

The Three Sister Series

Northern Exposure

By

Stephanie Williams



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ISBN: 978-1-60435-375-4 Cover Artist: Shirley Burnett

Editor: C.A.Hubbard Line Editor: WRFG

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Red Rose™ Publishing www.redrosepublishing.com Forestport, NY 13338

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Chapter One

Brit got off the phone in her office and started doing the "Happy Dance." She immediately stopped mid twirl, when one of the secretaries walked past her open door.

"Good news I take it?" the older woman asked with a sheepish smile.

"My vacation starts today," Brit said as she began packing her office. "That call was the last call of the day."

"And where are we going this time? Paris, Milan, Rome? Oh, or Athens. Or are you doing something totally different to throw us off, like staying in Los Angeles?" She smiled.

Brit's travel itinerary was notorious around the office and it wasn't just because she was Editor-in-Chief of *Colorful Travel Magazine*, a weekly geared to the African-American woman who wanted to satisfy her wanderlust.

Her parents had a lot to do with her need to travel. An army brat, the world had been her home. In fact, her parents thought it would be cute to name her and her sisters after places they were stationed. Her father loved France and therefore Brittany became her moniker.

Brit had traveled to every continent, including Antarctica. When she did take a vacation, it was the usual: Spain, Greece, France. However, her activities were anything but. Last year, she ran with the bulls in Spain and made a quick trip to South Africa to bungee jump over Victoria Falls.

Her sisters hated her. Well, not really. But they fumed every now and then, after hearing about one of Brit's escapades overseas.

This time would be different. She just wanted to relax, unwind and regroup.

Right now, the hard part was figuring out where she wanted to go.

She needed to reflect on her life. She was only twenty-seven, but the pressure from her parents to find "that special someone" was getting a bit heated.

As the middle child, she thought she'd had it free and clear for the past couple of years. They were bugging Sydney, the eldest, for a good minute. But after Sydney basically ignored their pleas, they began to focus on Brit. Oh joy. She was hoping to apply the same tactic and have them focus on Atlanta.

No such luck—yet. Besides, Atlanta was the baby; they probably couldn't stomach the idea of her settling down and having crumb snatchers.

Of course, that wouldn't be such a bad idea for Atlanta. She was a wild child and needed some stability. Brit, on the other hand, would physically put her life in danger for the sake of saying she tried something once. Hmm, maybe she did need to settle down.

Oh, well. At least she was going to be out of earshot of her parents for at least a month. They were out of the country and she would be too, and their paths would not cross. Kinda hard when they were backpacking in the mountains of Morocco.

Her phone rang, interrupting her thoughts.

"Brittany Reese speaking, may I help you?"

"Hey Brit, it's Kyle."

Ew. Brit's ex-boyfriend. Figures he would call now. "Yeah Kyle, what do you want?"

"Just wanted to know what you're doing tonight. Thought maybe we catch a show and dinner."

"Actually, I was just about to call my sisters to let them know that I start my vacation today. So sorry, I'm booked for a month." *A lifetime for you, buddy.* Why had she agreed to remain friends with him?

"Vacation? Hey, what a coincidence, I start mine too, next week. Where to? Paris, London...?"

"Finland!" she blurted.

"Finland? Man, you know my skin doesn't do well in cold. My eczema acts up. And it stays cold up there, even in August. It's only fifty degrees!"

I know. That's why I thought of it at the last minute. "Oh, that's too bad, and I'll be there the whole month," she said, trying to sound as sincerely disappointed as possible. She couldn't wipe the cheese-eating grin off her face.

"But why Finland?" She heard him sigh. Poor baby. Not!

"Oh, I just wanted to go someplace not so predictable. Paris, Rome, been there, done that."

"You went to Finland two years ago, three times."

"That was work related. I'm relaxing and going to enjoy the Finnish cuisine."

"Hmm. Well, you know, if I get some medication from the dermatologist, maybe I can join you."

Crud! Think fast, Brit. "Yeah, yeah. I can't wait to try some of the reindeer meat and blood sausages."

Silence.

"Kyle?"

"Reindeer? As in Rudolf? And blood sausage as in-blood?"

"Yeah, that's what they eat. They got this fish gut thing going, too, that I want to try. At least you can wash it down with straight grain alcohol."

"Um...you know something? I might have to sit this one out."

"Oh?"

"Yeah, tell you what, when our vacations connect again, I'll call you. Um, have a good time and call me when you get back."

He disconnected, fast. It sounded like he was about to throw up.

Lord knows, she wanted to. There was no way in hell she was eating reindeer meat. She was going to stay in a five-star hotel and dine on the best fare the Finns could bring her.

Now all she had to do was actually make a reservation for a flight.

Finland! Damn. She had been to Finland many times and loved it. But Milan would have been her first choice. Well, she would just take plenty of sweaters. As Kyle said, it's cold even in August.

But first she had to call little sis and big sis. She activated her speakerphone and got them on three-way.

"Hey, girl!" her sisters said in unison.

"Hey, Atlanta, hey, Sydney."

"What's going on?" Syd asked.

"I am going on a vacation."

Silence.

"Uh, hello?"

"So what else is new?" piped in Atlanta.

"It's a non-working vacation. Really."

"Yeah, right," Syd said with obvious disbelief.

"No, really, I'm going to Finland."

"Finland!" they yelled.

"Yeah, well, it was sort of spur of the moment."

"It must have been. What happened to, 'I need to get my shop on every time I go overseas?' Remember what you brought back last time you went to one of those cold countries?" Syd asked.

Sweaters. Brit bristled. "Okay, so Finland is not the fashion capital of the world. But it's a very nice, clean country."

"Whatever." Atlanta chuckled.

"Anyway, I wanted to tell you guys not to give Kyle my whereabouts in Finland no matter how desperate he sounds."

"Uh-oh, he called again, girl?" Syd asked.

"Yes, and his vacation starts too, that's why I mentioned Finland."

"Smart girl," Atlanta said with approval. "He has that skin condition."

Syd and Brit giggled. "He also got a stomach condition after I described the native fare," Brit laughed.

"Not the fish guts!" Atlanta screamed.

They all laughed.

"Anyway, Finland won't be that bad. It's still kinda offseason, so I'll have the run of the entire country."

"Look out, Finns," Syd said, still laughing.

"This will give me a chance to unwind and have time to myself for a change,"

Brit said, checking last minute items on her To Do list.

"So no crazy antics?" Syd asked, disappointment in her voice.

"Nope. This is a stress-free vacation."

"Let's give the girl a hand," Atlanta said.

All three laughed and continued their conversation. Most of it centered around their parents, and how they had gone gallivanting on camelback in the mountains of Morocco.

Soon after Brit got off the phone, she said goodbye to her employees and made a beeline to her car. Whistling to herself as she drove home, she thought, *Yep*, *life is good*. The more she thought about Finland and the Nordic region in general, the happier she got. "I think I might take a short cruise to Norway too. Just me and the fjords." She wasn't going to do a thing but be lazy in her hotel room and watch Finnish television.

It was ironic; she chose this place just to throw Kyle off the scent. But, this was going to be the best vacation she ever had.

Chapter Two

Helsinki was unusually warm this August with temperatures hitting about sixty degrees. But Brit didn't mind; it was a welcome relief. She had been cooped up in her room since her arrival, so seeing the sun out and actually heating the earth was refreshing.

Now she could hit the clothing-optional beach.

Brit was always of the opinion that instead of wearing string that cut into your butt crack and strips of fabric that scratch your nipples, you might as well go naked. In Europe, no one really looks at you anyway.

Brit strolled down to the beach with her umbrella, magazine, blanket and iPod. She set up her spot and got comfortable on her blanket. She placed the magazine over her face, stuck the ear buds in her ears, and listened to the glorious voice of Luciano Pavarotti. Ten minutes later, she was on her way to dreamland.

This was the life. No worries. No nagging parents. No annoying, geeky exboyfriend. No drama.

"Hello there."

At first she didn't respond. She was in that state of sleep between deep REM and half awake.

"Hello? Miss?" The voice was insistent, deep and masculine.

Masculine!

It wasn't until she felt a nudge on her shoulder that Brit threw off the magazine, and sat up on her elbows. What she was looking at could only be described as mythical beauty.

He was large, muscular, gorgeous and...nekkid!

Oh God!

"Sorry to wake you, but I just couldn't take the chance of missing you again."

Brit blinked rapidly. She really didn't hear him. She just looked straight into his huge, sea-green eyes and watched the movement of his sensuous, full mouth.

It wasn't until he shifted in the sand next to her, that she realized they were both nekkid!

"I beg your pardon?" she squeaked.

"I've noticed you at the hotel, but you were always on the move or locked up in your room. I wanted to visit you, but thought it would be rude of me to just come knocking on your door uninvited."

Of course, and approaching me buck-naked is better.

Brit reached for her clothing, but as she did so, she began to notice every ripple of muscle belonging to her naked intruder.

Every muscle.

She leaned back down on her elbows. Heck, it was too late now; he had already seen his fill of her.

"I...uh...I see. Well...."

"Please, how rude of me. Let me introduce myself. My name is Sebastian Jalo."

"Brittany Reese. I prefer Brit." She watched as he extended his hand. She was still trying not to stare at this statue-come-to-life, but he was beauty personified. Thick, blonde, wavy hair, piercing eyes and a body that was just unreal.

He was a merman washed ashore.

After she finished a mental inventory of this sea god, she reached for his hand and grasped it tightly, as though holding it would help take her mind off other body parts.

"Pleasure to finally meet you. You must really like Finland. This is your fourth trip here isn't it?"

"Four...." Now how did he know that? Great. A naked stalker.

"Don't look so alarmed. My uncle runs the hotel where you stay, and I must say you are hard not to notice."

"Oh really?" Brit said, not hiding the accusatory tone in her voice.

"Not for the obvious reasons of course, but for your beauty and something else. You have a boldness about you that I like. Most Americans shy away from a nude beach."

"Well, I" NUDE!!!

She kept forgetting that she was naked too. She sat up straighter and grabbed the end of the blanket and brought it toward her breast. But it didn't reach.

Sebastian gave her a wicked grin, then dropped his eyes. "I'm sorry if you feel a bit uncomfortable...."

"Oh, no!" she chuckled nervously. "There was a chill in the air. Ahem...uh...so, your uncle manages the hotel. How nice."

"Yeah. But what I really came here to ask you was what you're doing later today?"

Is this guy trying to pick me up? Naked?

"Uh...nothing that I know of."

"Great! Do you horseback ride? Of course you do, any woman that can relax on a nude beach can certainly ride a horse!"

"I can't see how the two are related unless I'm Lady Godiva."

Sebastian laughed. The corners of his eyes crinkled and every muscle in his well-defined body moved.

"That's pretty funny." He shifted some more, this time the obvious couldn't be hid any longer.

Oh. My. God!

Trying to be nonchalant, Brit reached for her magazine. "Um... so what do you do, I mean, what kind of work?"

Sebastian smiled again, and he must have decided it was time to get more comfortable. He lay on his side in the sand. "I'm a graphic artist. You?"

"Ah..." She couldn't think for staring at him. Now she could really see him in all his glory. Damn!

His legs were long and muscular with a sprinkling of fine blond hair. His chest and abs were unbelievable. He must do weights. His pecs were smooth and bare, which she liked. She noticed his nipples and how hard they looked. She wanted to smooth her hand over those massive pecs!

Her gaze traveled downward to see that his knees were nearly wide open. He was just lying on his side as if he were at home watching a ballgame.

He was big. He was thick. He was beautiful. He was...erect!

Mercy!

As she openly stared at his massive length, there was something else she noticed. He was cut.

Most Europeans and foreigners, with the exception of Israelis for religious reasons, were uncircumcised. Well, she wasn't going to ask. It was bad enough that she found herself drooling over a stranger's cock!

Brit remembered that he had asked a question. "I'm a magazine editor. This is the magazine." Brit began looking for it. "Ah, see." She held it up in front of her face. Anything to create a barrier between her and his little—scratch that—big friend.

"Beautiful cover. May I see it?"

"Uh...sure." As Brit handed it to him, a runaway beach ball landed between them. Followed by two rambunctious kids.

"Sorry!" one of the wayward kids yelled as they chased the ball into the ocean.

After the interruption, Brit brushed most of the sand off her body and then looked for the magazine. When she didn't see it on the blanket, she looked to Sebastian. "Where's the...?"

Oh...my...God!

She found the magazine. Perched on Sebastian's penis.

"Um...you...ca...can keep that, if you like."

Sebastian flashed a smile that could outshine the Aurora Borealis. "Thanks, I will." He casually picked up the magazine and began flipping through it. He shifted again, and this time his penis was pointed right at her.

This thing had a mind of its own. It points, it catches magazines. What other wondrous things could it do?

Just then an image came to her mind. She didn't know what she wanted to do, suck it or faint. She knew one thing, however; she had to get him out of her sight. There was only so much a woman could take.

"Um...wouldn't you prefer to read that over, I don't know, over your dinner tonight?" she said quickly.

"I would love to have dinner with you. I can pick you up around seven."

Hold up. Did she just invite him to have dinner with *her*? And did he just assume she was asking him out? Brit thought she was used to foreigners being bold, but when it was directed at her, it seemed rude. "I guess seven would be fine," she found herself saying anyway.

"Great! I'll just take this," he lifted up the magazine, "and finish reading it." He winked. "I would love to read it *before* dinner. It would give me a heads up, so to speak," he chuckled.

"Well, that doesn't seem fair. I won't know anything about you before dinner," Brit said. *Although your dick and I seem to be getting along quite well.*

"That shouldn't be a problem."

"How so?"

"Everyone knows me here." With that, he got up, brushed the sand from his muscular body, and strolled back to the hotel.

Brit watched him as he made his way back.

Good Golly, Miss Molly!

If there was ever the perfect male ass, it was his. And those powerful-looking thighs and strong back weren't anything to sneeze at, either.

Brit couldn't help but smile to herself. She had checked out a naked, drop-dead gorgeous man without having to sleep with him! How cool was that?

Speaking of sleeping with, she leaned back on her elbows and thought a moment. His body looked like it could do all kinds of tricks. From what she had seen of his...ahem...friend, it looked like it could work some magic, too.

"Ooh, Brit, you need to stop. You came here to relax, not get caught up in some torrid affair with a stranger."

She threw herself back down on the blanket and reached for her magazine.

Damn it!

Merman had it.

She flipped over on her stomach and rested her head on her crossed arms. She needed to pull herself together. Why was she letting this brief encounter with a regular guy on the beach get to her?

Probably because there was nothing regular about him.



Sebastian returned to his room and headed straight to the shower to wash off the sand.

As he began lathering his skin, he thought about the ebony beauty who had lain on the sands of his favorite beach.

Exquisite.

He had been so excited when he'd seen her walking down from the hotel.

He just couldn't believe his eyes. This had to be her favorite hotel when she visited

Finland. He had seen her before, many times, however, never on the beach.

But then he might have just missed her. He was always busy, and he hadn't had a chance to take a real vacation in the past two years.

This year was different. He was on sort of a sabbatical. Trying to get his life in order. Trying to figure out if there was more to life than his job.

He loved his profession, but he hadn't been inspired in a long time. Until now.

He stepped out of the shower, dried off and wrapped the towel round his waist. He went into the bedroom and picked up Brit's magazine.

Brittany. What a beautiful name.

He began flipping through the pages. It looked like your garden-variety travel magazine, but as she'd said, it was geared toward African-American women. Interesting.

He wondered what other places she had visited. He liked a well-traveled woman and it was unusual to see an American who was so well traveled. He wasn't trying to make a blanket observation. But when ninety percent of foreigners carried a passport compared to only thirty percent of Americans, it was refreshing to see.

And he had to admit it was nice to see such an open, carefree woman. A lot of tourists were skittish of clothing-optional beaches. Not her. She looked more comfortable than the natives. Until he approached her. He noticed immediately how self-conscious she became when he sat talking with her. Which meant one thing. She was attracted to him.

Normally, people just acted as they would if they had on clothing while carrying on a conversation. But he noticed the *way* she had looked at him—or tried not to look at him. How cute.

He hadn't been immune either.

Her body was perfection. Smooth, silky brown skin. He'd had to grab her magazine to focus on something else, otherwise, he would have had her right there on the beach.

Finland was open, but not *that* open. Tonight, however, he would get closer to his goal. Dinner, dancing, and hopefully, back to his hotel room.

Chapter Three

"Hey Susan, how's the office?"

"Girl, if you don't stop worrying. And do you know what time it is?"

Brit looked over at the clock, then winced. She kept forgetting about the time difference. This magazine was her baby and she had left it in the hands of other people, so she called and checked in every once in a while.

"About four o'clock in the morning. Sorry, my bad. I was just getting ready to go out to dinner."

"The chickens haven't even put on their underwear yet and—going out to dinner!"

Sigh. Brit kept forgetting how her personal life seemed to be everyone's business at the office.

"Yeah, well, let me let you go back to sleep. And tell Edward to do the copy for the Africans in Ancient Rome feature."

"Wait, wait, don't hang up. Are you going out to dinner with someone or by yourself?"

Brit took the receiver with both hands and began choking it. It was a habit she picked up from little sis, treating the phone like the actual person she wanted to harm. "Look, go back to sleep. I will talk to you later."

"Okay, just give me details when you call back."

Brit rolled her eyes and hung up. She looked at the clock and began getting herself together. She was running a bit late.

She was a little nervous, yet she was beyond curious. She had never dated a Finn before. Heck, she had never dated a Scandinavian. She had always perceived them to be too...pale.

In every Scandinavian and Nordic country she had been to, the natives looked like want ads for SPF 80.

Sebastian didn't. His body had a light dusting of a golden bronze tan. His blond hair was bleached blond on top but darker underneath. She had always liked that look.

The image of him naked floated through her mind. It couldn't be helped, considering that's how he was when they met.

Now they were going to dinner, imagining who knew what. How would she break the ice? What was there to talk about? The interesting birthmark on his balls?

Brit threw herself backwards on her bed and stared up at the ceiling. Why was she shocked? No matter what country she went to, something insane always happened. Just add this to the "The Crazy Adventures of Brittany."



Once she triple checked herself in the mirror, Brit was satisfied with her look. The temperature had dropped dramatically in a few hours, and it was forty degrees with a wind chill of twenty.

She had on a tight-fitting sweater dress with a cowl neck, her furry Giuseppe Zanotti boots, and her hair in a loose French roll. Her makeup was impeccable. She wore her favorite red lipstick and her diva mink false eyelashes. She was good to go.

She was about to do one last compulsive check in the mirror when she heard a knock on her door. "Yes?"

"It's Sebastian."

Brit's stomach actually did a flip-flop.

She opened the door.

Sha-zam!

Okay, she knew what he looked like naked, but clothed he was absolutely immoral looking. Snug jeans encasing muscular thighs and a tight ass. A bluish-

green, light cable knit that begged you to rip it off. Yep. This is what God intended when he made man.

"H-Hello," she managed to squeak.

"Hi, there. May I come in or are you coming out?" he asked, smiling.

His smile was so spectacular. Brit thought she would faint right there. That sweater was driving her crazy. It was trying hard to contain every muscle on that chest.

He was a tall man, at least six-four, but then Nordic men were among the tallest in Europe. She hadn't noticed that before. Kinda hard to do when she had been concentrating on other...ahem...traits. "Please come in," she finally said, stepping back.

Sebastian walked past her and the smell of his cologne and maleness went straight to her brain, nearly frying it.

This was going to be an interesting dinner.



Sebastian tried to do everything to stop himself from grabbing her and kissing the hell out of her. Her lips were begging to be kissed, and kissed hard. He also had to stop himself from laughing. It seemed that Brit had made an extra effort to cover herself.

Admittedly, it was a bit chilly outside, and maybe she wasn't used to the sudden drop in temperature. And even though the sweater dress accented every luscious, decadent curve of her body, the cowl neck was a bit too much.

He knew what was under there. It wasn't like he could forget her perfectly shaped breasts and long, luscious legs. "I'm really looking forward to tonight," he finally said.

"Oh? Oh yes, what restaurant are we going to?"

"Piccolo Mondo. It's Italian, I know. But I notice a lot of visitors don't fancy the native fare. But that's not what I was talking about. I meant after dinner."

Brit narrowed her eyes and raised her brow.

Uh-oh, what did he say?

"Excuse me?"

"Well, I thought maybe we could go back to my place for a nightcap as you say and..."

"And what?" She crossed her arms over her chest.

This was not going well.

"Do you think just because you saw me naked, that I would sleep with you on our first outing together?" she asked, now tapping her foot.

"N-No...well, yes. I mean no. No! What I meant was..."

She stood there eyeing him with what looked like contempt.

Should he leave and come back, or shoot himself? From the look on her face, she would probably prefer the latter.

"Okay, let me start over. I just thought that since you were open and..."
"Open?"

"Yes. Open and carefree. I thought we could have a little fun." A cheesy guilty smile spread across his face. "I'm open and carefree too," he quickly added.

She sighed, "Let's go to dinner."

The ride to the restaurant was pretty quiet. That was good, because at the moment, he knew if he opened his mouth, he would put his foot in it again. Or from the looks of her she would do the honors, and put *her* foot in his mouth. He did a quick side check. Yeah, it looked like she wanted to kick his teeth in.

He really didn't mean for his explanation to come out the way it had.

Sebastian was used to having women. All kinds of women. And he thought he knew them pretty well. Seeing Brit on the beach and the way they were talking, he just figured she was into having a good time. Most women he met were. After all, she agreed to go to dinner with him. Okay, maybe he was over generalizing from past experiences. She was obviously different from those others.

They arrived at Piccolo Mondo, and he heard the music blaring from the bar across the street. But this was his favorite nightspot. The food was good and the wine was even better. Hopefully he could make up for the terrible faux pas earlier.

"You'll really like this place," he said, opening the door of his Benz. He would have driven his convertible, but he could tell from Brit's clothing choice that that was out of the question. He helped her out and gave her another approving look. He hoped he could fix things.

"I love this place. I didn't come here last time I was in Finland, but I've been here before. Great seafood."

"I have a special table just for us." Sebastian took her arm and led the way. He pulled out her chair, grabbed his, and scooted next to her.

The place was cozy. Where they were seated, they had their own private table next to a cobblestone fireplace. The table was not a standard restaurant table. It was more intimate, with throw pillows by the hearth for added romance.

"Order anything your heart desires."

"Oh, I plan to," Brit said, lifting the menu.

Sebastian had to get this date back on track fast.

Chapter Four

Brit hid behind the menu. She didn't want Sebastian to see her mouse-eating grin.

She was going to give him a hard time, and he deserved it. She had known what he meant when he asked her back to his place.

Sebastian was going to suffer a bit. Besides, how dare he put images in her mind of both of them naked and sweaty in his room? The minute he mentioned going back to his place, her mind began spinning. She saw him naked. She saw his—

"What are you getting to drink?"

"Huh?" Brit shook her head and focused on the sea-god before her. "What did you say?"

"I was asking what will you have to drink? I can suggest something."

"Okay."

"You're miles away. Still thinking about what I said earlier?"

"Well..."

"Look, I'm so sorry I even suggested something like that. I assumed that you being here and the way you've traveled, that you were more...open...free-spirited. I forget that Americans are a bit prudish when it comes to sex and—"

"Prudish!"

"Oh, man." He sighed.

"I'll have you know that I'm not a bit prudish. In fact, I'm more open to things that will probably shock even you. I am also more acceptable to different...lifestyles."

"Okay, okay," Sebastian said, throwing up his hands.

"Humph, prudish. I could do it in the park if I wanted to, and feel nothing. I'll show you prudish." Brit leaned over and kissed Sebastian on the mouth. She let her lips linger there longer that she would have like. But hey, she had a point to make. Besides, his lips felt good. When Brit went back to read her menu, she could almost see the hole burning through it. She lowered the menu and noticed Sebastian ravenously looking at her.

"I see. That was sweet," he said quietly.

Man. Did she just do that? "Um...what I mean is, if that is what I wanted to do. Which I don't," she added quickly.

"You are a fascinating woman."

"How so?"

"You are conservative one minute, hot and crazy the next."

"I see. Which one do you like best?"

"The real Brittany. The one that's not afraid to be herself and to hell with everyone else. Like that kiss."

Wow. She hadn't seen that coming.

All evening he had been putting his foot in his mouth and being a total boob. But now he was Mr. Sensitivity.

"Who is the real Brittany?"

Great, now he was Dr. Phil.

Who was the real Brittany? Come to think of it, she had never asked herself that question. She always defined herself by her job, friends and family. Maybe that's why she went crazy when she traveled overseas.

Being the middle child wasn't easy, and she was sure that's one of the main reasons she engaged in most of her antics.

Damn, she wished she could turn the subject back to sex.

A waiter came to their table and Sebastian ordered appetizers, then poured her wine. "You don't have to answer that tonight," he said with a smirk, as if reading her thoughts. "I was just wondering. I read your magazine from front to back."

Great, a safe subject. "You did? What did you think?"

"I love the concept. There are differences in the way women of color are treated overseas."

Brit put her arms on the table and leaned closer. She was in working mode again, but she couldn't pass this up. Learning about how people of color are treated by other cultures always fascinated her. "Tell me more."

"I can only speak for the Scandinavian and Nordic countries, but we love colored women. We see them as exotic and wonderful. They are honest, they speak their minds, and they are more receptive to different things."

"Exotic, huh?"

"Did I say something wrong again?" Sebastian asked, putting down his breadstick.

"Well, usually we colored women," Brit said, making finger quotes as she said colored, "equate the word exotic coming from another race as freaky or willing to do anything."

Sebastian's face lit up, and he snapped his fingers. "Ah, now I understand! You think I see you as a stereotype."

By George, I think he's got it. "My train of thought was heading that way, yes."

"No, no. Please understand. The offer I made to you was genuine. I mean, I am attracted to Brittany Reese, the editor of *Colorful Travels*, not because she's black, but because she is just so beautiful, she seems unreal."

Well, damn!



Brit ate and enjoyed her conversation with Sebastian. Every now and then, she would catch him smiling and staring at her.

After the third time, she asked, "What?" as she took another sip of wine.

"You got a little food *right* there." Sebastian leaned over and licked the corner of her mouth. "Just a little sauce," he said as he licked his lips.

Okay, he did not just do that! Nope, she was imagining it. He did not just lean over and swipe his tongue over her lips. Oh well, tit-for-tat, she guessed. She closed her thighs tighter and tried to regain her composure. Damn! He was too sexy for words. And why had she chosen spaghetti for dinner?

"Um...so your uncle manages that hotel?"

Sebastian's smile grew wider. "Am I making you nervous?"

"Of course not."

"Liar." He took another bite of his dish, mussels over angel hair pasta and swallowed. "My uncle owns and manages several hotels in the area. Hostels,

actually. This hotel is a recent purchase. Since he had worked there so long and he was doing such a great job, the former owner retired and sold it to him.

"Why hotels?"

"Better than reindeer," he chuckled.

"He owned reindeer at one time?"

"Yep, near Inari."

Brit thought a moment. "Inari, Inari...."

"It's as close to the Arctic Circle as you can get," Sebastian said, helping her out. "I'm surprised you never ventured up there, you being...adventurous and all."

"Well, any time I did a piece on Finland, it was usually in the winter. I don't want to get any colder than I have to."

They both laughed.

"How long is your stay here?" Sebastian asked, taking her hand before she could reach her wine glass.

"A month."

"Excellent! I can show you some of the sights that you never put in your magazine. You know as well as I do that you never really see a country and its people until you go places normal tourists dare not." He kissed the back of her hand.

"Yes, well, I'm sure you'll show me a good time."

"And then some." He winked at her and continued eating.

Brit was in trouble.

After desert they walked across the street to his favorite music bar. The music was loud—and bad.

"You guys really love disco, huh?" Brit commented, turning to him.

"I will admit that some Europeans and Scandinavians have no taste when it comes to music, despite the fact that we watch music videos on television and on the Internet. And some of us insist on mixing the hip stuff with what is called Euro-trash music. Like Kanye West with nails across a blackboard." He shook his head and opened the door for her.

As they walked in, Brit noticed a lot of people sitting at a bar and against the wall. It was one of those "get comfy" bars with pillows to sit on, and servers bringing drinks and finger foods.

There was loud applause after the song was over. "Are they happy that the DJ stopped?" Brit mused as they took a seat in the corner.

Sebastian laughed. "Hard to tell, huh?" Just then more music began to play.

Brit looked over at the DJ and noticed he looked either African or Jamaican. That wasn't really unusual. There were a lot of expats from African countries and the islands in Finland.

Someone brought their drinks and some interesting cakes. "Mmm, sweets," Brit said, picking up one and popping it in her mouth.

"Whoa! Wait tha—" Sebastian reached for her hand, but it was too late. The cake flew out of her mouth and across the room.

The people in their area broke out in laughter.

"Those are vodka and grain alcohol balls," Sebastian said, laughing and wiping her chin. "I was trying to warn you."

"I thought it would be sweet," Brit said, wiping her tongue and coughing. "I probably would have enjoyed it, if I had been warned," she chuckled.

"Are you always that impulsive?" Sebastian looked at her with an intensity that spoke volumes.

She knew what he was trying to get at. He was relentless. She would have been insulted and upset if it weren't for the fact that he was drop dead gorgeous, and charming as hell. Even in the darkened room, she could see the dark pupils of his sea-green eyes. Oh yeah, and she was horny as hell.

"I usually look before I leap," Brit said as she sipped some juice one of the bartenders brought her. She knew that wasn't altogether true. That was her problem. Anything on a dare.

How else could she explain running with the bulls in heels?

She was supposed to have worn athletic shoes, but she had sneaked in her low-heeled Jimmy Choos. She had put grips on the bottoms and she had been a safe distance from the stampeding bovines. A smile crept to her face as she remembered the moment.

"What's that?" Sebastian asked as he grinned at her.

"Oh, nothing."

"Hmm, looked like something. Will you share later?"

"Maybe."

They continued to enjoy the music as much as they could. As the evening progressed, they decided to head back to the hotel.

As they drove, Sebastian noticed that Brit was hugging herself.

"Cold?"

"A bit."

He wrapped one arm around her. "I didn't think to bring an extra sweater."

"That's okay. Your arm is fine." She turned to him and smiled.

"So, are you game for anything tomorrow? You never answered me about the horseback riding," Sebastian said as they pulled into the hotel parking area.

"Sure, I love horses. I've never been on your little Finnish horses. They're kinda short and fluffy looking," she giggled. "They look like they'll be comfortable to ride."

"This is true."

They got out of the car and headed towards the elevator. They got off, but not on her floor. They continued walking down a long hallway, finally stopping in front of a door.

"Are you game for anything tonight?" Sebastian asked, taking out his card key.

"Maybe."

"A woman of very few words. I don't know if that's a good thing," he laughed and went into the room.

Brit followed, cautiously. She was adventurous, but she was always wary.

And even though he seemed like a nice man, one never knew.

She sat in a chair by the door, and looked around the place. The furnishings were mostly American modern. Brit wanted to laugh. People back home went gaga over the Scandinavian furniture stores back in the States, yet this Finn didn't have a hint of that crap. Beautiful earth tones with splashes of mint green throughout dominated Sebastian's furnishings. Two huge, comfy-looking chairs and ottomans sat in two corners of the room. Even though she hated modern, she could tell this was expensive décor.

"Nice room. Looks like the presidential suite or something."

"Well, being the nephew of the owner doesn't hurt." He smirked as he handed her a drink. "It's juice. I take it you might still have the taste of the vodka balls in your mouth. That was real funny, by the way. It happens a lot, but we still get a kick out of it." He sat in the chair near hers.

"I'm glad I could continue the tradition," Brit groaned as she gulped down her juice.

"I thought it was cute. But then anything you do is cute."

"I just met you today."

"Yeah, but your first introduction really left a lasting impression." He grinned and raised his glass to her.

She groaned and took another gulp of juice.

"You're cute when you're embarrassed, too."

"You don't know if everything is cute about me," Brit said, getting up and walking around.

"This is true. But I do know you're breathtaking." He walked toward her until he stood just inches away. He touched her cheek. "Stay with me tonight. We can just talk, and if it leads to something else, then as you Americans say, we'll cross that bridge when we come to it."

It was a somewhat innocent open invitation. But Brit knew anything planned with this man could become anything but innocent.

She was attracted to him. There was no hiding that. And she knew he knew it, too. But for once, she wanted to act cautiously. This wasn't running with the bulls. This was more dangerous. This was her heart.

He turned around and made his way toward the bathroom. In the doorway, he began to take off his sweater. "I just want to get into something more comfortable," he said over his shoulder. He was now standing with his bare back to her.

Brit groaned and took another gulp of juice.

This was going to be a long night.

Chapter Five

Sebastian hoped he wasn't pushing his luck by asking Brit to stay with him. But he didn't want this night to end.

He didn't want this month to end. When she told him she was staying for a month, he decided then to make her his—forever. He had finally figured out what was missing in his life. He didn't need a long sabbatical to reach that conclusion.

There was a reason Brit kept showing up. It was unusual to see this same woman, at this particular resort, four times! It was a sign.

He needed to tread lightly. He didn't want to scare her off or make her mad.

The latter he was doing very well by putting his foot in his mouth every ten minutes.

But at dinner and the bar, things seemed to get back on track. And right now was looking good, too. She didn't say yes to his invitation. But she hadn't said no, either.

He entered the bathroom, put on his silk pajama jacket and tied the sash before re-entering the room. Brit was sitting in one of the ottomans by the window. She glanced at him and her body language seemed more relaxed.

When his sweater was off, he had noticed how she looked at him. He'd seen her reflection in the mirror on the wall by the bathroom door. That was puzzling. A carefree, open woman like Brit afraid to express her desires.

And he'd seen and felt desire. That kiss was still burning his lips.

Women.

"Would you like some more juice?" he offered as he walked to the wet bar.

"Oh, no. Any more liquids and I'll be in the bathroom the rest of the evening," Brit chuckled.

"We wouldn't want that. I want you with me, in front of me as long as possible."

"Gee, you sure know how to make a girl feel attractive."

"I'm merely confirming the obvious."

Sebastian noticed her slight blush as it colored her cheeks in a warm glow, which in turn caused him to smile. He went to the little fridge under the wet bar.

"I notice you have a sweet tooth, hence your eagerness for the vodka balls. Here."He handed her a small bowl of pastries.

"Oh, these look good," Brit said as she picked one up and popped it in her mouth. "Mmm these are good. What are they?"

"Butter, cream, sugar and flour and some secret something my grandmother won't tell anyone until she's on her deathbed," he laughed. "She makes them for me every week. I'll fatten up like a farm pig if she doesn't stop."

"Well, tell her to send me a few dozen, I won't need the recipe. These are so rich, I could only eat so many."

"I'll make sure I tell her." He sat down in the chair next to hers. "So, what did you plan on doing in your month here?"

Brit cocked her head and thought a moment. "I just came here to relax and collect my thoughts. Every time I've gone overseas, it's been a working vacation. This time it's just for me, and you know what?"

"What?"

"I don't know what the hell to do with myself."

They both laughed.

"I know what you can do tonight," Sebastian said as he got up from his chair, and walked over to her. Standing in front of her, he stroked her cheek. "I wish you were here for a lifetime. A month is too short."

"I have to get back to my work," Brit said.

He took her hands and lifted her out of the chair. "You don't have to go to work tonight or tomorrow."

"No, I don't."

"You don't have anyone back home do you?"

Someone this beautiful probably had a lot of men waiting for her back home. Maybe there was a special someone back in the States that caused her hesitation. Sorry, but he'd have to hurt that person.

"No."

He wanted to leap for joy, but played it cool. "That's good to hear."

"It's that...well, I've never really done anything like this. I mean, I've only known you for a literally, a few hours."

"The way my heart felt when I spotted you this afternoon, it seems I've known you a lifetime."



This man knew the right things to say and when to say them. And not only that, he was sincere. How could she resist that?

Brit looked into his dreamy eyes and scanned his killer body.

"Uh, Sebastian, I think you're very attractive..."

"I know."

She had to crack a smile. Cocky Finn. "Okay, I'll stay with you tonight. But...just to talk. I need to take this slow. Call me skittish."

"That's fine. That's more than I can ask for. Can I have a little kiss?"

He was just too cute. A horn dog one minute, a sweet little boy the next. "Of course."

He leaned in and kissed her like no man, domestic or foreign, had ever kissed her. He took her face in both hands and his lips took inventory of her face, neck and shoulders. He was gentle, yet commanding. She sensed he knew he was in charge, and that was okay by her.

"You taste so sweet. Do you realize since the first time I saw you, you have been in my dreams every night and in my fantasies every waking moment?"

"R-Really?"

"Yes." He kissed her some more, and began caressing her from her butt to her breast. He suddenly pulled away. "I think we better...talk."

She just stood there breathing like she had just run a marathon. "Yeah...let's talk."

And they did.



Later the next morning, Brit was putting on makeup when she heard a knock on her door. "Who is it?"

"It's me."

Brit opened the door and in walked her sea god. It wasn't fair. He was gorgeous, twenty-four-seven.

"Good morning dear. I have something for you, for us," he said with a mischievous grin and his hands behind his back.

"Really? What?"

He then held up an envelope. "After last night, I realized and understood your hesitation. Don't get me wrong. I enjoyed our conversation and hope to have many more. I thought this would be a great way for us to really get to know each other," Sebastian said, placing the envelope in Brit's hand. "It will delay our horseback riding trip a bit, but I think it's worth it."

She looked at it. "What this?"

"Open it," he said, smiling so hard, she could almost see his face split in half.

"Sebastian! This is great." She wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed his cheek.

"I thought you might appreciate it. Two first-class tickets on Oslo's best cruise ship. As you know, Oslo is famous for its fjords. This will take us from Helsinki all the way to Norway."

"You know, I wanted to do this for the longest without having to write about it. Just sit back and enjoy it."

"Well, now you can. So pack a bag, this is a six-day trip," Sebastian said, rubbing the small of her back. And we leave tonight."

"Okay, give me a few hours."

Sebastian laughed, shaking his head. Brit hurried to her closets and began packing. Sweaters. But she had a great excuse for them this time. It was freezing, even in August, and this cruise would tour all the Scandinavian countries before reaching Norway.

Sebastian returned to her room a few hours later "Ready?" he asked as he took one of her bags.

"Yep."

"The tour bus awaits downstairs."

"Cool."

Once on the bus, Brit sat back and relaxed. Sebastian put his arm around her and began pointing out all the mountains and farmland. Finland was a beautiful country. Brit never had a chance to sit back and enjoy any of her travels the way she would have liked. She looked out over the landscape. They passed pastures full of grazing horses and cows.

"Those are cute," Brit said pointing to a herd of cows.

"They are Finnish Ayrshire cows. Kind of a new breed, only dating back to the 1800's.

She nodded and looked at them as they looked back curiously at the bus.

They reached the dock and boarded the ship. There were a lot of people, at least seventy. Brit and Sebastian made their way to their cabin, where Brit was

pleasantly surprised. She immediately ran to a huge basket of chocolates, fruit and nuts.

"This cabin is gorgeous," she said, popping some chocolates in her mouth and walking around the roomy cabin. She rubbed her hands against the silk fabric of the chairs and the softness of the bedding.

"I hear the sheets are six-hundred thread count," Sebastian said, taking off his jacket.

"Sweet," Brit took off her jacket and her knit cap.

"Poor thing. You were really cold." Sebastian said as he wrapped his arms around her. "Let me warm you." He nuzzled her neck, then started kissing her, starting at her shoulders and ending at the top her head. Burying his face in her hair, he said, "I don't want to ever leave this room." He squeezed her tighter.

"Me neither. We can't miss the fjords, but I'm sure we can keep busy between tours," she said, trying to return his kisses.

"Do you want to eat something?" Sebastian asked.

"Yeah, that ride gave me an appetite and I want to save the basket for later."

"We'll eat in our cabin. I don't want to share you with the rest of the passengers yet." He winked and went to the phone.

Brit sat on the edge of the bed and began removing more layers of clothing until she was down to her cashmere sweater and jeans.

"Okay, my lizard lady, dinner will be here in an hour," Sebastian said, clapping his hands and coming towards her.

"Lizard lady!" Brit screeched.

"You where shedding so many pieces of clothing..."

She fell back on the bed and laughed. Yeah, she must have looked insane. Sebastian joined her, lying on his side and rubbing her belly through her sweater. "Can we do a quickie?" he purred.

"Sebastian."

"We don't have to undress. I can get you going without getting you naked."

He kneaded her breast with a strong hand.

Immediately, Brit's sweater became too hot. She placed her hand over his and he slowly smoothed it over each breast. He kissed her cheek. Then moving his mouth to hers without removing his lips from her skin, he slid in his tongue, not giving her a chance to resist. Not that she considered it.

"I need you like I need my next breath," he said as he came up for air. He glided his hand down her leg and between her thighs. "Open wider," he whispered in her ear.

She did, and he moved his body over hers to nestle between her legs. "I could live here."

"I wouldn't mind you as a tenant," Brit chuckled.

Sebastian moved slowly, pushing her deeper into the bed. Brit never appreciated his size, until now. He was heavy, a big man. And speaking of big...

Sebastian could put a porno star to shame. She'd seen that the first day they met. But with him dry humping her like a teenage boy in a hidden corner of the school, she felt like she was riding a banister.

He continued kissing and caressing her breasts, all the while moving faster and harder between her legs.

She felt herself about to fly apart. "Mmm, Sebastian, hurry."

"Patience...I...want...to come with you."

Brit wrapped her legs around his waist so tightly, the jaws of life couldn't have pried them open.

After only a few moments, Sebastian and Brit locked hands and lips, and their moans filled the cabin. Just then, they heard a knock on the door.

Their thrashing came to an abrupt halt. They both looked over at the door, not moving.

"Who is it?" Sebastian mumbled against her lips.

"Room service."

Their laughter was muffled as Sebastian tried to get in one more grind, one more kiss.

Sebastian moved to get up. Brit's legs were stiff, but she managed to unwrap them and sit up.

"Just a minute," Sebastian yelled toward the door. "Sorry, honey," he whispered in Brit's ear as he lifted her up.

"I feel like I've been busted by my parents," she giggled.

"Maybe we should have finished and given the staff an earful." He smiled wickedly.

"Oh, no. Sebastian," she said, straightening her clothes. But the idea did sound like fun.

Sebastian finished straightening himself up and went to the door. "Ah. Now this is what I call service. Right over there, please." He pointed to the table by the window.

"My girlfriend and I were just mentioning how beautiful the cabin is."

"Thank you, sir." The room service waiter bowed and smiled. "Anything else I can get for you and your girlfriend?"

"No," Sebastian said as he looked through his wallet and pulled out some money for a tip. "Oh, you can tell the staff that we love the bed. Nice and firm." He turned to Brit and winked.

Brit's face felt like a hot furnace.

The man left and Sebastian turned back to her.

"You're bad," Brit said, getting up going to the table. "He knew what you were talking about."

"Are you embarrassed?"

"Just a little...you know." She shrugged.

"Did you mind that I called you my girlfriend?"

"No...I..." Wait a doggone minute. He had introduced her as his girlfriend.

"Come on. Food is getting cold," Sebastian said, taking a seat.

She sat down and looked out the window. She needed to reassess some things.

Chapter Six

"Let's go dancing this evening," Brit said, rummaging through the closet.

Sebastian was sitting in the chair, reading the ship's newspaper. "I love the idea. Besides, we know the music will be better."

"Uh huh. Lawrence Welk," Brit mused.

"Hey, there is a miniature golf game in thirty minutes. Want to try it?" Sebastian asked.

"I never played."

"I'll teach you. I actually play golf."

"Don't tell me. You go to Scotland."

"Every chance I get." He laughed.

They started looking for appropriate clothing for their outing.

Once dressed, they went on deck and headed to the miniature golf course. "This is so cute," Brit squealed.

"Please," Sebastian said in a playful tone. "This is serious business."

"Oh, yes of course." Brit smiled hard.

Sebastian loved this time together. They were both away from their jobs and enjoying each other. No pressure. Okay, maybe there was some pressure. But it all

came from his hormones. Even though they had done some heavy making out at the hotel and in their cabin, he wanted to make sure the moment was right before they moved further.

At the golf course, it was a disaster. But it was funny. Brit missed the windmill and the putter flew out of her hand and went overboard. For her embarrassment, Sebastian gave her a passionate kiss and everyone around them applauded.

At shuffleboard, Brit was better. Sebastian, however, couldn't keep the puck in play. But the best time came later, when it was just the two of them looking out over the water

"This is beautiful country, Sebastian. Just look at those lush, green mountains." Brit scooted closer to him and leaned on the railing. "I've only been a working observer. Now I can relax and enjoy being a spectator."

"The scenery is beautiful," Sebastian said, putting his arm around her shoulder.

She turned to look at him. "You're not even looking at the scenery."

"Yes, I am. And it's absolutely breathtaking." He brought her close to him hugged her, then kissed her for what seemed like hours. He finally came up for air.

"Did anyone ever tell you you're a great kisser?" Brit asked.

"Yes, but it never meant anything to me, until now." He took her by the hand. "I've been on this cruise before, but it never did anything for me. It was like taking a trip to see my grandmother. Until today. I'm with someone that brings meaning to all of this." He swept his hand in the general direction of the mountains.

"I must admit, this is my first date overseas."

"Really?"

"You sound surprised."

"I am. You're beautiful inside and out. I'm surprised the men were not beating down your door." He smiled. "But I'm glad to hear it."

"Like I said, it was all work, and when I did have time for myself, it was doing something crazy, like wind gliding in Barcelona"

"You wind glided in Barcelona?" Sebastian's eyes got big.

"Yep, and it got real windy and I almost slammed into the side of a mountain," she said. They both laughed and began heading back to the cabin

Once inside, they began nibbling from the gift basket and they turned on the television. It was all in Norwegian, but the commercials were funny.

Sebastian joined her on the bed. Brit looked at him, and had the urge to run her fingers through his hair. "So nice."

"I didn't put gel in, just for you."

"Thanks, my fingers appreciate it."

"I ordered a romantic dinner."

"Eating in again? You know the rest of the passengers are going to think we're snobs."

"We'll mingle later. We have another five full days. Besides, I want tonight to be special."

"This whole day has been special."

He took her hands and brought them to his lips. He kissed each knuckle. His warm, soft lips turned her hands into melted butter. "Tonight, I want it to be extra special. I want to make love to you, Brit."

She tensed.

A sheepish smile crept to his lips. "Are you surprised?"

"No...no. I'm just a little..."

"I know you think it's too soon. But I feel a connection. No, that's not right. I feel a completion, with you."

Brit cocked her head. No man had ever said that to her.

"I know, I feel something different with you, too. I just don't know what it is yet."

"Is it enough to take a chance?"

"Yeah, I think so."

"Don't be so surprised by my eagerness. A woman like you leaves a lasting impression on a man." He sat up in bed and proceeded to take off her dress, but was having difficulty.

"Why did you wear another wool dress?" he asked as he went for the belt.

She chuckled and got off the bed. "It's cold outside. Especially by these snowcapped mountains."

He chuckled. "But it's hot in here now. Besides, any chill you feel, let me know. I'll be sure to warm you up."

He took off the belt and lifted her dress over her head. "You know, these sweater dresses are great birth control."

She laughed. "I didn't think this far ahead."

"Liar."

He finally got it over her head and she stood there in her underwear and furry boots. "You look like a snow bunny pin-up."

This dude knew the right things to say.

"You're so beautiful. After all these years, my wish is finally going to come true," Sebastian said, while removing his jacket and tossing it aside. Next he let his pants drop to the floor, and kicked them to the side. His boxers went last.

Brit looked down and stared. If ever there were a contest for the most gorgeous penis, he would win hands down. Which begged a question.

"Yes?" he said, as he began nibbling on her ear.

"Oh, Um...Sebastian?"

"You like?"

"Yes."

He continued, going back and forth between each ear. "You are more delicious than vodka balls."

"Well, that's good to know."

"You had a question, I believe," he said as he kissed her shoulders and ran his hands down her body. "You are so soft."

"Uh...yeah...I did." Regretfully, she had to push herself away from him just to concentrate. She looked down again at his very erect penis.

Lord, have mercy!

He gave her a knowing smile and tried to pull her toward him.

"Uh, wait, I do have a question about..." she pointed down.

"Mister Magazine Catcher," Sebastian said, grinning.

Brit's face heated up. "Uh, yeah. I was just wondering, I mean, it's unusual to see a cut foreigner, with the exception of Israelis."

Sebastian's eyes narrowed.

Uh oh.

"How many foreign, or domestic men for that matter, have you seen naked?" he just about growled.

"Not that many. Really," she quickly added. She lied and she knew he wasn't buying it from his posture. "I mean...you know." She folded her arms over her breast, feeling vulnerable for the first time.

"I will be the last and only naked man you see from now on." Sebastian grabbed her and slammed her body into his. He kissed her hard with a possessiveness she didn't think Finns capable of.

When they came up for air, she was dizzy. "Wow!"

"I hope we have that settled. Because after tonight, you belong to me and I belong to you."

"Now Sebastian, just because I asked about your...you know, doesn't mean that I've been roaming the earth looking at a bunch of them."

"I know. And I know I'm being silly. But the thought of you with another man drives me crazy. You're sure you don't have one back home?" he quickly asked.

"I did, but we broke up."

"Good. Now back to your original question. Yes, it is unusual, but if you must know, I was born in the United States. I left there when I was eight months old. My father had work there and his assignment lasted longer than they

expected, so I was born in New York. Later, after a check-up, the staff got scissor happy and you know the rest." He grinned.

"Your parents didn't sue?"

"It's no big deal, really. Besides, I think my parents were still in shock that I came early."

Brit nodded.

"Are you disappointed? Would you prefer...?"

"Oh no," Brit laughed. "It's just, I was curious that's all. I like the way it looks, it's better than..." She stopped herself. "Than any I've seen in a magazine."

He chuckled. "Look, I didn't expect a woman with your personality and looks to be celibate. I haven't been, either. Now let's stop talking and let me show you that this not only looks good, but it can do great things, too. Of course, you already know that."

Sebastian bent down and picked Brit up as if she were a sack of potatoes. He placed her on the bed and began removing her furry boots. He was having a little trouble.

"Need help again?" Brit giggled.

"I am too anxious. I'm all thumbs, I'm afraid. You love Eskimo boots, don't you?"

"Just keeping the legs warm." Brit unfastened her boots and threw them on the floor. "Better?"

"Much better."

Sebastian crawled on the bed and covered her body with his.

"I love the way you feel under me."

"I love the way you feel on top of me. I love all this muscle." She rubbed her hands up and down his arms and then down his chest.

"Especially for you, dear," he chuckled as he lowered his head to kiss her.

"Like I said, I've been waiting for this moment from the first day I saw you. You haunted my dreams every night for three years."

"A girl likes to hear that, even if it's not true."

"Oh, it's true. Let me prove it to you."

He moved his body erotically over hers. He started at her belly button, licking her skin and blowing kisses on the spot. He moved up her body, kissing and nipping her skin. He then rubbed his face between her breast, licking and taking each nipple and twirling his tongue around the bud.

Brit tried to concentrate and take the time to study her sea-god come to life.

Two days. She was sleeping with a man she only knew for two days.

She had to admit however, that she felt closer to him in two days than with any man with whom she'd had a long-term relationship. He made her ...comfortable.

Sebastian wasn't a complex man, but he was intense. She knew that he'd been a graphic artist since fifteen, his favorite color was purple, and he was horrible at shuffleboard, but there was so much she didn't know. "I would like to know a little bit more about you," she said as she caressed his shoulders before moving to his wavy blond mane.

"We have the rest of this trip and our lives to find out about each other. This is only the beginning of our relationship." He nuzzled and kissed her neck.

Relationship? The rest of our lives?

But before she could form another rational thought, Sebastian was sliding that amazing penis into her. "Right now we have more important things to do."

He got that right! God, he felt good.

She was slick and he was hard as steel. Whoever said opposites attract wasn't kidding!

He rotated his hips, the friction of their bodies raising the room temperature, her chill replaced by the heat of sex.

"Oh, Sebastian."

"You like how I make you feel?"

"Mmm, do I!"

"You like it slow or fast?"

"Slow this time."

"I like it slow, too." He pulled himself out slowly before thrusting back in with the same ease and gentleness. It was tortuous pleasure, but it felt like heaven.

"Sebastian!"

"Minun lempiä," he cooed in her ear as he kept his rhythm steady.

"What does that mean?"

"My love."

"Sounds beautiful, Sebastian."

He moved deeper inside her and she moaned.

"Ah, but not as beautiful as your moans of pleasure and my name on your lips."



In and out, slow and sure, he didn't want it to end. But the fullness and pressure in his cock was becoming unbearable.

"Come on, sugar, let's come together," he growled in her ear.

Brit wrapped her legs around him tighter and began pumping her hips in time with his.

"That's it, sugar. Faster!"

Brit gripped the side of the bed with one hand while grabbing Sebastian's hair with the other.

Boy, she had a grip! But he didn't care; he was going to ride this out with her. And he didn't have long to wait.

Brit's other hand came up, and now she was clutching at his shoulders as he gripped the sheets. They both stiffened, then slammed into each other, screaming out their release.

Sebastian was too exhausted to collapse. He looked down at Brit, whose eyes looked closed.

"Open those beautiful eyes, sugar."

She slowly did and smiled up at him.

"How do you feel?" Sebastian leaned down and kissed her eyelids.

"Very satisfied," she purred.

"Good. I aim to please," he chuckled.

He kissed her face, then rolled off her and held her close enough to feel her heart beating against his chest.

"I think we make a great couple," he said in her ear then kissed her lobe.

"You think so?"

"Never been so sure of anything in my life. But it sounds like you have doubts."

"Not doubts, just taking it slow."

"We only have a month. Unless..."

Brit wriggled out of his arms and sat up to look at him. "Unless what?"

"You consider moving to Finland."

Chapter Seven

A day and half later, the ship arrived in Oslo. The tour group made its way to the train and took it to the Hanseatic port of Bergen, the gateway to the fjords. There they enjoyed picturesque villages, magnificent waterfalls, breathtaking mountain peaks and glaciers.

They had an early afternoon departure from Bergen. Brit and Sebastian joined the group for lunch and engaged in polite conversation. They visited the historic town of Voss, with its stunning background of snow-clad mountains. They boarded another train, which took them across the mountain plateau to Myrdal, where they transferred to the famous Flam railway, the highlight of the day. They then experienced one of the most spectacular rail journeys, descending down from the Mountain station of Myrdal to the quaint fjord village of Flam.

Hoping off vans, buses and trains kept Brit from thinking about Sebastian's offer. Move to Finland. She wouldn't think about that now. She was here to enjoy the trip and his company. She would concentrate only on that.

"It's nice just being a tourist," Brit said as she pointed to a landmark on her brochure. "I can't wait to write about..."

Sebastian put his finger to her lips. "Ah ah. This is for pure enjoyment, remember?"

Brit chuckled. "It's so hard to get out of the rut."

"Understandable." Sebastian smiled and took her by the arm. "Let's join the rest.

They had some free time, so Brit and Sebastian went to the local shops.

"This is some of the best chocolate outside of Belgium," Sebastian said, popping a sample in her mouth.

"Mmm, mmm. Get five pounds of this." Brit said, looking around the little candy shop.

They walked down a narrow cobblestone street and found a little mom and pop clothing store. Brit bought sweaters.

It was then time to embark on the afternoon ferry, which carried them to a breathtaking crossing along the lovely Sognefjord, the longest and deepest fjord in Norway. The coast offered a very strong contrast. Sometimes they experienced rocks falling dramatically into the fjord and other times the river turned a wonderful green.

Back on board the ship, they decided to participate in some of the nightlife the cruise had to offer. They went to the Karaoke lounge.

"American songs with foreign accents. That's a guaranteed good time," Brit mused.

"Can you sing?" Sebastian asked.

"Who's asking?"

"HA! Scaredy cat. Come on, let go up. I can't carry a note either."

Brit could think of several other things she'd rather be doing. Like looking for Bin Laden. But Sebastian had her by the hand, pulling her up, and the crowd was coaxing them on.

"Let's do this one." Sebastian pointed to I Got You Babe by Sonny and Cher.

After their performance, Brit figured she would be banned from all the Nordic and Scandinavian countries, but the crowd cheered and asked for an encore – twice.

After the singing, they had cocktails and enjoyed more conversation with their fellow passengers.

"Hey, ready to go back to the cabin?" Sebastian asked.

"Yep, it's late," Brit said, looking at her watch. It was two in the morning.

Once back in the cabin, they took off their clothes and sat by the window looking out over the sea.

"Simply awe inspiring," Brit said.

"It is. I'm with you. It's nice to just sit back and appreciate it."

"So, tell me," Brit said, sliding her chair next to his. "Besides being raised in Finland, what do you love about it?" She was still thinking about his proposition. He needed to give her good answers for her to even consider packing up sweaters and moving.

Did she love him enough to make it worth it? She liked him—a lot. She loved his company and he was an excellent lover. He was drop dead gorgeous. What woman wouldn't want to be with him?

So what was her hang-up? The cold?

Sebastian reached over and put his hand on the small of her back. He rubbed it gently as he stared out the window. "Let's see. Finland is quiet. Clean, very friendly. We enjoy life. We love having fun. We enjoy learning new things and meeting new people. Travel is big with us. The weather is perfect."

Brit subconsciously wrapped her arms around herself, and Sebastian laughed.

"It's something you get used to after a while," he said, scooting closer to her.

"And as you see, Finland is beautiful. All of the countries here are beautiful. It's nature at its best. No place like it on earth."

"I would agree with you on all of those qualities."

"Is there a reason you asked?" he asked with a knowing smile.

"I was just wondering. Look, we can talk more about it when we get back."

"Okay." He leaned over and kissed her. "Let's go to bed. I want to snuggle with you."

He just wanted to snuggle. Yep, she found the perfect man. What was her problem?



"Almost packed?" Sebastian asked, closing his suitcase.

"Yep." Brit put her suitcase down from the bed. "Sebastian, this was the most wonderful time I ever had," she said, throwing her arms around his waist and kissing him.

He returned her kisses. "Even better than all those trips you made for your work?"

"Most definitely. This trip had something the others didn't."

"Oh, what was that?"

"You."

The ship was coming into Helsinki. Brit actually felt like she was returning home. Maybe that was a clue, but she wasn't going to voice a decision yet. She still needed something else to convince her to make such a move.

After a couple nights, they went between snuggling and talking to wild sex. She was starting to really fall hard for him. But snuggling, wild sex, and talking does not a relationship make.

It was ironic. She could risk her neck bungee jumping, but she couldn't move to another country with a man that basically worshiped the ground she walked on.

The drive back to Sebastian's hotel was just has picturesque at night than in the morning. However, she kept nodding off to sleep. She was pooped.

They made their way back to the hotel and began unpacking. Brit had all her souvenirs out on the bed.

"Nice sweaters," Sebastian said, sitting on the edge of the bed.

"Thanks," Brit groaned.

Sebastian smiled and picked one of them up without really looking at it. "You want to talk now?"

"Not now. But soon."

He went to her. He kissed her on both cheeks. "No pressure. Just let me know when you're ready." He left the room.

She sat on the bed and held the sweater he had been holding. Tears burned her eyes. She needed to make a decision. She didn't want to just jump into something that she would regret later on. But she would like to give him and answer before she left.

She got up, wiped her tears with the back of her hand and finished unpacking and putting away her souvenirs. She would speak with him before it

was time to leave. They were going horseback riding Saturday, she wouldn't think about it then. She would just enjoy her time with him. So she had two full days to think.

She just hoped whatever decision she made would be the right one.

Chapter Eight

Brit and Sebastian were at his uncle's farm putting on riding gear while waiting for their horses. She looked at Sebastian as he finished suiting up. He cut a striking figure. But was he worth moving for?

It wasn't like packing up and going from say, Los Angeles to Dallas. This was a totally different country and culture. Why couldn't he live in England? Yeah, England, she could handle that. At least the English spoke the same language.

But Finland? She shook her head. She couldn't believe she was even entertaining the thought. But over the past week she had made a mental list of the pros and cons. So far, there weren't enough cons. Okay, enough Brit. You said you wouldn't think about it today.

"Here come our horses," Sebastian said in her ear, catching her unawares.

The cute horses were furrier than their American counterparts, surely an adaptation to the climate. She approached her horse, Sebastian right behind her.

"They are very gentle animals, more so than your average horse," Sebastian said. "And if you notice, they are softer. Here." He took her hand and glided it across the horse's back.

"Feels almost like fluff or something."

"Wait until you start riding, you'll be in for a surprise."

Brit stopped rubbing her hands across its back. "What do you mean 'surprise'?"

"Don't worry that pretty head of yours." Sebastian stroked her cheek and smiled. "It's nothing bad."

"Okay, 'cause there are some surprises I don't like. Like being thrown off the back of a horse."

Sebastian threw back his head and laughed the sexiest laugh Brit had ever heard. "Don't worry. Like I said, they are gentle. In fact, they love being ridden."

When they got out in the open crisp air, Brit's horse turned its head towards her and tried to lick her face.

"See. She likes you. This one is Preita, which means most loving. She's only five years old. Mine is Oskari, which means divine spearman. He's been around, he's eleven."

They finally mounted the horses and the handlers released the reins.

"Wow." Brit said, lightly bouncing up and down on her horse while it was still. "It feels like I'm sitting on a bunch of blankets. Their hides are so soft. No wonder you suggested bareback."

"That's surprise number one. Let's take them down the road. You will soon see surprise number two."

They did, and Brit immediately understood what Sebastian had been taking about. "Oh boy! No bouncing, even when they're trotting!"

"Yes, it's the way they are made. They're shorter in the withers."

"This is going to be a pleasurable ride."

"Yes, it is."

She looked over at Sebastian and knew immediately he wasn't talking about the horses.

The ride was quiet, neither of them speaking, both enjoying the view. The mountains were vast and green, the lakes clear ice-blue, as if no human ever intruded.

Brit was a little ahead of Sebastian, allowing Preita to lead the way. She had a mind of her own or knew the trail. Either way, Brit was enjoying the ride.

"Hey, wait up." Sebastian finally caught up with her. "Trying to lose me?"

"Of course not. I just get so caught up in the scenery."

"You can look at it all day and night if you wish."

Brit knew where this conversation was going and she wasn't ready for it.

"Uh, tell me more about your job. Since you refused to talk about work on the ship,
now I'm curious. What kind of graphics do you do?"

"I work for the government. You know when you go on the website for Finland's tourism, and you see all the beautiful pictures and movies and effects? That's what I do."

"Wow, that's a big job and a big responsibility."

"It is. But it's boring."

"Boring? How?"

"Well, look at your job. You write about different countries, events, festivals, sometimes the changing politics of these countries."

Brit was impressed. He had read her magazine, cover to cover.

"It's something different every week, every month," he continued. "Me, I know this country, I was raised here and nothing really all that dramatic happens here, as you know," he said with a smirk.

"I guess that makes sense. Are you looking for something else?"

"You might have noticed that jobs are not raining on our people, especially for something so specialized. More and more companies are having their graphics work done in-house."

"And you want me to move here why?" Brit didn't try to hide her sarcasm.

Before Sebastian could answer, other riders came toward them. When they were close enough, Brit was pleased at what she saw.

Sistahs! Five of them!

"Hello!" one with bright red locks said as she drew up her horse alongside them. "We kinda got off the beaten trail and ended up here. Could you tell us were here is?" She chuckled embarrassedly.

The others chucked with her.

"You're in Porvoo. If you're looking for the main city, you're not that far." Sebastian pointed to the north.

They all laughed. "Thanks." We've just been riding and riding and lost track of time and location," another woman said.

"So where are you guys from? Am I safe to assume you're not locals?" Brit asked. This was the first time she'd seen this many women of color in one place in any Scandinavian or Nordic country, unless they were near the major cities or university. Porvoo was far off the beaten path.

"Oh, no. We live here," said one of the women, her British accent heavy.

Brit did a double take. "What?"

"We live here," said the woman with the locks. "I am so sorry for being so rude. My name is Edna." She stuck out her hand as she moved her horse closer. "This is Linda." The lady with the accent waved. "That's Karen, Mary, and Tracy." Each waved and nodded as her name was called.

"I've lived here seven years," Edna said. "The others, less than five. We met at a club and became fast friends."

Edna stared at Brit in an odd way. Then she and the rest of the women looked at Sebastian with obvious admiration. Brit was irritated all of a sudden.

"You know, you look so familiar. Do you live here, too?" Edna asked, smiling.

"No, no. I've visited before; this is my fourth time back. I'm sorry, my name is Brittany Reese and this is my boyfriend, Sebastian."

He nodded to the women.

"That's it! That's where I saw you. You're editor of *Colorful Travels*! We get your magazine every week. We love it!" The other ladies nodded enthusiastically.

"Great, I hope it helps. I try to put in as much current information about each country as possible."

"I don't think I could have made the transition from England to Finland as easily if it weren't for your magazine," Linda said.

Sebastian pulled his horse a little closer. "So you ladies like it here?"

"We love it," they all said, singing different praises of Finland.

"So are you here writing another article?" Linda asked.

"Ah, no, this time I'm on vacation," Brit said.

"Vacation, huh?" Tracy grinned. "And this is your boyfriend?"

"Uh...."

"Hey, we ain't mad at you." They all laughed.

Brit immediately got an idea. This was a perfect opportunity to get into the minds of a variety of expats. She had done England, France, Germany and Italy. This was a chance to get unique viewpoints of Finland. This was definitely a goldmine. "Would you guys mind if I interviewed you?"

"A workaholic, huh? I know the feeling," Edna said. "But no, we wouldn't mind at all, would we?" The others shook their heads with big smiles on their faces.

"Great!"

They exchanged numbers and addresses, then agreed on a place to meet. When the women left, Sebastian came up close to Brit and held her hand. "So I am officially your boyfriend?" He smiled.

Oh crap! She had introduced him as that. Just as he had referred to her as his girlfriend on the ship. It was just so easy. "Um...well...."

"Don't think too hard on it. I like it." He leaned over and kissed her. His horse seemed to want to make the connection easier and moved even closer to hers.

"By the way?" Sebastian asked.

"Yes?"

"What did she mean by 'not mad at you'? What did you do?"

Chapter Nine

Brit and Sebastian continued their ride until they came to the one of the grassy mountains. She stared at it in wonder. It always amazed her how a mountain could be covered in snow and if you traveled up a bit further, it would be covered in thick, tall grass. They rode back to the barn in companionable silence and then drove back to their hotel.

"I had a wonderful time," Brit said, removing her jacket. Sebastian came to her aid.

"I did, too. So tell me, you never explained about that woman being mad at you. You two never met before today, right?"

Brit had to laugh. It was cute, him trying to understand an urban colloquialism while at the same time put logic to it.

"Okay, sit down and I'll try to explain." They both sat on the edge of his bed.

"The term, 'I ain't mad at ya' is like saying, 'I don't blame you.' Something like that."

He nodded.

"So when I mentioned that you were my boyfriend, 'I ain't made at ya' was her way of saying she understood why I'm with you."

"She made the comment *after* you told her you were on vacation and that I was your boyfriend." Sebastian pointed out.

Damn! "Uh...yeah." He was too observant for his own good. She had picked up on that and was hoping the issue wouldn't be raised. But Finns were a curious bunch. Well, at least this one was.

"That had some meaning to her," he continued. "For her to say something like that to a stranger, it had to be significant. What do you suppose she was suggesting?"

Sebastian looked at her, his sea-green eyes almost challenging her.

Brit got up and went to the window. Clever bastard! "I assume she thought you were a...a..."

"Yes."

She turned to face him. He had a knowing grin on his face, but his body language spoke volumes. He stood there, arms folded across his chest as if saying, *Go ahead, I dare you to say it.*"

"She...was... probably thinking since I said I was on vacation and that you were my boyfriend...and lived here, that maybe you were...."

"Go on. I'm listening," he said as he slowly approached her.

"A fling type deal," she said quickly.

"I see. I noticed you didn't set her straight."

"It's not that I didn't want to, it's just I didn't pay that much attention to the remark right then. I was so excited seeing so many women of color, and expats at that."

"I see." Sebastian stepped even closer to her. So close, she could make out the gray flecks in his eyes. "Of course, when you meet with them tomorrow afternoon, you will tell them otherwise."

"Otherwise?"

"That I am not a fling, or one night stand."

Brit flinched a little. "Sebastian, I really don't know what our relationship is."

"Have you thought about what I asked you the other night?"

"About staying here? I don't know anyone here."

"You've been here four times now and you've just met some more expats. But more importantly, you know me."

"Sebastian, I just can't pick up and move. I have my job, my family. Why don't *you* come to America?" she asked, putting her hands on her hips.

"Actually I was thinking of the type of magazine you write. It is about foreign travel. What better way to soak up the foreign flavor that to live here?"

Damn him! That did kinda make sense.

"Look, Sebastian, are you sure you're not just smitten with me?"

He cradled her face in his hands and leaned in for a blood-boiling, brain-frying kiss. "Does this feel like I'm just smitten? I've seen you here four times. Three times I missed you. I won't this time."



Sebastian kissed her again. It was all he could do to keep from ripping off her clothes and throwing her on the bed. Which actually wasn't such a bad idea since they weren't doing anything the rest of the day.

"Sebastian."

He came up for air when she spoke through his kiss. "Yes," he said as he rested his forehead against hers.

"I need time to think."

"That's something at least."

"It's just so sudden. We just met."

"No, we did more than just meet. We finally came together."

He pulled away and looked at her as she stood there. Was this really that hard for her?

"Brit, I don't know how else to say it or ask you. But I want you to know that I do love you. Wait," Sebastian said holding up his hand. "Listen to me. I was a man at thirteen. I was on my own. I lived, worked, traveled and yes, loved, all from a young age. I'm thirty-four now, and you may think that this is some crush

that couldn't possibly be anything deeper. I know what the real thing is, and I certainly know what I want out of life."

"I wish I could be that sure about my life."

Sebastian took her by the chin and kissed her. "You don't have to be. I have enough faith for the both of us."

Chapter Ten

"So how did you two meet?" Edna asked, sipping her coffee.

Brit wasn't about to answer that. Besides, she was supposed to be doing the interviewing. But as soon as she sat down to chat with the little group, there were squeals of delight. They all wanted to know about her Finnish stud.

And there was no way in hell she was going to tell them how she and Sebastian met on the clothing optional beach. It was bad enough she had told her sisters, and now they were teasing her mercilessly.

The last time she called her big sister, Sydney was singing 'Super Dick' to the tune of Rick James's Super Freak. Why had she told them about Mister Magazine Catcher? If she lived to be one hundred, they would never let her live that down.

She took a sip of her coffee and tried to figure out a benign answer. "We met at a club."

"Ahh," all the women said.

"He's absolutely beautiful," Karen said.

"Thanks. Now about you guys," she quickly said, wanting to move on. She was possessive of her "find" in Finland. "You said you all just got together."

"Actually, it was at a Caribbean Carnival in the Caribbean section here," Edna said. "I met Linda first. She's from the West Indies and moved to London as a teenager. Now she's here to stay. Then she told me about Karen, Mary and Tracy. Tracy missed the carnival by a day. But she settled in the community real fast."

"Yes, it was like a homecoming almost," Tracy said.

"Wow! I knew there were a lot of people of color living in these Scandinavian countries, but I didn't realize how many actually stay after they visited," Brit stated.

"Well, it took some time, it wasn't overnight," Karen said. "As you can see, there are not that many people of color here. But when we come together, we make up a good crowd."

They all laughed.

"But seriously," Tracy said, "even though we are a minority, Finnish people don't make you feel that way."

They all looked at Brit with goofy grins on their faces.

Oh, brother.

Brit continued her interview. Hearing their stories was interesting, particularly how finding a job was still difficult for an outsider.

"They may be friendly, but when it comes to employment, they weren't welcoming us with open arms," Edna said.

"Yeah, in fact, they began to treat us like refugees from third world countries," Linda said.

"It wasn't until companies realized that we weren't here to mooch off the system but actually contribute to society that it got easier," Mary said.

They also talked about reactions from family members when they told them they were planning to stay, how some members of the black community called them traitors to their race while others were very supportive, even considering moving with them.

"The brotha's especially," Tracy said. "Immediately they went to the dating thing. 'Oh, you're gonna date those white boys. Black men aren't good enough, even here.' That was not the reason for us coming here. If we wanted to date white boys, there were plenty back in the States that wanted to date us." The other ladies nodded in agreement.

"It's a lot of red tape between both governments also," Mary said. "America wants to know why you're leaving and the other country wants to know why you're coming."

Brit spent the rest of the afternoon with her new friends, going to places that catered to people of color one way or another. Hair, food—or whatever. A lot of the places she knew; others were tucked away in their own little communities reflective of the origins of the owners.

By the time she left them, she had enough information to start a whole new magazine. Which started her on a new train of thought as she walked to the hotel.

Sebastian had stayed behind while she met with the ladies, and she was so happy he had. The way the women were going on about him had been ridiculous.

Her jealousy was ridiculous, too.

But the conversations she had with the women had gotten her thinking, about her job, about Sebastian. About actually living in Finland.

When she got back to the hotel, Sebastian was in the lobby talking to one of the bellboys. "Hello, sweetness," he said coming to her. He kissed her full on the mouth. "I missed you."

"I was only gone for four hours."

"Do you know how many times we could have made love?"

"Sebastian."

"Did I tell you I love you?"

"I think so," she said smiling.

"Well, just in case." He pulled her toward him and kissed her again. "I love you."

"Sebastian, we need to talk. I need to ask you something."

He looked at her thoughtfully. "You made a decision,"

It wasn't a question.

"Yes, I did."

He nodded, then walked over to his staff. He said some things in Finnish and they dispersed.

"Want to go to the restaurant here or the privacy of the room?" he asked.

"The room."

They headed for his room, which was quickly becoming hers as well, since some of her clothing and most of her toiletries were in his bath now.

Sebastian took her by the hands and led her to the bed. "Okay, talk."

"I've been thinking."

"Yes."

"I...I might consider it...for a year, just to see," she quickly added.

"How much of an influence was I?" Sebastian asked with a cheesy grin.

"Mmm, not that much," Brit said with a mocking grin."

"Liar. A man likes to hear that he had everything to do with it."

"I'm not giving that to you." She smirked.

Sebastian pushed her on the bed and began wrestling with her. He didn't care what made her change her mind. He was just so damn happy, he could barely speak. He rolled around with Brit on the bed, laughing with her. It was the most beautiful sound he ever heard.

"You can move in with me," Sebastian said as he rained kisses on her eyelids.

"I live here in the hotel. I never really had the need to have my own place when my uncle took over the hotel. But now, I have more than enough reason to find a home."

"I guess looking for a place of my own is out of the question," Brit chuckled.

"I don't want to chance losing track of you again."

"Don't worry. You're stuck with me like a bad cold."

"I hope they never find a cure."

Chapter Eleven

Brit sat at Sebastian's drafting table as she looked around his place of work.

People were running all over, trying to meet the latest deadline. She felt right at home.

"Here you go, darling," Sebastian said, coming behind her. He placed some material on the desk in front of her.

"What's this?"

"Look at it."

They were sketches, drawings and graphics of various places in Finland. Even the clothing optional beach was depicted.

"These are beautiful, Sebastian."

"Glad you like them." He took a seat next to her. "I thought it would be great for the premiere issue of your new magazine."

Brit nodded. She had decided to take the plunge and start a magazine focused on people of color who emigrated. And she was going to open a satellite office in Helsinki. She would start the issue off with her own story and then those of the women she had met.

Her next step was moving in with Sebastian. She had decided to take that plunge, too.

She called her sisters and they were stunned stupid. Sydney offered her wisdom. "Are you sure that's where you want to move? Where will you get your hair done?"

"If that's my only concern, chile."

After a few minutes on the phone, they realized that she was truly in love with Sebastian. Or her sea-god, as she liked to refer to him.

He was quirky with a bit of innocence. He was blunt. Had a great sense of humor. And was F-I-N-E! That's all a woman needed these days. She chuckled to herself.

Sebastian arranged for the government of Finland to collaborate with her on her new magazine. They would give her all the information she needed and Sebastian would do all the graphics. Sweet!

So far, it looked like the first issue would sell out. They had already taken a poll of the expat population, which was pretty large, to Brit's surprise, and they couldn't wait for such a magazine.

"I want to thank you for all that you are doing for me and that you've done in such a short time," Brit said, turning to Sebastian and kissing him.

"Don't mention it. Besides, the reason I was rushing is because I wanted to make sure you had no excuse to go back home anytime soon." He laughed.

"Well, I do have to get my clothes and I have to say goodbye to my employees and my family."

"Yes, but I will be coming with you for that. And what's wrong with the clothes here?"

"Sweaters. Nothing but sweaters."

They chuckled as they looked over the first draft of her premiere issue. "I can't wait for this to hit the streets."

"It will be a success," Sebastian said, kissing her cheek. "Let's go, we've been here too long. I want to go check out our new place." They headed towards the elevator.

"Now you know what kind of place I want to live in?" They walked through the parking lot of the building.

"Yes, yes," Sebastian said, getting in the car after her. "Lots of closet space and modern plumbing. I can't believe you think we live in the stone ages," Sebastian said, feigning insult.

"Look, I've stayed all over the world and if it's one thing I know, apartments overseas leave a lot to be desired. I'm used to space and the latest gadgets and gizmos."

"Speaking of gadgets and gizmos," Sebastian looked at her wiggling his brows. "You know Finland has the best sex shops in the world."

"Why am I not surprised you know this?"



Sebastian and Brit drove off to look at their first place. The owner was waiting for them out front. He opened the door and allowed them to take a look on their own. It was perfect. A lot of the apartment buildings had once been hostels and hotels, and had been furnished as such, so they still had all the conveniences of hotel living. Brit was in heaven.

Weekly maid service, fully equipped kitchen, entry phone, shower, hairdryer, trouser press, direct dial telephone, color TV, modem connections, alarm clock, balcony, terrace, bathrobes, dishwasher, dryer, sofa-bed in lounge, cable *and* satellite and video stereo.

To Brit, these amenities were standard. To the Finns, this was luxury. But nothing was too good for Sebastian's future wife. They walked in and even he was amazed. A spiral staircase? Oh-la-la.

"I love it!" she squealed.

"You haven't seen the closets yet, dear." Sebastian smiled at Brit as she jumped up and down. Her breasts did a wonderful dance in her V-neck sweater.

They headed upstairs to a huge master bedroom and the closets were wall-to-wall, with another set of closets in the his *and* her bath. "I love it!" she squealed again.

"I think she likes it," Sebastian said to the owner, as he meet them back in the lobby.

"Great! What kind of lease are we talking about? Six months, year, year and a half?" the owner asked, with what looked like a lease already in hand.

"Let's make it one year," Sebastian said.

"Okay, come with me to the office and we'll sign the papers."

"I saw a loveseat that will go great with that rug," Brit said as Sebastian dragged her by the arm.

"Okay, honey, we'll decorate soon."

As they sat in the owner's office, all Sebastian could do was think of the things he wanted to do with Brit. First he was going to take her to a sex shop. He knew the one he wanted to go to also. His buddy was a clerk there. He promised him forty percent off any gadget. Cool.

He had always wanted to use some of those gadgets hanging on the wall and sitting on the shelves, but until Brit, he had never found a lady he really wanted to share that experience with.

This was going to be fun sex. She was a playful minx and he wanted to explore that with her.

"Here is your lease." The owner handed them the contract.

"Great," Sebastian said. "And here is the first six months' rent." He wrote a check and got his receipt.

"Newlyweds?" the owner asked, smiling at them.

"Not yet," Brit said."

Sebastian wanted to puff out his chest.

On the drive back to the hotel, Sebastian couldn't stop touching Brit. "We're going to make a little stop," he announced.

"Where?"

"To a shop I mentioned earlier. Remember, I said Finland had the best sex shops in the world."

"You're serious, huh?"

"You have no idea."

Chapter Twelve

Brit looked around the place as Sebastian chatted with one of the owners of the store. Apparently, he knew this place well.

"He made some suggestions for some items we may want to purchase," Sebastian said, coming towards her holding a piece of paper.

"What? You actually asked for suggestions?"

"You're embarrassed."

"Well...I...yeah!"

Sebastian threw back his head and laughed. "My poor Brit. You may have traveled the world, but there are still some things that you're not used to. Sexuality is not hidden or talked about behind closed doors here. Now, we don't talk about it on the streets, but you know we have a more open attitude about it." Sebastian took her hand and began leading her through the store.

"But Sebastian, really..."

"I simply asked what items would bring the most intense pleasure and give you a longer orgasm."

Brit's mouth nearly hit the floor. He was so nonchalant, as though he'd asked the maitre'd what wine would go with this cheese. "You are kidding? Please

tell me you're kidding." But just then, the storeowner came up to them with an object in his hand.

"Found it," he said. "It's the last one. You know these have been selling out since they were advertised on television."

Brit was going to faint.



Back at the hotel, Sebastian ordered a special dinner. "I want you to put on your most glamorous outfit for tonight."

"An actual surprise that no one knows about? Not even the bellboy?" she asked.

Sebastian smirked. "Still a bit miffed about the toy store incident? This is a private evening for us. I want it to be special," Sebastian said, as he took off his jacket. "I'm putting on something special, too." He smiled and winked at her and went off to the bathroom.

Okay, dinner would be private, yet he'd share with the world how he planned to get her off? Brit shook her head and went into the other bathroom.

She took a shower, and it helped her relax. It was definitely the shower gel that was doing it. It came straight from Finnish waters, which were always clean, clear and healing.

As she got out of the shower, she heard Sebastian whistling in the other room, and then she heard room service come in and set things up. Sebastian and the bellboy laughed and spoke in their native tongue in an animated manner. She really needed to learn the language as soon as possible.

She began dressing, paying particularly close attention to her hair. Maybe she could start her own hair care line for woman of color living in cold, damp climates. She laughed to herself as she finished her do.

She walked into the room and stopped, stunned. "Sebastian. This is beautiful."

The room was filled with flowers. Flowers on the dresser, the floor, the end tables and a beautiful, low-lying bouquet on the table, which was surrounded by a bounty of delicious food.

"Wow! You really went all out." Brit sat down in the chair Sebastian was holding out for her.

"Nothing is too good for my lady. Especially tonight." He took his seat in front of her. "So, you're happy about our new beginning?"

"Yes," Brit cocked her head. Did he have doubts? Well in all fairness, she had some herself, but she was willing to go forward and take a chance on this man. He said he'd waited a lifetime for her. No man had ever said that to her and pursued her with such zeal. But she knew he was sincere and that made her decision easy.

"I just needed to make sure before I gave you this," Sebastian said as he handed her a velvet box.

"Sebastian." She opened the box and caught the bright sparkle of a cluster of huge diamonds. "It's beautiful!"

"Just like the woman I plan to make my wife. I'm not going to give you the chance to leave. I want you as my wife before the year is up."

"Holding me captive, eh? Well, there's no need. I accept."

Sebastian jumped up and whooped, grabbing Brit at the same time and raining kisses on her. "This dinner will stay warm with these trays. I have something better for you to feast on," he said, wiggling his brows.

"Oh."

"That toy I got, I want you to put it on."

"P...put on?"

He got up and went into the other room. He returned with a small box. "Open it."

She took it and opened it. She looked inside and was a bit confused. "I see panties...."

"Flip them over and look inside that little box there."

She did, but was still confused. Okay, the panties, a clit stimulator attached, that much she knew. What was in the box? When she opened it, she just looked up at Sebastian.

He chuckled. "It's a remote control. You put those panties on and I can turn you on from a block away."

Brit's eyes got big.

"Don't worry, we'll just use it here—for now."

"What will they think of next?" Brit said, looking at the panties.

"Go put them on. I'll take that." Sebastian grabbed the remote. Let me know when you have them on, okay?"

"Hey, you'll be running the whole show."

Sebastian grinned wickedly. "I know."



Sebastian couldn't wait to try this out. He had always wanted to be the omniscient observer of his lover's pleasure. But no woman had ever inspired him—until now.

But that was Brit. Always inspiring him.

"Okay, I have them on," Brit said from the bathroom.

"Stay there a minute," he hollered back. He put the batteries in the remote and started fiddling with the button. He was actually nervous. Then he activated the lowest level.

"Oh!"

That brought a smile to his face. Just knowing he could control her pleasure was making him hard as a rock. He would wait for his own pleasure, though. He wanted to get the most out of this night as he possibly could.

This was going to be fun.

Chapter Thirteen

Sebastian took off his shirt and stood in the middle of the room with his pants unzipped. This was turning him on more than he realized. He pressed the button again.

"Ooh, Sebastian! Let me come in there with you."

"Good idea."

She walked in the room with just the panties on. "Lie down, darling."

As she crawled on the bed, he hit the next level.

"Ahh! Sebastian!" She nearly fell off the edge of the bed.

"Does it feel good?"

"Yes, but that's dangerous. I can be anywhere with these on and you could...Ohh!"

"Make you come like a porn star," Sebastian said, grinning.

"You are wicked!"

"Don't worry. This is for our private playtime. Now lay down flat on your back." He came to the bed and stood over her. Beautiful. Simply beautiful.

"H-How long are you going to do that?" Brit asked, laughing nervously.

"Until I think you've had enough orgasms."

"But Sebastian...ooh!"

He hit the button that said heat and vibrate.

"Oh shit! Sebastian, please!" She tossed and turned, fondling her breast.

It was as though an invisible entity was having its way with her. It was the most erotic thing he had ever seen.



Brit was coming unglued. She never experienced anything this erotic before.

And this kinky.

"Wait! Ahh!" Brit didn't know which turned her on more, the actual panties or that Sebastian controlled her pleasure without touching her.

"Let's see what this top button does. It says 'heavy throb." He pushed it and Brit thought she was going to pass out.

"Sebastian!" She gripped the edge of the bed with both hands and was rocking back and forth. He didn't stop the pressure with this level. If the perverted smile on his face was an indication, he liked what it was doing to her, so he kept it there.

"Oh God! Yes!" Brit's first orgasm hit with such intensity, she thought her eyeballs would pop from her head. When her body settled down, Sebastian hit her with another jolt. "Fuck!" This was insane and he was merciless.

"Ah, look here, there's a button on the side that says 'piston.' Hmm, I wonder..."

He pressed it and the clit stimulator started going in and out of her. "Oh God, yes!" She rolled onto her left side then back to her right. Her second orgasm hit harder and she nearly rolled off the bed.

"I think two more orgasms will do. What do you think?"

This man was cruel. Brit lay in a pool of sweat with panties soaked from her juices, unable to form a decent sentence.

"I take your silence as an affirmative." Sebastian began hitting buttons again and Brit was thrashing around on the bed like a carp out of water.



Sebastian was more than ready for her now. He couldn't stand it anymore. He wanted to see if he could make her come ten times, but he couldn't even get her to six and still see straight. His cock was so hard, it was blinding him with pain.

He threw the remote on the chair nearby and began removing the rest of his clothes.

He climbed on the bed and pulled Brit's panties off. He tossed them to the floor and covered her body with his. Damn! She was hot. He immediately impaled her with one smooth stroke.

"Sebastian, I don't think...oh, baby!"

"I can make you come some more. Just relax and feel."

She relaxed beneath him, and he plunged into her over and over, bringing her to climax at least three more times. He finally had no choice but to let go and allow his own release. When he did, he nearly pounded her into the mattress and yelled until the windows vibrated. He collapsed in her embrace and they lay there for a few moments. They both needed to catch their breath and wait for the room to stop spinning.

"That was an eye-opening experience," Brit murmured in his ear.

"You're telling me. I take it you liked it?"

"Loved it!"

"Good. We'll use it from time to time. Oh, and let me know when you're willing to wear it outdoors."

That brought a look of panic on her face that made Sebastian laugh.

Epilogue

"The premier issue sold out the first month and the readers are demanding reprints!" Brit had to scream into the phone so her sisters could hear her above all the noise. They were having a party at Sebastian's office to celebrate the success of *Expats of Color Magazine*. It had been months in the making, but when it hit the newsstands, they couldn't keep up with the demand.

"Wow, I didn't know there were that many expats of color in Finland," Sydney said.

"It's not just Finland. Norwegians and Swedes are snapping it up, too. They want a magazine like it for their countries."

"That's great!" Atlanta said. "At least you didn't have to wait months to find out if it would be a success or not."

"I know...huh. Okay, honey. Sebastian wants me to join him and everyone for a toast."

"So you and the merman are really an item. Wow! Living in Finland, of all places. By the way, thanks for the free copy," Sydney said.

"Yeah, and thanks for the sweaters," Atlanta said. "Your merman with the super dick is fine with a capital F!"

Brit rolled her eyes. "Okay, on that note I'm leaving. I will see you guys soon, though."

"Bye!" her sisters said.

Brit turned around in the arms of her fiancé. "Here's to *Expats of Color*," she said, raising her glass.

"And here's to us," Sebastian said, raising his.

Brit kissed him. "This wouldn't have been possible without you. And to think it took us only five months to come together and realize our dream."

"But we have a lifetime to enjoy it."

The End

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My name is Stephanie Williams. I am a native to Los Angeles, born 43 years ago. I am a full-time home business owner in the export/import trade as well as a contract Purchasing Agent for a medical facility. I enjoy opera, classical music and am a huge history buff.

Reading is my passion and it is not unusual for me to read a book a week, whether it's War in Peace or short stories of Poe and of course romance and erotica. I've traveled extensively and it's not unusual to find me celebrating Christmas in the Land Down Under with a Shrimp on the Barbie.

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