand over Torrye's. Niall's jealousy grew as her eyes which were gentle upon her companion, hardened as she glanced at him.

Pulling his hand out of his pocket, Niall took her hand, the one the other man was touching, turned it over palm up, and placed her hairpins in it.

"You left these in my room last night." His tone smacked of masculine arrogance, challenge, and territorial declaration.

Torrye felt the blush begin but it stopped the second Marco picked up one of the pins from her hand. "Didn't I get these for you in Acapulco?" Putting his dark gaze on a fuming Niall, he added, "I remember how much I loved taking your hair down and having it frame your beautiful face as we—"

"Marco!" Torrye interjected, fully embarrassed. "Don't we have work to do?"

The handsome Italian sighed dramatically. "This is one woman who is near insatiable ... but I love that about her."

Looking to the mortified Torrye, he nodded. "Let's get planning for this big ball." Another side glance at the man who had intruded and Marco led Torrye away.

## *Chapter 10*

Niall swore and headed to his room to change his clothes. "I can't believe she has slept with him." He pounded one fist into his palm. "He won't get her again. Over my dead body will she go back to him."

He went and worked out before taking a swim. As his body worked, his mind couldn't let go seeing her and that man together in bed. Each stroke through the water brought a visual of that man touching what Niall considered his and infuriated him even more. The more he pictured it, the angrier he became. Holding onto the side of the pool, Niall fought for control as he closed his eyes, desperately wanting to rid himself of that image.

Finger snapped in his face and he opened his blue eyes to see Torrye crouched down in front of him, a towel in her other hand.

Standing off to the side, Torrye watched Niall swimming in the pool. His muscular physique sliced effortlessly through the water. He made swimming look like child's play. And yet, like it should be in some erotic show.

She groaned as her body grew damp just from observing him. Last night she had tasted just about every inch of his skin. Her internal muscles clenched with desire.

When he stopped swimming and propped himself along the edge, Torrye moved toward him, swiping his towel along the way. Allowing herself one last unobserved look, she reached out and snapped her fingers in front of his face to get his attention.

An Unlikely Encounter  
*by Aliyah Burke*

Her breath hitched as their eyes met. He peered deep into her soul and could read her like a book. Ignoring her yearning for the lovely Texas specimen, Torrye thrust the towel at him. "We need to talk." She stood and took two steps back.

Niall licked his lips as he roved her body with his gaze. Wiping his face with the towel, he lifted himself out of the pool to stand before her.

Torrye swallowed ... hard. The man in front of her was damn near perfect. The water clung to his firm skin as if loathe to abandon the opportunity to touch him. Not that she blamed the water; she would love to run her hands, fingers, and her tongue over his body again.

He wore a pair of medium-blue swim trunks that left nothing to her imagination. Unconsciously her tongue snuck out to wet her full lips.

Her eyes drifted over the straining ridge in his swim trunks. They outlined what she had experienced personally and made her long to drop to her knees and suck on him like a piece of candy.

"What did you want to talk about? Your boy toy?" he snapped.

"I wanted to ask you something," she ground out, her temper pricked by his implication giving her the strength to ignore her body's lustful feelings.

Rubbing his strong arms with the towel, he remained silent and waited. When nothing further came he prompted. "Ask me what?" One eyebrow rose as he draped the towel over his shoulder.

Her expressive eyes swept the pool area before landing back at his questioning expression. "Could you possibly be a bit *less* of an ass around people I work with?" Her eyes were diamond hard.

"Hey, I was just returning your hair thingies to you. I'm not the one who went off down memory lane about how he loved to take your hair down," he countered, angered at the image that evoked in his mind.

"No, *you* were acting like a male lifting his leg, pissin' on shit to mark his territory." Her gaze was furious. "I am working here and if you keep that up. I will have you kicked out of this hotel."

Niall stepped closer to her rigid body. "I *was* marking my territory. That man shouldn't have put his hands on you."

Torrye closed the remaining distance between them and hissed, "*That man*, has known me long enough to touch my hand. How long have you known the woman touching you while you were at breakfast?"

He put his face directly into hers. "He has *NO* right to touch you. You are mine, Torrye Melissa and by God, everyone will know it. I don't know and don't give a damn who that woman was. There is one woman who means anything to me."

They fell silent as a couple walked into the pool area. Torrye wanted to spit, she was so angry, and yet, at the same time she wanted to mash her lips against his firm ones.

Casting the couple a subtle glance, Niall turned his full attention to the woman before him. He knew she was mad, but he also knew she was aroused. And so was he.

An Unlikely Encounter  
*by Aliyah Burke*

Two men, both very handsome entered the pool area. Niall tensed at the appreciative looks they gave her. He was consumed by jealousy. He had told her he loved her and she was acting like those words hadn't ever been spoken between them.

Before Torrye could say anything else, he positioned his hand at the back of her neck and kissed her. Inhaled her taste and scent into his body. While careful not to get her clothes wet, there was no mistaking his claim before the others there. Torrye was marked.

As she wrenched away from his mind-numbing touch, he spoke in a firm and sensual tone. "Quit putting your hair like this. I don't like it."

Without responding, Torrye spun around and marched off, anger clearly evident. When she was at the door, Niall's voice reached her. "I'll see you at seven for dinner, sweetheart."

Her body stopped for a brief moment as her hands clenched and unclenched. Then with no retort at all or a look back at the man who set her insides trembling with just a glance, Torrye left the pool area.

Niall had a huge grin on his face as he picked up his belongings. "Man, I *love* that woman!" he announced to the people that had witnessed the interaction. Then he walked out.

\* \* \* \*

A knock on her office door brought Torrye's head up out of the stack of applications she and Marco were going over.

An Unlikely Encounter  
*by Aliyah Burke*

"Expecting someone?" Marco asked with a wicked glint in his eyes. "Your handsome guest perhaps?"

"Shut up, Marco!" she hissed. "Come on in." Torrye sent her friend a glare as the door swung open.

Niall stepped through the door and shut it behind him. Raw emotions tore at his gut as he saw Torrye still in the company of that other man.

His intense gaze took in how comfortable that guy in her office looked. Like a flash, Niall grew angry from the image of this man kissing and doing other things with Torrye. His woman.

"Is there something I can do for you, Mr. O'Cinneide?" Torrye asked, her tone barely civil.

\* \* \* \*

Marco leaned back in his chair; his intelligent gaze flickered between the two of them. He wasn't dumb for he could see the anger in the man's gaze. Apparently this man had decided that Torrye was his. With a quick glance at Torrye, Marco witnessed the emotions she tried to hide. She wanted that man as well. Well, Valentine's Day was a day for romance, maybe these two just needed someone to play cupid for them. His heart sank as he realized what he was witnessing.

\* \* \* \*

Niall walked around to her side of the desk, totally ignoring the fact that she had another person in her office. His large

powerful frame towered over her as he spoke in a silvery voice of seduction, "It's seven."

Flipping over the papers in her hand, Torrye shrugged but didn't meet his gaze. Her tone grew snide, "Congrats, you can tell time. What about it?"

"We were meeting for dinner." His rich tone was commanding.

"That wasn't anything *I* agreed to." Torrye grabbed her pen only to have it jerked from her hand. Outraged, she looked up and met his gaze. "What the hell do you think you are doing?"

"I said I would see you at seven for dinner. It's past that."

Torrye rolled her eyes with increasing exasperation. "I'm working ... or trying to." She snatched her pen back from him. "I'm not having dinner with you."

Niall's eyes narrowed as she looked away from him. *I'm acting like an idiot when it comes to this woman.* "Have you eaten?"

"Not yet. I'll eat later." Her gaze remained on the paper and not him.

He stood there silent for a moment and just watched her. Watched her try to ignore the fact he was still there. Noticed how she didn't succeed at it, but damn if she didn't keep right on trying to maintain the fact that she was busy working.



## Chapter 11

Niall leaned over her chair, his breath teasing the side of her neck. "I think you need to eat now, and with me." His thick Texas drawl made her body wet with desire.

With a firm shake of her head, Torrye picked up another application in her left hand. The paper shook slightly as she tried to control the clenching need of her pussy. "Go away, Mr. O'Cinneide. We have nothing more to say to one another."

Niall growled in displeasure. Looking at the name on the application he ground out, "Richard Torgul can wait for you to eat some dinner."

Biting her lower lip, Torrye jerked her head to look at the man beside her, using up her oxygen and making her lightheaded. "I'm busy."

"And I'm a hungry guest. Aren't you supposed to put my needs first?" His thick drawl tugged at her body, causing it to call out for his touch. The words he said contained such a double meaning, for she knew what 'needs' he was talking about.

"Go away!" she half-hissed, half-begged.

Those Prussian blue eyes peeled away her clothing and saw deep into her soul. "That's not what you want," he purred. One strong hand reached around to the back of her neck, his fingers stoking the embers inside her to full-blown flames.

She trembled. Her tongue snuck out to wet her lips and she witnessed the answering flare of desire in his gaze as it

followed her motion. "You don't know what I want," Torrye protested.

"Yes I do. You want me." One by one, her pins began to fall from her thick hair, her bun giving way to fall around her shoulders.

"I have work to do," her words were soft and almost undetectable.

"Shut up, Torrye," Niall ordered as his lips covered hers.

The kiss was explosive. Her hands dropped what they were holding and wrapped around his neck, hauling him in closer to her body.

His hand wound deeper into the locks of her hair. One side of her hair was still up with the pins, but the loose tresses wrapped around Niall's hand like a lifeline.

He plundered her mouth with his tongue, sharing his taste with her and learning hers all over again. Niall stood up straight, lifting her up out of the chair and turned to sit her on her desk, never once releasing her luscious mouth.

Her back arched pressing her breasts closer to his chest. He slid between her legs as his free hand began to tug her shirt from the waist of her pants. The second he felt her skin on his, he groaned into her mouth.

Torrye whimpered in return as she felt his calloused hand swipe over her hip. Drawing his tongue into her mouth she sucked on it like it was the only thing keeping her from drowning in an ocean of loneliness.

"Uh hmm," a deep voice broke into the haze that had enveloped around the couple.

Torrye tried to pull away from Niall, but his strength denied her that opportunity. Both of them looked in the direction of the sound. It was Marco.

He sat there in the same place he had when Niall had come in the room. "Excuse me, but I just wanted to let you both know I was here." His eyes moved over the two still locked together.

Torrye blushed from head to toe. "Marco," she groaned.

Niall tightened his arms around her. "Not a name I want to hear from your lips, especially when you are in *my* arms." His voice grew arrogant.

"Let me go," she demanded.

One more quick kiss and Niall did just that. He didn't like the way that Torrye bolted out of his embrace and away from him. Immediately she began to pull her hair back up into that bun. "Don't," he issued the directive.

"Don't what?" Torrye said, not looking at either man in the room.

"Put your hair back up in that god-awful bun. You look like a damn schoolmarm like that." His answer growled with irritation.

"I'm a professional, I should dress like one. And not the kind of professional you are used to. I work at a desk as opposed to on my back or with a bar between my legs," she snapped. Her dagger-like stare found its way to Marco and she bit out, "And you keep this to yourself."

"I want to have dinner with my gorgeous woman, not a spinster, leave your hair down." Niall moved over to her and undid all her work, tossing the pins to the floor.

"I am not *yours*," Torrye retorted as her gaze fell to the carpeted floor where her pins lay scattered.

"Baby," Niall drawled. "You were halfway to mine when our eyes met in that restroom. And all the way as I took you against the bathroom wall in the airport." His words didn't soften so Marco had no problem hearing them.

It didn't stop there. Niall tipped up her chin and forced eye connection. "So get rid of your boy toy here and admit that we belong together."

Marco stood up and prowled towards them with his leonine grace. "I resent that implication. I am not a boy toy." His deep voice was laced with danger.

Torrye recognized that tone, swallowed her own embarrassment and stepped between them. "Marco, please. Don't."

The man stopped before her, glanced between her and the man who had kissed her. "Only for you, darling. But it would help his chances of survival if you explained things to him. I'll leave you alone to handle your business. See you in the morning." Before Niall could react, Marco had leaned over and kissed Torrye on the lips. Then he was gone, shutting the door silently behind him.

Niall fumed as Torrye stepped away from him, tucking her shirt back into her pants. "What the hell is going on between the two of you?" he thundered.

"Nothing." She knelt on the floor and began to pick up her pins, her hair falling over her face obscuring his view of her.

An Unlikely Encounter  
*by Aliyah Burke*

Dropping to the floor beside her, he moved back her hair and tipped her chin to meet his gaze. "Tell me." This time his voice wasn't as sure or cocky as before.

"Marco is a very good friend, one of my best friends actually. And he would have killed you before you laid a hand on him. He is a sixth degree black belt."

Niall felt fear rise in him that he could lose her to this man. "And about Acapulco?"

She smiled a gentle smile. "We went one year for spring break from Norte Dame. The hotel messed up our reservations and booked us in the same room." Torrye sat back on her heels, seemingly forgetting she wanted her hair up.

Not really sure he wanted to hear this, Niall just waited as she fell silent. Grateful however, that she declined to continue yanking her hair back into that fucking bun.

"One night after a bunch of drinks, I was heading off with a group of guys, being stupid and Marco stopped me. Told them all to leave me alone. Fought them to keep me safe."

His massive hands flexed as he pictured anyone hurting a hair on his precious woman's head. "And then?"

"Then I helped him back to our room where I nursed his wounds for the night and fell asleep in his arms." Torrye tucked a wayward chunk of hair behind her ear. "From that night on, we were inseparable."

"And the hairpins he gave you? What was that all about? When he said he loved watching your hair around your face as you ... you what?"

An Unlikely Encounter  
by Aliyah Burke

"He gave me the hairpins on our last night there. And we were dancing when my hair was loose. He said he loved seeing it flow around my face as I spun around on the dance floor."

"So you never..."

"Never," Torrye insisted as her dark eyes landed on his lighter ones.

A sigh of relief exploded out of his mouth. "I was so angry when he said that. I thought the two of you..." he let it hang in the air, unsaid.

"I know you did. Marco and I have never had that kind of relationship. He doesn't make me lose my breath, or get my palms all sweaty."

"And me?" Niall moved closer to her on the floor.

"You make me forget everything. I crave for *your* touch." Her honest admission shocked him, and he could tell her from the way her eyes widened.

"Will you have dinner with me tonight?" he asked in a tender voice.

"Yes. Yes, I will."

Niall leaned in and kissed her on the mouth.

## Chapter 12

Six mornings later, Torrye woke to the feel of an orgasm flowing through her body. As she whimpered in pleasure her body was filled with a hard cock. She opened her eyes to see Niall above her moving in and out of her willing body.

"Morning," she mumbled as her hips rose to meet his thrusts.

"You stayed," he said pleased. It was the first morning that she was still in his room when he woke.

"I didn't have any energy to go anywhere." Her hands tightened on his forearms as she came hard seconds before he released his sperm deep within her.

As he covered her body with his, he nuzzled her neck. "So that's the secret, wear you out so you can't go anywhere?" His voice was raspy with exertion.

Shivering from the feel of his stubble against her sensitive skin, Torrye giggled. "Stop, I have to get back to my room."

"Why, that would mean you were putting on clothes? That would get in my way." He nibbled along her neck some more.

"Niall," she moaned.

"Yes, baby?"

"Stop. I have to get going. I have to meet Marco for breakfast." She jumped when he nipped her neck.

"You have a bad habit of saying his name while in my arms." Niall pouted and rolled off her and the bed, shoving on his boxers.

An Unlikely Encounter  
*by Aliyah Burke*

Torrye followed his actions with her gaze. His tarnished hair was delightfully messy and on his back she could see the red marks from her nails. Like she had marked him herself.

A woman with a limited list of sexual partners, Niall was testing her body in ways she had never dreamed possible. Not that she would change it for anything, but she was extremely sore from her activities over the past week with him.

The second his fine physique disappeared into the bathroom she rolled out of bed, dressed quickly and left his room. She let out a sigh of relief as the elevator doors closed behind her.

\* \* \* \*

The ride up to her room saw her going over her actions in her head. She had to put an end to this. The hotel was counting on her to set a good example and she couldn't do that while she was sleeping with one of the guests. Never before had she been torn between her job and her own personal happiness.

Lost in her thoughts, Torrye didn't even see Marco waiting for her outside her room until she ran into him. "Oh, Marco," she wailed as the tears overtook her.

His strong arms opened and she immediately curved into his body, allowing his strength to hold her up. With the key, he opened her door and helped her inside, shutting it behind them. "What's the matter, darling? Did he hurt you?"

Her tears wouldn't stop and so he had to wait for an answer. Marco swept her up in his arms, his lips curling in



disdain as he smelled another man on her body, and carried her to the bed. Sitting against the headboard, he kept her tucked into his body.

Torrye cried until there were no tears left. Marco didn't say a word, just held her and rubbed her back. The fact she was getting tears all over his immaculate suit not a factor in the least.

"Ready to tell me what's going on, darlin'?" Marco asked in his deep voice.

"I'm nothing more than a slut, Marco," Torrye wailed, hiccupping as her tears began again.

"What the hell are you talking about? Did he call you that?" the voice was low and deadly. Every muscle in his body shifted and rolled in preparation for a battle.

"No," she sniffed. "He hasn't said anything of the sort. But look at me; I'm sleeping with a guest."

Marco looked down at the woman he had loved since college; to him it felt so right having her in his arms. "You aren't a slut. What you are is a lovely and desirable young woman."

Snuggling closer to his chest, Torrye sighed. "I have *never* done that before." He made her feel so safe, it wasn't even funny.

"I know. But I would also bet that you haven't ever done what the two of you did in the airport either." His hands stopped moving.

"Never," she admitted. "I don't know what it is about him, Marco, but I lose all sense of control when he is near me."

Torrye pulled back and glanced up at the one who held her.  
"I'm scared of how he makes me feel."

"How so, Bella?"

"I feel things I don't know how to explain, and when he touches me..." her small body shuddered in Marco's arms.

His lips curled in derision. "I could tell. You two seemed to forget I was even in the room."

"You don't like him," Torrye observed his reaction to her words.

"Of course not. He's taking you away from me." Marco stared directly into her eyes.

"Taking me away from you? You aren't ever gonna lose me." Her face scrunched up in confusion. "What are you going on about, Marco?"

"I'm in love with you, Torrye. You've got to know that."

Astounded, Torrye just sat motionless and stared at Marco. After a moment she blinked and stuttered, "Wh ... wh ... what did you say?" she was in such shock she didn't even try to get out of his embrace, but then why would she? He had always been her protector.

Marco didn't smile or crack a joke like she expected him to do. Instead his serious gaze held hers until she looked away, unsure and uncomfortable with the intensity of his eyes.

"I don't need to repeat it, Bella. You heard me just fine and we both know it."

Torrye was immobile as his lips moved towards hers. His firm lips brushed over hers lightly before landing at the corner of her mouth. "I would give everything I had to have you look at me the way you stare at Niall O'Cinneide. You are in love,

Torrye. That's what those feelings are. And before you ask, I am a hundred percent positive because it is the same way I look at you." He brushed another kiss against her cheek.

"Why didn't you ever tell me?" Torrye asked as her fingers traced the spot his lips had been.

"I didn't want to ruin our friendship. I liked how you trusted me. I was scared of losing that."

"Marco," she began only to have him hush her.

"No, Torrye. I know now you will never be mine. And while it breaks my heart, I want you to be happy. So I'm going to ignore my own selfish desires and help you get the one you want."

Her cocoa eyes shimmering with more unshed tears looked up at him. "I love you; you know that, don't you?"

He nodded as he carefully removed her from his lap. "I know," his words were hollow sounding. "Just not how I wished you to love me." Marco stood and looked down at her beautiful sepia face. "Come on, we have some planning to do, and more apps to go over. I'll wait here, you go get cleaned up."

Scrambling off the bed, Torrye headed for the bathroom after a quick stop to grab some clean clothes. At the door, she paused and looked back over her shoulder at the handsome man in her room. "We're okay, right?" Her hand moved between them.

His eyes were sad but he sent her a grin. "We're okay." At her doubtful look he winked. "Now, unless you need me to help you get ready, I suggest you get a move on."

An Unlikely Encounter  
*by Aliyah Burke*

That time a hesitant smile crossed her face. "I'm goin'. Love you, Marco." That said she disappeared into the bathroom closing the door on the shattered heart of her best friend.

"I love you, too, Bella." Marco spoke to the empty room as his body settled down in a chair to wait for her to finish getting ready.

### *Chapter 13*

Niall watched as all around him the hotel began getting ready for Valentine's Day. It was just a few days away. He wasn't content with his relationship with Torrye. The fact that she always snuck away when he was in the bathroom or asleep, weighed heavily on his mind.

Did she see him just as a quick fuck, to pass her time here in Texas? He was totally in love with this woman, and she seemed content to share herself with him so long as there were no witnesses. Otherwise she treated him the same that she did the other guests. Polite and friendly, but lacking the emotion he knew she had for him.

Out of the corner of his eye he caught a glimpse of Torrye moving through the lobby, with none other than Marco at her side. Niall felt the jealousy rear its ugly green head but he tamped it down. She had given her word that there was nothing between them. And as much as he didn't trust Marco, he wouldn't jeopardize her job.

So he walked the other direction and headed out into the warm Texas afternoon. Heading for his truck, Niall had just unlocked it when a voice stopped him.

"A word, Mr. O'Cinneide."

Niall turned to find himself face to face with Marco. "What can I do for you?" he asked as his eyes moved over the man before him. The Italian carried himself with a quiet dignity and an air of confidence that was just there, he didn't have to force it upon a person. He didn't seem like the type of man to fear much of anything ... if anything.

"I wanted to talk to you."

"About?" Niall questioned. A flash of something foreign shone in Marco's eyes and then disappeared before Niall could identify it, but it still sent a shiver down his spine.

"I believe you know the answer to that."

Niall's head nodded. "I do. Torrye."

Marco inclined his dark head. "I want to know what your intentions are toward her." His arms rested in front of his body, clasped at the wrist, giving off a relaxed position. A very deceptive look for Niall was positive Marco was ready for anything, despite how he appeared.

"You're in love with her," Niall stated bluntly.

A sharp brusque nod was what he got in return. "And have been since college. But you haven't answered my question." Marco held his gaze, silently communicating just how serious he was.

"I would marry her this very day if she would accept me. I have been in love with her since I saw her in the airport. And everyday since then it has only grown into something deeper that I can't explain, except to say she is the other half of my soul."

"The only reason I am here is because I know she is in love with you. But she will ignore it and after her time here is done, leave without looking back. And by doing so, hurt herself." Marco rolled his shoulders as if relieving some tension.

"You don't think I'm good enough for her," Niall observed.

"Of course not. I'm in love with her, why would I think you good enough for her? But, like I said, my Bella is in love with

you. So I want to know what you intend to do about it." He shrugged nonchalantly, an action that made Niall respect him.

"I don't know what I am going to do. The only time she shows me emotion is when we're alone, and for the past two days, she has managed to avoid that as well." Niall leaned against his white truck.

"Well, I will tell you this, she is leaving the evening of Valentine's Day. The hotel will be up and running and she will be traveling back to New York. So if you are going to do something, do it by that night." Marco remained immobile.

"But she will be at the party that night?"

"I can assure you of that. She will be there." He looked over the tall man leaning on his vehicle. "Whatever you do, don't hurt her."

"I would sooner hurt myself," Niall vowed. "Do you think you could help me get her away from the hotel? Just for the day?"

"I will tell her to take the rest of the day off. She will be free in mere moments." A quick shake of his head and Marco turned to walk off only to stop and face Niall again. "If you do hurt my Bella, may God have mercy on you, for I won't." Then he was gone.

Niall swallowed. The deadpan way that message had been delivered scared him more than any man ever had before. Opening his door he made sure his truck was clean enough for his woman to ride in it, and then he leaned against it and waited for her to come outside.

\* \* \* \*

An Unlikely Encounter  
by Aliyah Burke

Torrye practically skipped out the front doors. She had wished for a day to just go see the sights in Corpus Christi before she left, so when Marco suggested she take the rest of the day off, she jumped on it.

As she stepped outside, her dark brown gaze immediately fell upon the handsome man leaning against his large white truck as he watched her. The second one of his hands waved her over toward him, her feet took her in that direction. *Jeez, Torrye. Can't you at least act like you aren't panting after him?*

"Afternoon, Torrye," he spoke in a velvet voice.

"Hello," she said with a small wave of one hand. Her eyes darted around the parking lot.

"Going somewhere?" he asked as his eyes took in her body-hugging jeans and caramel colored sweatshirt that matched the streaks in her hair. And her hair was loose, blowing in the slight breeze.

"I'm taking the afternoon off." Her eyes sparkled with joy.

"Good. Climb on in." Niall jerked his head toward his truck.

"I have a vehicle," she protested.

Niall groaned. "Why do you make everything a battle? Come on, Torrye, get in the truck. Spend some time with me."

Torrye sucked her lower lip into her mouth as she made a decision. "Okay." Her eyes traveled over the bumper sticker he had on the back. It read: *Oil riggers do it hard, fast, and right the first time.* She smiled as she agreed totally with the phrase.



He grinned as he moved around to open the door for her and help her in. "Thank you."

Torrye slid onto the leather seat. The truck was huge. As Niall climbed in behind the wheel she noticed it fit him perfectly. This was no sports car kind of guy; he was a truck man all the way around. "Nice truck," she said as she clicked her seatbelt.

"Thanks. Where did you want to go?"

"I was just going to drive around so it doesn't matter to me."

"Okay, then I will take you somewhere I think you'd like."

Looking across the expanse of the truck interior, Torrye smiled at him. "My life is in your hands."

*If only you truly meant that, Torrye.* Niall winked at her. "Sounds good to me. You look stunning by the way."

Torrye flushed and turned her head away as he started up the powerful Duramax diesel engine. He backed out of his parking space and put them on the road. The quiet strands of country music filled the cab.

Niall glanced over at his passenger. She kept her head averted from his, keeping her gaze out the window as he drove them through town. *Oh, Torrye. If only you realized how much you have come to mean to me since we've met.*

"Where are we going?" her question startled him.

"I thought you'd like to go riding on the beach." He downshifted his truck and changed lanes.

"Riding, as in horses?"

An Unlikely Encounter  
*by Aliyah Burke*

Niall smiled at the excitement in her voice. "That's what I meant, unless..." he sent her a lascivious wink. "...there was something else you wanted to ride on the beach."

Torrye trembled at his not-so-subtle implication. "I don't know," she teased back. "I'd probably get sand in places I don't want to think about."

A jolt shot through his body causing his erection to pulse against the confines of his jeans. "Well, there's always the back of the truck, or a blanket." He slid his gaze over to her.

"The back of a truck, wow ... how romantic." She shook her head.

"It could be, just give me a chance," his silvery voice coaxed her, like a harpist pulling such beautiful music from their instrument.

Those words painted a picture for her that had her lower body shifting on the leather seat to try and control the wetness and the clenching, going on. She bit her lower lip and very decidedly put her gaze on the side streets they were passing.

## Chapter 14

Torrye sat on the back of her buckskin gelding. Her gaze overlooked the water as she waited for Niall to catch up. He rode so well, it was like they were one. His horse was a large bay gelding.

She released a groan of pleasure as her body flooded with longing to have his sensual touch on her again. The closer he got, the wetter she became. Squirming in her saddle she sent him a small smile.

"What do you think?" he asked as he pulled his horse to a halt beside her.

"Thank you so much for bringing me here." Her expression displayed what a wonderful time she was having. "This is something I will never forget."

Niall grinned. "I wanted to give you something special. I had hoped you would like this."

Her brunnese eyes gleamed with mischief and joy. "Well, I love it, even if it isn't my knight in shining armor riding up on his white stallion."

Niall laughed a rich deep sound that echoed throughout her soul. "And here I thought you didn't want a man to do that."

"A girl can change her mind, can't she? There is something romantic about a man on a horse, especially when he knows how to ride."

His voice dropped an octave and stroked her burning synapses. "I know just how to ride, and I would love to show you. Want to ride with me?"

Torrye shivered at what that would mean. "I think I'm safer over here on my horse."

"If you're sure," he relented. His eyes scorched her firm physique as they took in the wind-kissed face and sparkling eyes.

"Not really, but you seem to be up to something." With an easy movement of her wrist she turned her horse and encouraged him to step out and head off down the beach.

"Darling, around you, something is always up," he retorted as his horse fell into step with hers.

Rolling her eyes, she remained silent as they moved down the white sandy beach. Her horse began tossing his head and asking to go faster, so she acquiesced. Soon, Torrye and Niall were running their horses side-by-side through the surf.

Niall rounded the corner first and pulled his horse up. Torrye followed suit and put her eyes on his. "What?"

Swinging down, he tied his horse to a beached log and walked over to her, lifted her out of the saddle and did the same with her horse.

"What's the problem?" Torrye asked as he slid her body down his hard one.

"I want you," he forced out as his mouth claimed hers, immediately sending her body into full-blown longing.

Torrye slid her hands up under his tight tee-shirt, moaning with pleasure as her skin found his. Their tongues dueled for supremacy, and eventually Niall won, setting the pace for the intense kiss.

"Niall," she purred in the back of her throat as his hands covered her full breasts, making the nipples harder than they already were.

"What, baby? I'm right here. I'm not going anywhere." His mouth nibbled all down her lean exposed neck until it reached the collar of her sweatshirt. One strong pull and he left her in her leopard print bra. "Oh, damn, you look hot in that."

He flicked his thumbs over the tight nipples, causing her to jump in reaction. Niall looked down at the woman in his arms. Her head was leaning back, exposing her neck to him. Long hair reached for the sand as her breasts stood up and begged for his touch, barely covered by the silk and lace of her bra. She was holding onto his bare waist not to fall back onto the sand.

"I have never seen anything as erotic as I did today, watching you ride that horse. I've been out here with a raging hard-on because of you," he murmured as his tongue moved down her sternum and between her breasts.

Torrye squirmed beneath his wicked touch. She was burning up. "I'm sorry about that," she panted. "But you weren't the only one suffering."

"Really? Are you saying you're turned on?" Sliding one arm behind her back to support her, Niall allowed his other hand to unfasten the button on her jeans and lower her zipper. "Oooh, matching panties. What a wicked woman you are. Are they wet?"

His fingers slipped inside her soaked panties and flickered across her sensitive clit, making her whimper and jerk.

Torrye gripped his strong forearms harder as she moved her lower body to try and get his fingers where she wanted them ... inside her. "Niall," she begged.

"What? Tell me what turned you on?"

Her voice was weak with passion. "Watching how you rode your horse," she admitted. "Please touch me."

"Did you wish you were on it with me? Wish I was inside you as we moved up and down the beach." His fingers teased her swollen clit as he spoke.

"Yes, oh, yes. I wanted you deep within me as we went fast. I wanted you to pound me as the horse took us all over the beach."

Two fingers dove home inside her. "Good girl for being honest. I would have loved to have done that to you." He maneuvered his arm so he could bring her head up to see him. "Right now, I want to make love to you. On the ground."

The sand wasn't an issue as he removed the rest of her clothing and laid her on the wet beach. All Torrye felt was a mounting desire to have him deep inside her throbbing body. For it was only him who could alleviate the craving she had.

"Yes. Now, Niall." Torrye sat up and reached up to touch his physically powerful torso as he exposed it to her carnal and wanton gaze.

He removed his pants and boxers in no time. His thick erection jutted out from the nest of springy curls at the apex of his thighs, the tip moist with drops of precum. It jerked as she licked her lips in appreciation.

An Unlikely Encounter  
*by Aliyah Burke*

Torrye reached out with one of her hands and wrapped it around his veined cock. The fact they were both naked on a beach in February didn't seem to faze either one of them.

As her hand circled around his erection she sent him a slow, seductive grin and her tongue slid out to wet her full lips. His blue eyes burned with masculine pride and pleasure as he watched her dark skin against his lighter, yet tanned skin.

Torrye reached out and swept her tongue across the bulbous head of his cock. His moan encouraged her to lick and lap at him in the late afternoon sun. Soon, Niall had his hands fisted in her hair as he pumped into her mouth.

He came with a scream to the heavens as his semen shot deep into her throat. Still hard, Niall laid her back on the damp sand and entered her wet, silken body in one swift stroke.

"Oh!" she cried out, over the scream of the seagulls.

"Let me hear it, baby," he encouraged as his hips pounded into her, deeper and deeper.

Torrye dug her fingers into the skin around his shoulders. She didn't even hesitate as he rolled her over to be on top.

"Ride me," he ordered. "Ride me, Torrye."

Shifting her body so she was comfortable, Torrye found a slow rhythm that kept Niall buried deep within her. His hands reached up and palmed her breasts, tugging on her nipples as her hips never relented.

The speed was driving her crazy, but the depth the angle she was at, allowed his cock to reach her in places she

thoroughly enjoyed. Her lids dropped closed as she ground down on the erection that was giving her so much pleasure.

"Perhaps I should try this on horseback," she muttered to the air. A siren's grin filled her face as she felt his cock stiffen inside her. "What do you think?"

"I think I'm about to change my mind about letting you be in control."

She leaned forward, dangling her breasts over his mouth and stopped moving completely. "Want me to stop?"

His eyes darkened as he gripped her hips and began driving up into her. Her mouth latched onto his as she met his thrusts with action of her own. "Fuck me, Niall," she whispered into his mouth.

She felt her body clench as his gaze turned primal. He did just what she asked him to do. Pounded deep and hard into her wet, willing body. Her moans increasing with every pound he delivered to her.

It didn't take long for the two of them to find the pinnacle they were searching for. Hoarse shouts echoed from the sand dunes as they came within moments of one another.

They remained there until the air turned decidedly cooler. Then and only then did they get up from their private area, put their clothes back on, and ride back up the beach to put the horses back at the stable.

Niall kept one hand on her the whole time, as if he believed she would vanish if he didn't touch her. The man at the barn sent them an amused look as he took in the rumpled and sandy clothes they wore.



An Unlikely Encounter  
*by Aliyah Burke*

Before lifting her into the truck, Niall made sure to kiss her senseless. "I want to take you out to dinner tonight," he whispered against her lips.

"I have to change."

"But you will come for dinner? No running away from me?"  
"I'll come to dinner," she promised as her lips sought out and met his firm ones.

## Chapter 15

Torrye walked outside of the hotel. Tomorrow was Valentine's Day and then she was leaving. Leaving the warmth of Texas, leaving a place she had come to enjoy the short time she was there, leaving Niall.

That last one gave her pause. He hadn't said he loved her since that first time. Had he meant it, or was it just blurted out in the heat of passion? Why did it matter?

"Shit," she mumbled. "I don't know what I'm going to do."

"Hey, baby," a masculine voice interrupted her train of thought.

Her cocoa eyes flashed up in panic. Standing before her was none other than Jack. He stood there looking down at her with a suspicious look on his face and trouble lurking in the back of his eyes.

"Jack!" she sputtered. "What are you doing here?" Her heart began to beat erratically as she wondered just what this meant for her safety. After his threatening phone call seeing him was the last thing she wanted to do.

"I came to see my girl, what else. It is after all, almost Valentine's Day. And since you weren't coming back to Buffalo, I decided to come to you." He sent her a smile that held more than a hint of malice.

Torrye shivered as she tried to find her bearings. This wasn't good at all. Clutching the front of her shirt with her hand, Torrye began to back away from him. "I don't think it's a good idea for you to be here. We aren't a couple anymore

and that phone call you gave me scared me. I don't want to see you anymore."

"Now, baby. I didn't mean that call. I was just angry. You know I wouldn't hurt you." His eyes glinted as he stepped towards her. "You wouldn't want me to have wasted my time and money in coming down here now, would you?"

That pricked her temper. "A waste of time and money? What the hell are you thinking?" Her words were delivered in a fast hiss. "I am not dating you. We had one date, that's it. Our relationship ended the second you thought you could boss me around. So I don't care how much time or money you wasted coming here, when you called I made my feelings crystal clear."

Jack clenched his fists and stepped closer yet. "Watch your tone with me," he warned.

One lip curled up. "Why? You are nothing but a bully, Jack. I don't know why I went out with you in the first place. I am not dating you and I sure as hell don't want to see you, so just go somewhere and leave me alone, before I have you removed from the premises." Torrye didn't back down an inch, her anger overriding her fear.

Anger filled his dark gaze. "Women don't dump me, Torrye. If anyone does the ending, it's me. And that's once they are no longer of use to me." His tone dropped to a low growl.

"Well, then consider this your first time. Congrats, you just got your cherry popped on being dumped." Her brown eyes were in narrow slits. "Now leave," she warned.

In a flash his strong hand was gripping the upper part of her arm, squeezing it hard enough to bring tears to her eyes. "Don't start something you can't finish, Torrye. You can't beat me. I am so much stronger than you."

"If you don't take your fuckin' hand off her arm, I will bury you." a thick drawling voice intervened.

Both Jack and Torrye looked to who had intruded. It was Niall, and the look on his face made her feel like they were in Greenland instead of Texas.

If anything Jack tightened his hold on her, causing her to wince in pain. "Who the hell are you?" he snapped as he pulled a reluctant Torrye closer to his large body.

One arm, strengthened by years of working on an oil rig reached out and clamped down on the wrist of the man holding Torrye. Niall began to squeeze until the man swore and let go of the woman he held. "I told you to let her go," the words were delivered with finality.

Torrye scrambled back from Jack and her eyes flickered back and forth between the two men there. There was a gleam in Niall's blue eyes that she had never seen before. It was pure rage, and he wanted to hurt the man he held onto.

"Niall, don't, please." Torrye tried to reach him.

"Who the hell taught you how to treat a woman?" Niall snarled at the man before him, ignoring Torrye.

"Let go of me, man," Jack protested.

"Not so tough, now that there is someone who can kick your ass causing you problems, are you?" Niall applied more pressure making the man squirm under him.

"Man," Jack snapped. "I'm warning you, don't make me hurt you."

A humorless laugh erupted from Niall. "I'd like to see that."

"Who the hell are you?"

"I'm the man defending the woman you dared to touch."

Niall abruptly dropped the arm and stepped back to haul Torrye up to his side. Tipping her face up to his, he wiped away the tears that leaked out and asked her, "Are you okay?"

Security like she had never felt before encased her like a cloud. "I will be," she tried to assure the man holding her in his embrace.

Niall looked down at her arm and his eyes went from gentle to feral in less than a second. Before Torrye could blink, Niall had landed a direct punch into Jack's face.

Blood spurted as a sickening crunch filled the morning air. Jack stumbled back cupping his nose and moaning in pain. As he sank to his knees, Niall stood over him, "You bastard. You are so lucky that's all I'm going to do to you. You bruised her."

Torrye looked down at her arm and saw the impression of Jack's fingers around her bicep. While she was touched that Niall wanted to protect her, she couldn't let him continue to hit Jack. "Niall, please. No more."

Angry blue eyes snapped back to her, softened a bit before he stepped away from the bleeding man on the ground. "Very well, Torrye." He knelt down and faced the man looking at him with murder in his eyes. "You come anywhere near her

again, and she won't stop me from kicking your ass. Are we clear?"

Stumbling to his feet, Jack nodded. His brown eyes shot daggers over to where Torrye stood but he moved off through the parking lot and got in a car. Niall didn't relax his stance until the car had left the hotel parking lot.

Torrye blinked as Niall filled her line of sight. "Are you sure you're okay, baby?"

"I'm fine. Just a bit shook up." she managed to say without shaking.

As if he knew, Niall gathered her into his arms and pressed her head to his chiseled chest. "I'm sorry I didn't get here sooner, Torrye."

"Thanks for helping me, but you can't be punching people in the face." She stepped back and frowned up at him.

Niall sent her a bland look, telling her he really didn't give a damn about hitting him. "He bruised you and made you cry, he's lucky that's all I did to him." Gathering her chin in his hand, he asked, "Who was he?"

"A guy I had gone on a date with in Buffalo."

"What was he doing here?"

"He didn't take too kindly to our breakup and since he wasn't the one who did the breaking up, figured it didn't happen. So he flew here to be with me on Valentine's Day." Torrye shuddered as the look in his eyes flashed through her memory.

"So he threatened you?" Niall's voice dropped another few degrees as his corded muscles began to ripple with desire to inflict pain on someone.

An Unlikely Encounter  
*by Aliyah Burke*

"Something like that," Torrye admitted quietly. "No, Niall. I don't need you in jail because you hit him again."

"So you *do* care what happens to me?" The anger left his gaze to be replaced by mischief and admiration.

"I never said that," she retorted.

## Chapter 16

Niall grabbed her closer to the hardened planes of his body. His strong fingers dug into the flesh of her buttocks as he ground against her.

"Niall," she panted. "Stop this. We're outside, someone could be watching."

He waggled his eyebrows and moved them out of the wide-open to behind a small grove of trees. "This better?"

"Not really," Torrye responded.

Ignoring her, Niall began tugging up her shirt. "Look at you. You are so damn beautiful. The sunlight loves your body."

The professional in Torrye wanted him to stop but the woman in her took over and she didn't fight his hands. Her own fingers began undoing the button on his jeans. "Shut up, Niall."

Niall smirked as he pulled her shirt totally off her body and let it fall to the manicured grass, leaving her in her yellow bra, skirt, and heels. His mouth grew dry as he let his eyes rove over her.

Torrye froze as he just stood there. "What's wrong?" she asked in a hushed voice.

"You are so beautiful. I just wanted to look at you." Her body dappled by the sunlight that made it through the trees to land on her exposed skin.

Flushing, Torrye continued with her own quest; holding his erection in her hands. Carefully she lowered the zipper and



took out his veined cock. It bobbed in her hand and unconsciously she licked her lips in anticipation.

"I want that," her words were soft but had the force of a mule's kick. Mindless of her skirt, Torrye sank to the ground before him and took him in her mouth.

"Oh shit," Niall groaned as her warm mouth slid over his hard length. "Torrye," he panted as his hips began to pump into her willing mouth.

Her eyes were closed as she enjoyed the treat she was feasting on. How she loved the taste of him. Her tongue ran up and down the underside of his throbbing cock as her mouth sucked.

Once his hips began moving faster, she reached up with her hands and gripped his solid thighs. She moaned as he drove home into her mouth. It didn't take long and he was coming deep within her mouth, sending steams of sperm down her throat.

Still hard, Niall pulled out of her mouth, brought her to her feet, turned her around, bending her at the waist over his arm, jerked up her skirt, ripped her thong off and drove into her dripping pussy in one thrust.

"Oh, Niall!" she hissed as he filled her body.

"You are a wicked woman, Torrye. Wicked." He delivered pounding thrust after thrust into her. The only reason she didn't fall face first into the ground was the arm around her midsection.

"Harder, Niall," her words were garbled. "Harder."

"Brace your hands on your knees," he ordered as he put his hands on her hips.

Torrye did as commanded, her bent position allowing him deeper penetration. Blood was rushing to her head, and she didn't give a damn. All she cared about was the man behind, fucking her outside of the hotel she worked at. She wanted more of his thick erection inside her. She wanted him to make her see stars in the way only he could do.

"Good girl. Tell me what you want, baby."

"More, Niall, more," she answered him immediately. Feeling wanton, sexy and downright desirable.

"More what?"

"What you're giving me. Your cock," she panted.

His body quivered as he fought back the need to come inside at that second. "It's all for you, baby."

"Harder Niall." She begged. Her orgasm was just out of reach and she desperately wanted to get to it.

Niall complied and before long she was almost cresting over the edge, when he stopped abruptly. "Someone's coming," he hissed.

"Niall," Torrye complained. She could care less if the president was approaching.

"Stay quiet and they'll never know we're here," he ordered.

She shook her head in understanding and just about screamed when he began to move again. It wasn't a slow move within her; he slammed to the hilt within her. He shushed her whimper.

"Not a word, Torrye. Not unless you want the patrons of this hotel to see you being impaled on the cock of a guest. My thick cock." He stroked in and out a few more times. "But

maybe that would turn you on, being watched by all those who know you to be so proper. Is that it? You want them to see you all flushed and pleased?"

"No. please, Niall. Let me come." Torrye couldn't follow much of anything.

"Yes, baby. Time for you to come." He increased the speed and force of his strokes.

For the most part, Torrye remained silent, but every now and then a small squeak would escape. Closer and closer the couple got until they sat down on a bench not far from where Niall and Torrye hid.

Niall pulled out of Torrye's body and turned her body around, lifted her and impaled her on his cock before she could voice her complaint. Her arms latched around his neck and their mouths locked in their own embrace.

"Look how close they are to us," he whispered as his hips pistoned his erection in and out of her.

Her brown eyes glanced over and she recognized the couple as they cuddled on the bench. Soon her eyes drifted closed as the pleasure that Niall was giving her overtook all her senses.

Niall could feel her body tightening around him and he knew she was going to scream when she came. At the last second his mouth covered hers and he took her scream in the depths of his mouth.

Moments later he exploded deep within her and moaned his release into her mouth. Legs weak and hearts pounding, Niall lowered her carefully to the ground. They lay in silence until their hearts slowed down.

They could hear snatches of the conversation the couple was having. Niall handed her the scraps of her thong with an arrogant smile. "Let's get going," he whispered as he helped her maintain her balance.

They headed out of the woods and moved past the couple on the bench with a 'good morning' and nothing more. Torrye was blushing as she stepped into the elevator to head up to her room.

She had to clean up; she had a meeting later on this morning with the department heads of the hotel. Niall got in the same elevator and as soon as the doors closed he stepped towards her.

"No!" she hissed. "There are cameras in here."

Rolling his shoulders, Niall leaned against the wall. "I want to be inside you again. Damn it, Torrye. I'm rock hard again."

"Shut up, Niall." Torrye kept her eyes on the door and tried not to show his words were affecting her.

He got off at his floor only stopping long enough to give her a long heated look. Once the door closed behind him, she heaved a sigh of relief.

Torrye sat in the meeting, but her mind was on Niall making love to her outside. The fact she had almost been caught had only added to the excitement. She shifted as her body grew damp.

She was nothing more than a hussy when it came to Niall. All she wanted was to be taken over and over by him. Held in his arms and kissed by his lips. That man made her feel so complete it wasn't even funny.

An Unlikely Encounter  
*by Aliyah Burke*

The clearing of a throat made her realize she wasn't focusing on the meeting at all. Shoving all her lustful thoughts to the back of her mind, Torrye spent the rest of the day in meetings turning over control of the hotel to Marco and the heads of separate departments.

## Chapter 17

### *Valentine's Day...*

Torrye looked around the main lobby of the hotel. They were ready for the big party tonight. Reds, pinks and whites were everywhere. Balloons, streamers, and candy as well. The guest list was full, and she had booked the well-know group, *IL DIVO*, to sing for the guests. *The Pantheon* was a hit.

The hotel was up and running and, after tonight, she would be on a plane heading back to her lonely life in New York. A life without spontaneity. A life without love. A life without Niall O'Cinneide.

Torrye felt her insides shift into mush as she watched his hard physique walk into her line of sight. He moved easily through the crowd and from where she was standing she was able to witness every motion he portrayed.

Her world slowed to a stop when a buxom brunette ran up to him and jumped into his arms. Torrye felt like passing out as that woman's lips touched his. Without waiting to see anymore she turned and ran like a coward.

Niall reached out instinctively to steady the body that jostled his. Too late he realized that it was an ex-girlfriend of his. As her collagen-injected lips hit his, he saw Torrye out of the corner of his eye and witnessed her quick retreat.

"Get the hell off me!" he swore, shoving her away from him. "What are you doing?"

Mercedes Sidell tilted her head to the side. "What's the matter with you, Niall honey? I thought you would be happy

to see me. I got the news of you losing that place you called a home and came down to make sure you were okay. And help you find a place to live."

Niall searched frantically around to catch a glimpse of Torrye. Not seeing her, he turned his attention back to the woman clamoring for his attention.

"That place burned down about two weeks ago, Mercedes. You don't care about my wellbeing. You just think that I'm going to take you back, don't think I don't know what day it is." He narrowed his eyes at her. "I am *not* getting back into a relationship with you."

Her bottom lip, which looked too big for her face, stuck out as she tried to do a little girl pout. "But, Niall ... I realize I made a big mistake. I want you to forgive me and let's start over." She trailed her fingers over his gray cotton tee-shirt.

He gripped her wrist in a viselike hold. "No! Listen to me. I don't want to be with you, all you want is my money and you aren't going to get it. Now go away and let me go fix the damage you have done."

Her green eyes narrowed. "You have someone else then? Do they know what you do, how you are gone for weeks at a time? You know they just want your money as well," she hissed.

In that moment, Niall saw Mercedes for what she truly was ... a very ugly woman. "I'm sorry that is how you live your life. I hope you find a man who will give what you want, but that man isn't me, Mercedes. I am in love with a wonderful woman, and I hope you didn't ruin it for me by your actions. Good luck in your life, but I no longer want you in mine.

Goodbye, Mercedes." He sent her a small smile and headed off toward Torrye's office.

Marco was in the office when Niall walked in after knocking. "She's not here, Niall."

A feeling of doom settled around his heart at those words. Niall looked at the man he had considered his rival. "Do you know where she is?"

"Yep." Marco leaned back in his chair and stared blankly at the tall man his friend had fallen for.

"Well?' Niall asked, with considerable strain.

"She's gone for the rest of the day. She left a few moments ago and won't be back until the concert and ball tonight."

"Damn it!" Niall swore. He couldn't stop that curse from leaving his mouth no matter how hard he tried to stop it.

"You know, she doesn't usually like doing what she is doing right now. What'd you do to her?"

"Nothing!" he snapped.

"That's the same bullshit line she gave me. But, I'll let it go since I have a hotel to manage. I'm just waiting for her to tell me you hurt her. All she said was she was sad about leaving, and I'm not buying it."

Marco waved one hand at Niall, who took the hint and got ready to leave the room. At the door he stopped and turned back to the overly smug man behind the desk. "I need your help with something," Niall swallowed his pride and asked.

Black brows arched as Marco gestured him back to a seat. "Do tell."

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Torrye stood by her packed bags and smoothed down her dress. She wore a rich coral-colored dress that hugged every curve of her body and stopped just above her knees. Her hair was up in a French twist with pieces on either side of her face loose to soften the look.

Around her neck sat a gold necklace with a heart pendant. Simple gold teardrops hung in her ears. "Get a grip, Torrye," she admonished herself as she looked at her reflection in the mirror. "You were just a passing fancy for him. It's Valentine's Day. Do this and get on that plane for home."

She still hurt, for she loved that man. Although she had never said those words out loud to him, it was how she felt. "I will always love him," she admitted to her mirror image.

A deep breath and she skimmed her reflection one more time. "Ready?" she asked herself. With an answering nod, she slipped her feet into her three-inch heels and walked out the door, to head to the amphitheatre to begin the concert.

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"So, to finish up," Torrye said with a smile at the huge crowd gathered at her hotel. "I just wanted to welcome everyone to *The Pantheon*. I know I am not who you came to hear, so I am finished. I hope your Valentine's Day is wonderful and I know you will enjoy the music of this group, who defines love and romance. Please welcome to *The Pantheon ... IL DIVO*." Torrye grinned at the huge standing ovation that they got as the four men walked out on stage. Each one gave her a kiss on the cheek.

An Unlikely Encounter  
by Aliyah Burke

Standing to the side, Torrye let her eyes skim over the couples in attendance. Snuggling with their partners, holding hands, it was all so romantic. And as sad as her heart was, she was very proud of her accomplishment. This was what she did, and the hotel had been successfully opened with a bang. It's just now after the concert it was time for her to leave.

"Great job," Marco whispered beside her.

"Thanks. You look very handsome tonight," she said.

Marco wore an Armani tuxedo.

"And you are stunning." He kissed her gently on the cheek.

"Why don't you stay? You know you could work from here. Texas suits you, and Heather would agree to it."

"There's nothing to stay for," Torrye said sadly.

Before Marco could respond, Torrye was called out onto the stage by the group. Walking back out, she accepted the rose from Carlos. "We wanted to thank the lovely hostess who allowed us to come here," he spoke in his accented voice.

Then they began to sing *Somewhere*. Torrye tried to back out of the limelight but the men surrounded her and kept her there. As they sang, there was a lone spotlight that swung out toward the edge of the crowd.

It landed upon a man that sat upon a large white stallion. It was Niall. The light followed him as he nudged the horse towards her and the stage. He was dressed in a black tuxedo and carried a single red rose in his hand.

Up the steps of the stage, he guided the horse to stop before them. The closer he got, the singers moved back, so it was just Torrye and Niall in the spotlight. Silent and only

surrounded by the amazing tones of *IL DIVO*, Niall handed her the rose.

Torrye looked up at him with tears in her eyes. And in his she read all she needed to know, his love for her. Blinking back tears, she smelled the rose and froze. Inside, adhered to the center of the rose was a diamond ring.

She took it out and glanced back up at Niall, who mouthed, "Marry me," at her. Nodding, Torrye let him slide it on her finger as the cheers from the crowd grew to deafening proportions. Her eyes caught Marco's as he stood to the side with a smile on his face.

David appeared beside her and lifted her up into Niall's waiting arms. The second she was across his lap, his mouth was on hers, sealing their love and fate for all to see. Pulling away from her mouth, Niall made sure she was secure in his lap before he touched his heels to the horse, who jumped off the stage and took them away from the amphitheatre with his butter-smooth gait and the fading sounds of romantic music.

He rode until they were alone in the gardens of the hotel. "I love you, Torrye Melissa Jamieson."

"I love you, too, Niall." She slid her arms around his waist, letting her head settle against his chest. "I have since I met you."

His heart pounded, it was the first time she had said that to him. "Don't leave me, I don't know how we will work out living arrangements, but I don't want to go another day without you in my life."

"I'll stay. I don't want to leave you."

His lips brushed across the top of her head. "When I saw you down here I swore I wasn't going to let you go, again. I thank God everyday that we met." She chuckled as she remembered their first meeting. "Happy Valentine's Day, sweetheart."

Torrye snuggled closer to his marbled physique as they sat on the back of the horse in the evening. It was the best Valentine's Day she had ever had and it was all thanks to an unlikely encounter.

THE END

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