



**SCARLET WILSON**  
The Boy Who Made  
Them Love Again



**MEDICAL  
ROMANCE™**



Scarlet Wilson

**The Boy Who Made Them Love Again**

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**Wilson S.**

The Boy Who Made Them Love Again / S. Wilson —  
«HarperCollins»,

From Dr Storm to devoted dad When Luke Storm ended his relationship with Abby Tyler, he thought that he was doing the right thing. Abby so wanted children and Luke knew he could never give them to her. Now, five years later, when he meets Abby again, and with a little boy of her own, Luke is rocked. She's as gorgeous and adorable as ever, but he realises that if he wants Abby back in his life, he has to let her special little son into his heart and become the father he never expected to be...

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## **Abby was engrossed in her son and didn't seem to notice Luke's reaction. When on earth had Abby had a child? And why didn't he know about it?**

For a second, just for the tiniest second, a wild thought flitted through his brain. He tried to approximate Reuben's age. Was he around four? Could, by some miracle, Reuben be his?

Almost as soon as the thought appeared, he shook it off. He was infertile. Tests had shown beyond any doubt that he was infertile. Reuben could never be his child. So whose child was he? And just how quickly had Abby moved on?

He cleared his throat, attracting her attention. 'You have a son.'

'Yes, yes I do.' Abby turned Reuben around in her lap to face Luke with a proud smile on her face. 'Reuben, this is Mommy's friend. He's called Luke and he's a doctor—like Mommy.'

Luke watched the little figure Abby had clutched closely to her chest. His heart was beating frantically. "Pleased to meet you, Reuben." He held his hand out to the little guy.

"How old is Reuben, Abby?"

"He's four," she answered quickly.

Four. A new sensation flitted through him. She'd replaced him almost instantly.

Fury started to build inside him. All rational thought was leaving the building. He was infertile. He couldn't have kids. That was the reason he'd broken up with her—because he couldn't fulfil her dreams of having a family. And he hadn't wanted to make her lose that chance.

And she obviously hadn't. Abby had moved on and had the family she deserved. So why did it hurt so much?

### **Dear Reader**

Do you remember 'the one that got away'? Everyone apparently has one and that's what this story is all about. Luke Storm and Abby Tyler have both taken different paths in life, but a set of extraordinary circumstances brings them together again and makes them realise what they've lost. However five years is a long time and the circumstances of both have changed, can they really rekindle what they had? As in any good medical romance the path of true love doesn't run smoothly!

This is my second book for Mills & Boon Medical™ Romance and I'm still very new and excited about being part of this line. One thing I've always loved about the medical romance line is the wide range of professions and settings that can be used. There is always the challenge of trying to find something that hasn't been used before and I relished the opportunity of setting this story around the White House Medical Service and their staff.

Please let me know what you think at [www.scarlet-wilson.com](http://www.scarlet-wilson.com)

Many thanks

*Scarlet*

**Scarlet Wilson** wrote her first story aged eight and has never stopped. Her family have fond memories of 'Shirley and the Magic Purse' with its army of mice, all with names beginning with the letter 'm'. An avid reader, Scarlet started with every Enid Blyton book, moved on to the *Chalet School* series and many years later found Mills and Boon.

She trained and worked as a nurse and health visitor, and currently works in public health. For her, finding Medical™ Romance was a match made in heaven. She is delighted to find herself among the authors she has read for many years.

Scarlet lives on the West Coast of Scotland, with her fiancé and their two sons.

**Check out Scarlet's fantastic debut**

**IT STARTED WITH A PREGNANCY**

The Boy Who  
Made Them  
Love Again  
Scarlet Wilson



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This book is dedicated to my mum and dad,  
Joanne Barrie Wilson and John Niven Wilson,  
who are, in fact, the best mum and dad in  
the world. They've raised three daughters  
who love them very much and cared for  
and nurtured six grandchildren with  
endless patience. Whenever either of my sons  
come out with a 'fascinating fact'  
I know where it came from!



## CHAPTER ONE

IF ABBY TYLER had known how the day was going to end she might not have got out of bed that day.

As it was, she leaned back in her chair, arched her back and then did something that she never did—put her feet up on the desk. Pelican Cove was quieter than quiet. She hadn't treated a patient in the last hour.

She took a sip of the strong, dark coffee she'd just made and nibbled on one of the nearby home-made oatmeal and raisin cookies. She gave a huge sigh and smiled over at one of the nearby nurses. 'Nancy, you make the best cookies.' Abby closed her eyes for a second. Recovery time. Reuben had woken at three a.m. and came through to tell her a story. The story had lasted the best part of an hour and had been full of animal noises and hand gestures. It seemed as though she'd been blessed with a child who didn't require much sleep. Through her heavy lids she could see the rest of the emergency-room staff giving her knowing nods and moving off to the far end of the reception desk. The staff here were a great, tight-knit team with a real community approach.

As an emergency-care paediatric physician Abby loved the twelve weeks a year that she covered in the community hospital—in fact, it was one of the reasons that she'd taken the job. San Francisco was much more frantic. This gave her the opportunity to do some much-needed paediatric outpatient clinics and practise emergency medicine.

There was a screech of tyres outside. It startled her, breaking her from the easing, gentle lullaby that had been repeating in her head. Seconds later a pair of heavy feet pounded inside. The dark business suit, crisp white shirt, flash red tie and shock of white-blond hair drew the immediate attention of the surrounding staff.

Abby blinked. Twice. Before breaking into a lazy smile and brushing the cookie crumbs from her scrubs. 'Luke Storm. I always knew some day you'd come walking back through my door. I never doubted that. Something made it inevitable.' The words were out of her mouth in an instant. An automatic natural reaction to him, adapted from a film they'd watched together as med students. She ran her eyes up and down his muscular frame. Still every bit the male model. 'So what can I do for you?'

'You can take your feet off the desk for a start.'

'Excuse me?'

'I take it you work here?'

Abby gestured to the white board on the wall with her name on it. 'I take it I do,' she answered calmly, refusing to let him rile her.

'What facilities do you have for premies?'

That got her attention. 'What?' She pulled her feet off the desk and stood up. 'What on earth are you talking about?'

'I don't have time for a debate, Abby. I need to know if you can deal with a premature delivery or not. And I need to know *now*.'

Abby watched in disbelief as her calm emergency unit was instantly transformed into a scene of chaos. Half a dozen dark-suited men, some with obvious bulges in their jackets, swarmed through the doors and immediately started covering exits whilst muttering into small silver dots on their lapels and holding their earpieces. 'What on earth...?'

Luke grabbed hold of her arm. 'What facilities do you have, Abby?'

Abby shrugged her arm from his firm grasp. Her brain shifting sharply into focus. 'This is a small 25-bed acute-care hospital, Luke. It's mainly used for routine surgeries and outpatient consultations. We have this emergency department and we have equipment for emergency deliveries

but we only have one neonate cot. Once stabilised we tend to transfer to San Francisco Children's Hospital.'

'Do you have a paed?'

It was obvious Luke wasn't thinking straight. What on earth had rattled him so much? Abby tilted her head, a smile dancing across her lips. His words were rapid and harsh and she could see from the deep frown lines in his forehead that a million different things were spinning around in his head. An expression she'd seen more than once.

Her pale-skinned hand reached across the desk and squeezed his golden tanned one. Like chalk and cheese. The way they'd always been with each other. '*I'm the paed, Luke.*'

His head turned abruptly towards her. 'You're the paed?' She could almost see the pieces falling into place in his head as the moment of realisation struck him. 'Of course you are. Then it's you that I need.' His hand closed around hers, pulling her towards the door. Just for a second she saw the characteristic gleam in his eyes that she remembered so well. 'Don't suppose you've got an obstetrician handy?'

'Actually, I do.' She ground to a halt, stopping him in his tracks. 'But I've no intention of phoning him until you tell me exactly what's going on. I take it you've got a patient for me?'

'Actually, I've got two—but the second one I can take care of myself.'

'What do you mean?' This was getting more bizarre by the minute.

'He's a cardiac patient. Where do you transfer your MIs to?'

She tugged on his hand. 'Stop, Luke,' she said in a low voice, and pulled him closer to her. Her senses were bombarded by the smell of him, bringing back fragments of past memories. But something was different. A new scent. A new cologne. Something fresh and sharp, reminding her of the crashing waves in the sea. She inched even closer. She could see the deep-etched frown lines on his brow, the tiny beads of perspiration glistening under the hospital lights. 'Slow down and take a deep breath and tell me what's going on.'

She heard him let out a deep sigh before he glanced over at one of the dark-suited men, who gave him a tiny nod of approval. He ran his fingers through his short white-blond hair, his eyes glancing at the ceiling, with one corner of his lip curling upwards. 'You're about to deliver the First Lady's baby.'

'What?'

Luke watched the colour rise in the unflappable Abby Tyler's cheeks. Her head flicked from side to side. 'I'm being had, right? This is one of those daft game shows, isn't it? You've got a hidden camera somewhere, haven't you?'

Luke stood stock still. He still quite couldn't believe that fate had brought him to an emergency unit that was staffed by Abby Tyler. Of all the places in all the world...

Abby put her hands on her hips. 'Luke, what on earth would the First Lady be doing in Mendocino Valley? Isn't she supposed to be on bed rest in the White House?'

Luke nodded and smiled wryly. 'That's what the world is supposed to think. The truth is Jennifer Taylor would never have stayed on bed rest in the White House, which is why she's here.'

Abby shook her head. She couldn't believe this was happening. And she hadn't worked out what was more incredible to her—the fact the First Lady was in Mendocino Valley and nobody knew, or the fact that Luke Storm had just catapulted his way back into her life. She pulled her professional head back on. 'How far along is she? Thirty? Thirty-two weeks?' Abby's mind whirled, trying to remember what she'd seen in the press.

'She's just under thirty-two weeks.'

'Where on earth has she been staying and how come no one knows about it?'

Luke smiled. 'She's been staying in one of the mansions in the hills around here—I think you call it "Millionaires' Row"? He named a hugely popular rock star who owned one of the nearby houses. 'Apparently he's good friends with the President and offered his house to them. His staff are very loyal and word just hasn't gotten out.'

‘But how did she get here?’ He could see her mentally calculating the distance in her head between Mendocino Valley and Washington before coming to the obvious conclusion. ‘Who on earth let a woman in her condition fly?’

Luke gave a snort. ‘You haven’t met Jennifer Taylor yet, have you? Prepare yourself. And remember, she didn’t exactly fly commercial. And she had her own obstetrician with her.’

Abby’s face clouded in puzzlement. ‘Well, where the hell is he?’

‘He’s the MI I’m about to treat.’ Abby shook her head at the unfolding scene around her.

And he watched her. Drinking up her appearance, just for a second. The long sheen of blonde hair that he remembered had been cut into a sharp bob, short at the back with tapering longer layers at the front. It suited her, highlighting her high cheekbones and clear skin. He caught a waft of something. Strawberries. His eyes fell to her glistening pink lips. She was still using the same strawberry lip gloss that she’d used all those years ago. It gave him an instant reminder of kissing her and tasting that sweet, juicy gel, sending waves of nostalgia down his spine. His eyes swept over her body. Even hidden in shapeless green scrubs he could see the outline of her small breasts and neat hips. Perfection couldn’t be hidden. And in amongst all his panic and confusion a wave swept over him—something that only Abby had ever done to him. He felt as if he had just come home.

His eyes fell to their hands, still tightly clasped. When was the last time he had held Abby’s hand? Had it been the night she’d broken up with him? When she’d said she wouldn’t give up on her dream of a family? Had that really been five years ago?

‘Luke?’

Her voice pulled him back from memory lane. His head flicked around and he pulled her towards the doors and grabbed a nearby gurney. ‘Come with me, Abby.’

She stopped, just for a second, and glanced towards the open-mouthed staff. ‘Nancy, set up for an early delivery, please.’

She grabbed hold of the rail on the gurney and followed as he pulled it outside towards a sleek black car. The fresh sea winds immediately caught her hair, tossing and turning it before landing it back on top of her head like freshly whipped meringue. She tried to push the tangled mess from her eyes as she took in the scene in front of her.

Six black-suited men were strategically positioned around the car, their eyes scanning in every possible direction. The faint whoop-whoop of helicopter blades could be heard in the distance. A craggy-faced man put his hand on Luke’s arm as his eyes ran up and down the full length of her body, ‘Who’s this?’ The voice was brusque and gruff.

‘Our saviour.’ Luke’s eyes caught hold of Abby’s and she took a deep breath. Five years on and nothing had changed. He could still stop her heart with one look. And it killed her. Because everything *had* changed.

The nearside door was open and Luke gestured for her to look inside. She bent forward, removing more blonde strands of hair from her mouth, and peered inside.

‘You’re not going to put me on that, are you?’ The words were straight to the point with only the slightest hint of strain in them.

Abby smiled at the pale face ahead of her and ducked inside the car out of the sea winds. ‘Hi, I’m Abby, one of the doctors at Pelican Cove.’ The spacious interior of the car nearly made her laugh out loud. Her entire Mini Cooper could fit inside the rear passenger space. She slid along the cream leather seats and looked at the familiar face next to her.

Jennifer Taylor was the darling of the nation. A feisty, intelligent lawyer, she had refused to stop working when her husband had become President. She campaigned tirelessly for human rights and wasn’t afraid to put her neck on the line when necessary. More importantly, she was also the first First Lady in nearly fifty years to deliver while her husband was in office.

Abby took in her short gasps, her grey jogging suit and trainers and her normally immaculate brown hair pulled back into a ponytail. The press would have a field day if they saw her like this— in

all the news reports Abby had never seen this woman with so much as a hair out of place. She could see the worry lines across her brow and the fatigue in her eyes. She leaned over and took her hand. 'I think the gurney is for the other guy.' She nodded in the direction of the sweating, grey-haired man whom Luke was trying to assist out of the front passenger seat. 'Do you want me to get you a wheelchair or do you think you can walk in?'

Jennifer looked up through her heavy eyes with steely reserve. 'I'm walking.'

'Okay, let me help you.' Abby slid back along the leather upholstery and waited for Jennifer to swing her legs from the car. She slid an arm around her waist and guided her inside, surrounded on all sides by the black brigade.

Nancy met her at the entrance door and gestured towards a nearby side room. 'I've set up in here,' she said, pointing her to the room, which had been hurriedly filled with monitoring equipment.

Luke gave a shout at her back as the gurney went speeding past and into the nearby trauma room. Abby watched thankfully as one of her nurse practitioners gave her a quick nod and followed Luke into the room.

Abby settled Jennifer on the bed and swung her legs up. She pulled out the backrest and watched in amusement as Nancy refused entry to any of the bodyguards. 'Wait outside, gentlemen. You can't be in here while the lady is being examined.' She shut the door with a quick slam and turned to face them, folding her arms across her chest. 'They won't get past me.'

Abby switched on the monitors and started hooking them up. 'So tell me, Mrs Taylor, what's been happening today?' She turned her head to Nancy. 'Can you take a BP reading and get me a foetal heart rate, please?'

Jennifer shifted uncomfortably on the bed. 'Call me Jennifer, please, I hate formality. I started having back pain last night. Nothing major, just a general feeling of unease and nothing I could do would make me feel any better. Then at around breakfast time today, just after I'd used the bathroom, I felt a little trickle run down my leg.'

'Your waters have broken?'

'I think so. Dr Blair was going to check for me but then he started getting chest pain and...' Her voice tailed off as tears brimmed in her eyes. 'This isn't supposed to happen. I'm only meant to be here to rest for a few weeks and then I was going to go back to Washington to have the baby there.' She lay back against the pillows, resting her hands on her swollen abdomen. 'Charlie is going to be so worried.'

Abby gave a little smile at her pet name for her husband, the most important man in America, and gave her hand a squeeze. 'Has someone told your husband that you're here?'

Jennifer rolled her eyes in response. 'Oh, yes.'

Abby glanced over the notes Nancy was making of the foetal heart rate and the First Lady's blood pressure. Everything looked good.

'Don't worry, Jennifer. We'll take good care of you. I'm going to examine you in a few minutes to confirm that your waters have broken. Have you had any contractions at all?'

Jennifer shook her head. 'No, just the back pain. It's still there now.'

Nancy raised her eyebrow then moved quickly towards the door as it started to open. 'Yes, can I help you?' Her voice echoed around the room.

'Just to give you these, Mrs Taylor's medical records. Dr Storm said that you would need them.' A black-covered arm appeared through the tiny space in the doorway, brandishing a thick brown envelope, which Nancy snatched away before banging the door shut again.

Jennifer slumped back against her pillows. 'Poor Luke,' she murmured. 'I thought he was going to blow a gasket when he realised what was going on. I didn't know what else to do when Dr Blair started having chest pain—he seemed the most obvious person to call.' Her voice drifted off.

Abby felt as if she was missing something. 'How do you know Luke?'

'He's my husband's cardiologist.'

‘The President has a cardiologist?’

‘My husband has a doctor for everything— whether he needs it or not.’ Jennifer gave a wry smile.

Abby gazed in wonder at the most watched woman in America. She might be the First Lady but she was still a first-time mom-to-be, who was probably just as worried as every other potential mother in the whole world. Her waters had broken early and the first thing she’d done had been to phone a doctor for the man having chest pain. She hadn’t thought of herself first at all. This was some woman.

Abby gave a nod and slid the notes out from inside the envelope. ‘I’ll have a quick check over these and give our local obstetrician a call.’ She moved towards the door. ‘Nancy will stay with you for now and I’ll be back in five minutes.’

She stepped outside and directly into the path of six black-suited men. They seemed to be multiplying by the minute. ‘Excuse me,’ she said, sidestepping them and heading over to the nearby desk. She bent over to pick up the phone but was stopped as a firm bronzed hand slid in front of hers, picking up the phone first.

‘Hey!’

Luke shot her a dazzling smile. All white teeth and tanned skin. Just the way she liked him. Just the way she remembered him. More little sparks fired inside her, sending a feeling to the pit of her stomach like...like what? It had been so long she couldn’t remember.

‘Sorry, Abby, I’m first. I need to take Dr Blair to the cath lab. He’s a definite inferior MI.’ He waved the ECG under her nose. ‘Look at the ST elevation.’ Then he paused for a second, the smile draining from his face. ‘You do have cath-lab facilities, don’t you?’

Abby nodded as a look of relief swept visibly over his face. ‘Wait a minute, though, Luke. You’ve just come from Washington DC—you won’t have a licence to practise medicine here.’ Her brow furrowed. ‘Or is there some crazy dispensation for the President’s staff I don’t know about?’

He raised his eyebrow as the corner of his mouth turned upwards. ‘Yes and no. I can treat the President, but only the President, in any state. However, here...’ he swept his arm outwards ‘... I’ve just been lucky. I’ve been working with two of California’s universities and needed a licence to practise in the state. So don’t worry, Abby, I’m covered.’

She gave a little nod. ‘Just dial 032 and tell them what you’ve got. One of our nurse practitioners will monitor the patient for you and I’ll get one of the residents to come and assist you with the procedure.’

‘Will there be any issues with your own cardiologist?’

‘Absolutely not. Our own cardiologist is currently thirty-eight weeks pregnant and has a full clinic this morning.’ She gave a wave of her hand. ‘I’ll speak to her, you don’t need to worry.’ She listened while he finished the call, glancing over the medical records in front of her. Everything seemed good: no underlying conditions; no obvious problems with the baby. All antenatal care meticulously charted. Dr Blair was obviously no slouch—but then, this was the President’s baby.

She reached over to grab the receiver as he hung up, her hand brushing against his. A delicious little zing shot up her arm. One that she hadn’t felt in— how long? He must have felt it too as their eyes locked. And Abby stayed there. Frozen in that second in time. A whirlwind of electric memories all came back instantly—the long, lazy afternoons they’d spent together, the easy, comfortable relationship that they’d had together, the times when they’d both opened their mouths to speak and both said the same thing simultaneously, and the long, hot nights they’d spent locked in each other’s arms. In that instant she was twenty-four again, her long blonde hair blowing in the wind as they’d stood at the top of the hill in Washington and he’d promised that he would stay with her for ever. A promise that had soon been broken. Broken on that same hill only a few months later. A promise that had broken her heart and sent her tumbling into an abyss.

But time had passed now. Time that appeared to have etched a few fine lines into Luke’s forehead, making him seem older and maybe a little more careworn.

‘Hello? Hello? Is someone there?’

Abby jolted from the daydream she’d been hiding in and stared at the phone receiver in her hand. She’d dialled the number automatically without even realising that she’d done it.

‘Hi, David, it’s Abby Tyler here. I’ve got a bit of an obstetric emergency. I wondered if you would mind coming in for a consult?’

A smile danced across her lips as she listened to the voice at the end of the phone. She could sense Luke’s eyes on her, willing her not to say anything that would reveal the identity of their patient.

‘Ten minutes would be great. Thanks, David.’

She replaced the phone and grinned. ‘That’s our emergency obstetrician. He’ll be here soon.’

Luke leaned back against the nearby wall and folded his arms across his wide chest. His brow furrowed suspiciously. ‘Why do I get the feeling you’re not telling me something, Abby?’

She shook her head and winked at him. ‘You’ll see.’

A wave of fear swept across Luke’s chest. ‘No funny stuff, Abby. He’s definitely an obstetrician?’

‘Oh, yes, he’s definitely an obstetrician.’ One of the nearby nurse practitioners walked up quickly and touched Luke’s arm.

‘Dr Storm?’

He nodded swiftly.

‘We’ll be set up for you in the next ten minutes, I’m just going to get the patient.’ She nodded towards Abby. ‘Dr Tyler will tell you where we are.’ She carried on down the corridor and into the trauma room to collect Dr Blair.

‘Some things never change.’ Abby surveyed the surrounding chaos around her. Her once peaceful emergency department looked as if it had been invaded by a black-suited army.

‘What?’ Luke glanced around him.

‘Storm by name, Storm by nature.’

‘You know I hate it when you say that.’

‘That makes it all the more fun.’ She watched as one black-suited man talked into his jacket lapel, while holding his finger to his ear, as if listening for a reply. She raised her eyebrow at Luke. ‘We still have a problem here, Luke.’

‘What do you mean?’ The last thing he needed was more problems.

‘I’m a paediatrician. I do children—kids.’ She wiggled her hand in the air. ‘I do some babies but certainly not *early* babies. Not neonates. We might have an obstetrician but what we really need is a neonatologist. And I’m not that.’ She shook her head. ‘This really isn’t my specialty.’

Luke folded his arms across his chest. ‘I’ve never known you to run from a challenge.’

Abby waved her hand around her. ‘In an emergency situation I could probably muddle through. But if the baby needs supported ventilation then we just don’t have the facilities, and this *is* the President’s baby, Luke.’

‘I know that.’ He ran his fingers through his hair in exasperation. ‘Well, what the hell are you doing here? Mendocino Valley, of all places?’ His arm swept outwards across the expanse of the department.

Abby was instantly irritated. ‘What do you mean by that?’

Luke tilted his head. ‘Last time I saw you, you had just been offered the job of a lifetime in San Francisco. Five years later I find you here, in some backwater clinic in the middle of nowhere. What happened, Abby?’

Abby shook her head and carefully closed the notes in front of her, bringing them up and clutching them to her chest. ‘Just shows how little you really knew me, Luke. It might well have been the job of a lifetime, but it wasn’t *my* job of a lifetime. You happened, Luke. You made me re-evaluate my life. And even though I didn’t think it at the time, you probably did me a favour. I love

being here in Mendocino Valley. I do still work in San Francisco, but I only took the job because it means I can work here, in Pelican Cove, for twelve weeks a year. This is where I want to be.'

Luke's cool eyes watched her carefully, a wave of guilt sweeping over him. For the second time in five minutes he wondered what she wasn't telling him. She was holding the case notes to her chest as if she were protecting a closely guarded secret. The Abby Tyler he'd known had had the world at her feet. She'd been approached by three prestigious university hospitals to take part in their paediatric residency programmes. She'd been dedicated and focused. Something about this wasn't quite right. Why would the woman who'd been top of her class and had had the pick of any job be working in a backwater place like this?

## CHAPTER TWO

ABBY watched with a sinking feeling in her heart as the nitrazine paper turned the tell-tale shade of blue. She raised her head and gave Jennifer a rueful smile as she showed her the paper. 'Well, I think we can safely say that your membranes have ruptured.'

'They have?'

'Yes. This paper turns blue when it comes into contact with amniotic fluid.'

Jennifer blew out a long, slow breath from her pursed lips. 'It's too early. What happens now?'

Abby snapped off her gloves, walking quickly to the sink to wash her hands. She finished and sat down at the side of the bed next to Jennifer, trying to work out what to tell her.

'It won't really be up to me, it will be up to Dr Fairgreaves—the obstetrician that's coming to see you. I just needed to confirm your membranes had ruptured so I can give him the whole picture.'

'Do you need to examine me any further?' Jennifer gave a little grimace and Abby knew exactly what she meant.

She shook her head. 'No, actually, that wouldn't be a good idea right now. Ideally what we want to do right now is to delay you going into labour for as long as possible.'

'Tell it to me straight, Dr Tyler.'

Abby leaned over and held Jennifer's hand. 'There are a number of things for Dr Fairgreaves to consider.' She held up the buff-coloured folder. 'From your notes I see that you're currently 31 weeks and 4 days. He may decide to give you some steroids to help mature your baby's lungs in case of early delivery. He might also decide to give you some antibiotics to help prevent infection.'

'Am I going to deliver early?'

Abby shook her head. 'I'm not really qualified to tell you that. I do know that about 80 per cent of women whose membranes rupture go into labour within four days.'

Jennifer took a deep breath and her hands rested automatically on her swollen abdomen. 'What are my baby's chances?'

Abby shook her head. 'We'll talk about that when Dr Fairgreaves gets here. I want to hear what his professional opinion is before we start leaping to any conclusions. From right now, though, you're on strict bed rest.'

Jennifer threw up her hands in frustration. 'But I've already been on bed rest!'

Abby raised one eyebrow. 'Have you?'

Jennifer watched her carefully before finally answering, 'Well, maybe not *complete* bed rest.'

'We need to monitor your baby for any signs of distress and monitor you for any sign of infection.' She hesitated a little before continuing, 'It might also be advisable to move you to a hospital with better facilities for pre-term babies.'

Jennifer looked deep in thought and bit her bottom lip. 'Where would that be?'

'The nearest is San Francisco Children's Hospital. They have a special ICU for premature deliveries.'

'No.'

The voice was clear and decisive and took Abby completely by surprise.

'What?'

Jennifer folded her arms firmly across her chest. 'I'm staying here.'

Abby shook her head in disbelief. 'Why on earth would you want to stay here?'

'Wouldn't moving me be dangerous?'

Abby shifted uncomfortably. Jennifer's sharp retort unnerved her. In an instant she was in a witness box and being cross-examined by the more-than-capable lawyer. This wasn't her specialty and she was beginning to feel at little out of her depth. 'This is a conversation you need to have with your obstetrician.'



‘Oh.’

This response was different. Quiet and unsure. She’d gone from being a feisty lawyer to an imminent first-time mom in a matter of seconds. This woman was more scared than she was letting on.

‘What’s he like?’ Jennifer ran her fingers through her uncombed hair. ‘Your obstetrician.’ She hesitated for a second. ‘Is he good?’

Abby gave her a little smile. ‘Officially he’s retired. But in answer to your question he’s better than good—he’s great.’ She was interrupted by a heavy knock at the door.

‘Abby...Dr Tyler, can I see you please?’

Abby could hear the anxiety in Luke’s voice. She gave Jennifer a smile, picked up the notes and headed to the door. ‘I’ll be back in a few minutes.’

She pulled a pen from her pocket as she opened the door. She wanted to make sure she’d recorded everything perfectly. With her head in the notes she walked straight into Luke’s broad chest.

‘Ow! Luke, what are you doing?’

Luke shook his head and pointed sideways in exasperation. ‘Please tell me that isn’t your obstetrician.’

Abby followed to where his finger was pointing to a small dishevelled character dressed from head to toe in fishing gear, with an upright fishing rod perched precariously in his hand. He was surrounded on all sides by men in black suits and was protesting loudly, ‘Who the hell are you lot?’

Abby’s face broke into a wide smile. ‘It certainly is,’ she said as she shouldered her way past the security detail. ‘Dr Fairgreaves, I’m so glad you’re here.’ She wrapped him in a warm embrace and pulled him to one side. ‘We need to have a private chat about our patient.’

She handed him the buff-coloured folder and watched as he ran his eyes over the presidential seal on the bottom corner of the notes. His eyes narrowed. ‘Who’s this?’ He gestured in frustration as a figure appeared at Abby’s side.

Luke. ‘I was just about to ask you the same question,’ he muttered under his breath.

‘I might be old, son, but there’s nothing wrong with my hearing.’

‘Well, do you always come to work looking like this?’ Luke gestured towards the fishing gear.

‘Son, I try not to come to work at all if I can help it. I’m retired.’

‘You’re retired?’ Luke’s voice rose in pitch.

Abby cleared her throat loudly before the conversation got out of hand. ‘Luke, I’d like you to meet Dr David Fairgreaves, our honorary obstetrician, and, David, I’d like you to meet Dr Luke Storm, he’s a cardiologist from Washington who brought the First Lady in.’

David’s brow furrowed in confusion. ‘Why the hell is a cardiologist bringing a pregnant lady to hospital?’

Abby smiled. In an instant she wasn’t the First Lady any more, she was simply an expectant mother, like any other. She loved that about David Fairgreaves—even though he’d been pursued by many dignitaries and celebrities for his services, he never wasted time on pomp and ceremony. His patients were just that, *his patients*.

Abby slid her arm around David Fairgreaves’s shoulders, ‘Her own obstetrician is currently having an MI—Luke is about to treat him.’

David stared at Luke for a moment before finally grunting, ‘Fine, then.’ He sat down and started reading the notes.

Luke stood frozen to the spot. ‘David Fairgreaves? *The* David Fairgreaves?’

Abby nodded in recognition of the man who was famous all over America for his groundbreaking work. He’d received numerous awards for pioneering the procedure to retrieve stem cells from the umbilical cord. Something that seemed almost commonplace now, but at the time had been a real revolutionary leap of faith. He’d done that while continuing to work as an obstetrician and was known as one of the best in America.

Luke groaned. 'This is turning into a bad TV show. What on earth is David Fairgreaves doing here?'

'You mean in this backwater place?' She couldn't help the sarcasm that crept into her voice. Then, seeing the expression on his face, Abby sneaked her hand around his waist and gave him a quick hug. Luke's stress levels seemed to be going through the roof. The warmth of his body immediately poured through her skin. She raised her head up towards his and smiled. 'Fishing.'

'What?' Luke looked totally bewildered.

She shrugged her shoulders. 'He's got a fishing boat in Pelican Cove, and now he's retired he spends half the year here. We have an informal arrangement together that I can call him out for any obstetric emergencies and he loves it.'

Luke studied the man in the rumpled clothes sitting in the chair in front of him. 'He looks about a hundred and ten,' he whispered.

'Well, he's not quite that old,' she whispered back, 'and he's as sharp as a tack so don't annoy him.'

Luke looked as if he could spontaneously combust at any second. Abby pulled her arm from his waist and turned to face him, taking both his hands in hers.

'Look on the bright side, Luke. If someone had asked you to pick any doctor in the world to deliver the President's pre-term baby, who would you have picked?'

She watched as the significance of her words began to sink in. The deep wrinkles in Luke's forehead began to soften. 'I guess you're right,' he said.

'You know I am.' She lifted herself up on her tip toes and kissed the tip of his nose. 'Now, go and deal with your MI. I'll come and find you if there's any problems.'

He nodded, still lost in thought, before taking a deep breath and pulling his hands from hers. 'Okay,' he murmured as he turned and started to head off down the corridor.

Abby watched for a second. Her lips felt as if they were on fire. A thousand little pins were prickling them, leaving them alive with sensation after touching his skin.

'Dr Tyler?'

Abby started at the deep voice behind her.

'Yes?'

'I'm James Turner.' He held out his hand towards her. 'I'm in charge of the protective detail for the First Lady.'

Abby nodded silently. The craggy-faced man from earlier. He was a large, imposing fellow with a small scar that snaked across the bridge of his nose. Her mind exploded with a thousand possibilities as to how it had got there, before his intense gaze jerked her back into focus. 'Sorry,' she muttered. 'What can I do for you, Mr Turner?'

'This is your department?' It didn't sound like a question coming from his lips, more like a statement.

'Yes, it is.'

'Well, sorry, ma'am, but I need to close your emergency department down.'

'What?' Abby's screech of disbelief echoed around the building. 'You most certainly will not. I won't let you. You don't have the authority to do that...'

He silenced her by holding his hand up directly in front of her face.

'I do have the authority. As of now, your department is closed. I also need access to all your personnel files.'

'What?' This was just going from bad to worse. He wanted to close her department and then spend the day looking at files?

'I need to have access to everyone's history. We need to run security checks on everyone in the building.'

'You want to do what? No! You can't do that!'

‘Yes, yes, I can. And I will.’ His broad hand had caught her arm to stop her gesticulating wildly. ‘Nothing is more important than the safety and security of the First Lady.’

Abby took a deep breath. ‘Look, Mr Turner, while I appreciate you have a job to do—so do I. This is a small community.’ She waved her arm around the department. ‘I know every single member of staff here. None of them are a risk to the First Lady’s safety or security. I can personally vouch for them all.’

‘That’s very nice, Dr Tyler.’ He shot her a white-toothed, crooked grin. ‘But it’s not going to cut it. We’ll run our own checks on everyone here.’ He glanced around the bustling department. ‘And we’re going to have to restrict the number of staff.’

Abby shook her head. ‘This is a community hospital, Mr Turner. We serve a widespread population that doesn’t have easy access to emergency facilities. If you close us down, the nearest emergency unit is 50 miles away. If there’s an accident at one of the nearby saw mills, or at the harbour, that travel time could cost the life of a patient. We also have links with a special-needs school near here—Parkside. We often have children brought in with breathing or feeding difficulties—taking them somewhere else would cause immense difficulties.’

She glanced towards the white board, which only showed three patients in the department at the moment—two of whom were with James Turner. ‘We’re not normally this quiet.’ Her mind was spinning with endless possibilities. ‘I know this isn’t an ideal situation but the most realistic solution is to move Jennifer Taylor to one of the ward areas once Dr Fairgreaves has examined her. If she’s out of the emergency department, do you really have to close us down?’ Abby couldn’t keep the pleading sound out of her voice. She just couldn’t turn patients away, not when they needed her. ‘I’ll let you see the personnel records if you want—just let me check with the hospital administrator. You’re not going to find anything anyway, but please don’t close down the emergency department.’

‘Do you have floor plans for the hospital?’

He hadn’t moved a muscle. Abby was sure he hadn’t even blinked.

‘What? Yes...yes, I think so.’ She pointed over his shoulder. ‘They’ll be in the hospital administrator’s office.’

‘I’ll get back to you, Dr Tyler.’ He turned swiftly on his heel and stalked off in the direction of the nearby office.

Abby leaned back against the nearby wall and breathed a huge sigh of relief. There was only one other patient in the department right now. Dr Fairgreaves was dealing with Jennifer Taylor. She’d need to wait and see what his recommendations would be. She glanced at her watch and stared up the corridor. She could almost feel the invisible pull. Luke was up there. Probably performing an angioplasty. It had been years since she’d seen him at work. Maybe it was time to go and offer some moral support?

\* \* \*

Luke’s head was spinning. He pushed open the door to the changing room with unexpected venom and started as it thumped off the wall. The First Lady was going to have her baby. Her obstetrician had had an MI. The new obstetrician looked like a tramp but had the credentials of a king. And they were stuck in some backwater part of Mendocino Valley. Stuck with Abby Tyler. He couldn’t have made this up.

He tugged at his red tie and undid the buttons on his shirt, stuffing them in a nearby empty locker. Behind him he found a variety of sizes of theatre scrubs and pulled the familiar clothing over his head.

And she’d kissed him. The lightest kiss, as if a feather had brushed the tip of his nose, and it had sent his blood soaring through his veins as if a rocket had just taken off. What on earth was happening? They’d laughed through their medical training together, stressed through their exams, but spent most of their time in each other’s arms. And for a while he had never been happier. The dark cloud that had hung over his head since his brother had died had finally lifted. He’d met the woman

of his dreams. The woman he wanted to spend the rest of his life with. Until she'd started to talk about the future. *Their* future. A future that involved them having a family. And the dark cloud had appeared again, nestling around his head and shoulders until it had completely enveloped him.

They had been midway through their specialist training by then—he in cardiology, she in paediatrics. And he'd begun to see her in a completely different light. Whenever she'd spoken about the kids, even the ones with terrible outcomes, she'd had a sparkle in her eyes. On the few occasions he'd gone to pick her up from the ward, he'd never found her stuck in an office with her head in the notes—no, she had always been right in the middle of things, leading the games in the middle of the ward, usually with a child under each arm.

He'd seen a few of his friends start to flourish when they'd commenced their specialty, becoming more animated and enthusiastic when they'd spoken about their work. But Abby had truly blossomed. She had excelled at her job and hadn't hidden her thrill at finally specialising in paediatrics. And after years of study that's when she'd started to plan ahead. To plan for a family. A family he could never have. And that's when he'd broken her heart. That's when he told her he was infertile—an unfortunate complication of teenage mumps.

There had been so many other things going on in his life at the time, and although he had known it was important, he hadn't taken the time or had the maturity to understand the wider implications—that one day he would meet the woman of his dreams and she would want a family. A family he couldn't give her.

Maybe it was his fault? Maybe he should have told her right from the beginning that he couldn't have kids. But then again, it wasn't your everyday normal topic of conversation. But three years into their relationship—when he'd started to see the signs—he'd sat her down and told her.

To give her her due, Abby had made all the right noises, told him it didn't matter, that she loved him and that they would find a way to have a family together. But for Luke it had been the death knell of their relationship.

From the moment he'd heard the word 'infertile' he'd blocked out all thoughts of a family. Surely there was a hidden message there? If he couldn't have kids naturally, maybe he wasn't meant to have kids?

She'd talked about donor sperm, adoption, other possibilities—but he hadn't wanted to think about those options. Truth was he wasn't ready to consider those options as he hadn't really faced up to his infertility yet. So he'd shut himself off from those conversations and had point-blank refused to consider any possibilities.

Every time after that he'd looked at Abby, he'd felt as if he was cheating her. Cheating her out of the opportunity to be a mother.

Five years they'd been together but they'd slowly, but surely, drifted apart.

The door on the other side leading into the theatre swung open. 'Dr Storm?' A pretty Asian woman looked at him, her dark hair poking out from under a theatre cap. He nodded.

She stuck out her hand. 'Good, I'm Dr Lydia King. Abby sent me along to assist you.' He gave her a little nod in recognition as he shook her hand and she backed out the door again. 'I'll just check on the patient and see you in there.'

A wave of anticipation swept over Luke as he pushed open the doors and entered the cardiac cath lab, quickly followed by a wave of nausea, most likely because he hadn't had a chance to eat yet today. He glanced about him quickly, taking in the layout and equipment available. One of the NPs appeared at his side. 'We're all set up for you.' She pointed in the direction of the sinks. 'You can scrub up over there and I'll gown you up. Would you like to come over and speak to Dr Blair first?'

Luke gave her a quick smile. 'Of course I would.' It only took three strides to cross over to where Dr Blair was lying on the table, monitors attached, pale and sweaty. 'How's Jennifer?' he gasped.

Luke gave him a quick pat on the shoulder. 'She's just being examined now by one of the obstetricians but she's doing fine. Let's worry about you first.'

He watched the rapid, shallow breaths. 'Let me explain the procedure to you.'

Dr Blair waved his hand in the air. 'Son, don't teach an old dog new tricks, just stick the thing in and get this blockage cleared. I feel as if a train is sitting on my chest,' he wheezed.

Luke nodded. 'Give me a few minutes while I scrub up and I'll talk to you while we're doing the procedure.' He cast his eyes over one of the nearby monitors. 'Can Dr Blair have some oxygen, please?'

The NP nodded before pulling a mask over Dr Blair's head. She followed Luke over to the sink and waited while he scrubbed up. The door opened and he turned as Abby came in.

'Hi, Luke. You don't mind a spectator, do you? I don't get the chance to come in here much.'

Luke shook his head and shot her a gleaming smile from beneath his blue theatre hat. 'Of course I don't, Abby, you're welcome in my cath lab any time.'

The words sent a shiver running down Abby's spine and she felt a little warmth in her cheeks as she looked anxiously around the room. Had anyone else noticed? No, everyone else was going about their daily business. No one had noticed a thing. Maybe it was all in her mind?

And then he began. And it was like watching a master at work.

'Are we ready to start?' Luke asked Lydia and she gave him a quick nod as she finished administering the sedative.

'Okay, Dr Blair, I'm just going to insert a little local anaesthetic down here.' Abby watched as Luke swabbed the groin area surrounded by surgical drapes then numbed the area with local anaesthetic. He waited a few moments before lifting a scalpel and making a small nick into the skin, then expertly inserted the sheath into the artery.

With slow and deliberate actions he watched the X-ray monitor carefully as he slowly guided the catheter into place until it reached the site of the blockage. Over the course of the next 30 minutes he inserted the contrast material and established the full extent of the blockage.

'Okay, Dr Blair, there is quite a significant blockage in your artery so I'm going to insert a stent to ensure we keep your artery open.' He turned his head and exchanged a few words with Lydia, who gave him a nod in approval.

'I'm going to use one of the newer drug-eluting stents. Have you heard of them?'

Dr Blair gave a little shake of his head from the theatre table.

'This type of stent is coated with a medication that is slowly released to help keep the blood vessel from re-narrowing. They've just recently been approved for clinical use in the coronary arteries and I've had some really favourable results when I've used them.'

'Whatever you think, Doc.' Dr Blair waved his hand in nonchalance from the effect of the sedatives.

Luke gave a little smile and continued. Abby watched from the sidelines. He was an entirely different character in here. In his familiar medical setting Luke was the calmest man in the room. The consummate professional, who was relaxed and happy in his field of expertise. She almost laughed. She'd forgotten just how good he was. But take him out of his expert field...

A smile danced across her lips as she remembered the look on his face when he'd entered her emergency room—with his furrowed brow and anxiety levels reaching skyward. Not to mention when he'd first set eyes on Dr Fairgreaves in his fishing gear. She'd thought at that point he was going to blow a gasket at the thought of some country bumpkin delivering the President's baby. But in here he was cool, calm and collected. None of the previous worries or anxieties showed. She watched as he spoke quietly to his surrounding staff, expertly guiding the stent into place, before removing the guide wire and catheter and applying firm pressure on the site.

He stood there for ten minutes, continuing to reinforce to Dr Blair what he'd done and giving instructions on follow-up care to the staff. 'Can we keep him flat initially, please, and monitor the catheter site for bleeding and swelling? You can give me a call if there are any problems.' He looked over his shoulder. 'Abby, do you have an emergency page you can give me in the meantime?'

Abby lifted her hand to show the pager she was already holding in her hand. 'Your wish is my command.' She laughed. 'Just as well I switched my telepathic powers on this morning.' She turned to the other staff. 'You'll be able to page Dr Storm on 556. If you forget, I've given his details to the switchboard operator.' She turned back to Luke, just as his stomach let out a loud rumble. 'Come on, I'll wait with you while you change. I think it's about time we had a coffee.'

Music to his ears. This was the weirdest day in history. Luke smiled as he held open the door for her. Thank the Lord for mixed changing rooms. Abby walked in front of him and his eyes fixated on her butt. She was wearing the same thin green scrubs he was, but on her they seemed so much more alluring. He squinted, trying to see through them. Where was her VPL? There was none. What did that mean? He felt a rush of blood. Thank the Lord that no one else was in here. 'Do you do killer-strength coffee here?'

She raised her eyebrow. 'In this backwater town? Do you still take four shots in one cup?'

The door banged shut behind them and he caught her by the waist and spun her around. 'What do you think?'

Through the thin scrubs that she was wearing he could feel the warmth of her skin. Her head was just below his chin and there was that strawberry lip gloss again. Invading his senses and making every hair on his body stand on end. He gave out a little involuntary groan as she stepped closer, pressing her body against his. To hell with decorum. There had been too many distractions today already.

'I think my telepathic powers are still working,' she whispered, fixing him with her deep brown eyes. 'And you're not thinking about coffee any more.'

'Five years is a long time, Abby,' he growled.

'Five years is a *very* long time, Luke.'

It was all the indication he needed. His hands crept around the edges of her waist, pulling her even closer, pressing her firm breasts against his muscled chest. Her head was tilted upwards towards his. Her eyes already half-shut, lips slightly parted in readiness for his kiss.

Using all the restraint he could muster, he bent his head and kissed her lightly, slowly, his teeth brushing her bottom lip. Her hands slid up around his neck, pulling him even closer. This was heaven. Heaven that he hadn't known in five years.

The kiss grew deeper, more passionate, bringing with it the most natural, primal response. This would be the time in the movie that the romantic music started playing and they both fell to the floor in the bedroom of the beach house, with the patio doors wide open to the beach, a tropical sunset and waves lapping up towards them. But it wasn't.

Right now all he wanted to do was have her. Right here. Right now. On the changing-room floor. Up against the wall. He didn't care.

He slid his hand inside her scrub trousers. Bare skin. He almost groaned out loud. Then his fingers caught it, the edge of her thong. Abby in a thong. Now, there was a sight he hadn't seen in years. His fingers flicked a little lower and she let out a gasp.

It stopped him in his tracks. Luke stepped back reluctantly, releasing her from his grasp, knowing that at any moment anyone could walk through either of the changing-room doors.

'Abby...'

'Don't. Don't say anything, Luke.' Her breathing was hard and ragged. She adjusted her scrub top, which had ridden up past her waist, pulling it down sharply to reveal her erect nipples, clearly visible through the thin fabric.

His eyes fixated on the view, causing her to look down and cross her arms in front of her chest in embarrassment. 'Stop it.'

'I wasn't doing anything.' The corners of his lips turned upwards in the beginnings of a smile.

Abby sat down on the nearby bench and put her head in her hands. 'This is madness.'

Luke hovered for an instant, unsure of what to do next, before sitting down next to her. His thigh brushed against hers and she jerked her leg away.

Her fingers parted slightly and she peeked out at him. 'Stop touching me.'

He raised his eyebrow. 'I am not having a conversation with a pair of hands.'

'You're going to have to, because I can't stand looking at you.'

'No, I'm not.' His broad hands enveloped hers and gently pulled them away from her flushed face. 'We're adults, Abby, not children.'

'You're making me feel as if I'm eighteen again.'

Laughter lines appeared all around his eyes as a huge smile took over his face. He leaned forward and whispered in her ear, 'Now, that I really *would* like to see again.'

She swatted at his leg as a new wash of red swept up into her cheeks. 'Stop it. No, I mean it, stop it.'

Luke leaned back against the wall, folding his arms across his chest as he watched her babble. He was amused. The unflappable Abby Tyler was flustered. This was twice in one day. Had he ever seen her this way before?

She stood up and started pacing across the room. 'You've got a lot of nerve, you know? Coming in here with the First Lady, *the First Lady* no less, and wreaking havoc in my emergency room. And as for the black brigade—they seem to have an amazing ability to self-replicate—they're like a virus. One minute there's five of them, two minutes later there's ten of them! Where do they come from?' She threw her hands in the air in exasperation. 'And James Turner—the Man in Black— threatened to shut my emergency department! And do you know they're checking the personnel files of all my staff? How dare they? Bursting in here, taking over the place, then checking on my staff, *my staff*! Who do they think they are?' Her voice had reached fever pitch by now.

Abby was frustrated. She was *beyond* frustrated. Sexually frustrated. Something she hadn't experienced in five years. She'd just gone from the starting blocks to practically the finishing line in the flicker of an eye. Or more like the flicker of a finger.

But this wasn't her. She didn't do things like this any more. So why were her legs like jelly? Why couldn't she look him in the eye? And why was she ranting and raving like an idiot? Things had changed. She couldn't do anything like this now.

'Have you finished?'

'Hell, no! And as for you...' She pointed a finger at him accusingly. 'You virtually disappeared off the planet. No nice emails, no phone calls. Then you come in here after all this time and kiss me! Kiss me as if we've never been apart.' *And please kiss me again, only this time don't stop.* 'I don't know what you've been doing for the last five years, or where you've been, or who you've been with.' Her voice fell as a sudden realisation hit her. 'You could be married for all I know.' Her eyes fell automatically to his left hand. No ring. Her eyes met his. 'Are you?'

Luke shook his head. In an instant the colour had left her face, leaving her deathly pale. She looked as if she could fall over. He stood up and caught her by the shoulders. 'Abby, calm down.' He shook his head. 'I'm not married—of course I'm not married—I wouldn't be kissing you if I was.'

The words hung in the air. He lifted his finger and touched her cheek. 'And you know why there were no phone calls, no emails. Not because I didn't care, Abby. I cared *too* much. And we both had to move on. I couldn't do that if I'd seen or spoken to you every day—and it looks like you couldn't too. You moved here, remember?'

She looked stunned. He was touching her again and the heat from his body was electric, causing ripple effects all over again. She shrugged her shoulders out from under his grasp. 'I told you to stop touching me,' she muttered as she turned around and started pulling things from the locker in front of her. 'Here, put your clothes back on, please.' She shoved his trousers at him, her hands feeling the expensive fabric beneath her fingers. 'I guess you didn't buy these in Target, did you?'

Her eyes fell to the obvious lump in his scrubs. It was still there. It hadn't disappeared in an instant. After all this time she could still have a long-lasting effect on him. Was that good or bad? 'Well, hurry up and put them on, maybe they'll give you a little more coverage.' She turned and pulled

out his now crumpled white shirt and silk red tie, glancing at the labels. 'You must be Washington's best-dressed doctor.'

Luke shook his head and grabbed the shirt out of her hands, dropping it on the bench next to him as he pulled his scrub top over his head.

Abby stood frozen to the spot. The last time she'd seen those sun-kissed pecs and abs she'd been all over them. There was something really disconcerting about standing in an enclosed space with a half-dressed man who'd just kissed you. And his cheeky grin was infuriating her. No, *really* infuriating her.

This was all just a joke to him. He didn't know how much her stomach was churning. She didn't even care that the First Lady and her SWOT team were there. Well, maybe that wasn't strictly true. But the First Lady was a patient, and patients she could deal with. Ex-lovers who'd broken her heart she couldn't. Especially when they looked like Luke. With his white-blond hair, tanned skin and gleaming teeth he looked as if any minute now an ad company would come running in with their cameras, strap a surfboard to his back and whizz him off to an exotic beach location somewhere for a photo shoot.

She watched as he turned slightly to put his arm in his sleeve. Her breath caught in her throat as she saw something new, a little zigzag scar running across his shoulder blade. Before she had time to even think about it her finger was touching it.

'That's new. What happened?'

He stopped, leaving his shirt hanging halfway down his back as the tip of her finger lightly traced the line of the scar. 'Abby...'

'What?' She was mesmerised by the ragged, uplifted skin. Maybe Luke wasn't so perfect, after all?

Luke took a deep breath and glanced downwards. 'Stop touching me,' he growled.

She followed his gaze and pulled her hand back sharply. 'Oops, sorry.' She took a few steps and flattened herself against the far wall. She couldn't touch him from over there. Just as well. She averted her eyes as he stepped out of the flimsy scrubs and into his designer trousers. Well, she tried to move her gaze, but still happened to catch the slightest glimpse of his trademark white tight-fitting shorts. Shorts that left nothing to the imagination, causing her to feel a tingling sensation between her thighs.

'You're driving me crazy,' he growled again.

'Sorry.' She turned her back and found herself staring at the wall. Great. She was trapped in an enclosed space with a man she hadn't seen in five years and all she wanted to do was jump on him. Now she really was acting like a teenager. Who was this Abby Tyler? Time to change the subject.

'So how did you get the job?'

'What job?'

'Working for the President, of course!'

'Oh, that job.' She heard him rustling for a moment. 'You can turn around now.'

Could she? Would he be completely undressed and ready for her? She whipped around. There he was. Fully dressed and still looking good enough to eat. She almost gave a sigh of disappointment. 'Straighten your tie,' she said as she pointed at the crooked tie. 'I'd do it for you but I'm not allowed to touch.'

He gave her a sarcastic smile as he straightened his tie. 'I don't really work for the President. I'm just on his list.'

'What does that mean—on his list?'

Luke shrugged his shoulders. 'I think they just like to cover all eventualities. I was approached a few years ago and asked if I would be the President's cardiologist. They ran a huge number of checks on me, with my permission of course, and after a few months came back and explained that they would call if I was needed.'

'I thought all the President's doctors were from the military?'



Luke shrugged his shoulders. 'They usually are. But the military doesn't cover all areas. The President's physician is from the military and he's in charge of the White House medical unit. But some of the other specialists are like me—just called in when, and if, they're needed. Dr Blair was Jennifer Taylor's family obstetrician. She brought him with her, because it's been a long time since the White House needed an obstetrician.'

'So you've never actually met him?'

Luke shook his head. 'No, and today was the first time I'd met the First Lady too.'

'And here was me thinking that you were their best friend! I guess it didn't hurt that you were connected?'

His face darkened. 'I'd like to think they contacted me because of my professional expertise, rather than the fact my father's a senator.'

Abby flinched. Well, that was one way to dampen the sexual tension in the room. She should have known better. Luke's relationship with his father was strained enough, without her insinuating that he'd been given an easy route into a prestigious position. She'd forgotten how much he prickled at the mere mention of his father. 'I'm sure they did.' She held open the nearby door, allowing some cool, fresh air into the claustrophobic changing room—just what they both needed—and resisting the temptation to look and see if the telltale bulge in his trousers was under control yet. 'Are you ready? Let's go and get you that four-shot coffee you wanted.'

'Actually, I'm not strictly a four-shot drinker any more. I've mellowed.'

Abby choked in disbelief at the words. 'You? Mellowed? Well, I never thought I'd see the day!'

He quirked an eyebrow at her. 'I might surprise you.'

He grabbed the door and fell into step beside her, his arm draping easily across her shoulders, like it was the most natural thing in the world. And it was.

She gave him a sideways smile. 'Luke?'

'Yeah?'

'We're going to have to have some rules about touching...'

## CHAPTER THREE

THE canteen was small and informal, nothing like the chaotic and bustling university hospital canteen Luke was used to.

‘Your usual, Abby?’ the assistant called from behind the serving counter.

‘Thanks, Jan.’ She turned and looked at Luke. ‘What would you like?’

Luke resisted the temptation to say what came to mind and looked around, puzzled. The place was immaculate but he couldn’t exactly see what food was on offer. ‘What’s your usual?’

Abby gave a little smile and glanced at her watch. ‘You probably expect me to have something healthy like fruit juice and an apple but, at this time of day, and because nine times out of ten I miss lunch, it’s a latte and one of Jan’s homemade pancakes.’

‘Mmm, that sounds good. I’ll have the same.’

‘Make that two, Jan,’ she shouted over her shoulder.

Luke stuck his hand in his pocket and pulled out some money as two steaming tall latte glasses appeared, followed by two plates with hot pancakes. His stomach growled loudly at the appetising aroma, reminding him how long it had been since he’d eaten.

Abby waved her arm. ‘Put your money away— I’ve got a tab.’ She lifted the tray and walked over to a nearby table, sitting down and handing him his latte glass and plate. The canteen was quiet, with only a few other people sitting at the surrounding tables.

Luke leaned over and took a deep breath. ‘Mmm, this smells great. I haven’t had home-made pancakes in years.’

Abby bit her lip. When they’d lived together as medical students home-made pancakes had been one of their Sunday-morning rituals, along with a number of other things... Luke obviously didn’t remember. Maybe reliving the past wasn’t as good as Abby thought it was.

He looked around him. Sunlight was streaming through the nearby window, which overlooked the lush green gardens. The canteen was at the back of the hospital, facing onto the hills. The garden beds were packed with brightly coloured flowers and obviously well tended. The bushes were shaped and trimmed into neat round circles. So instead of feeling deprived of the ocean view, this really was a little piece of paradise.

‘So how long have you worked here, Abby?’

She took a sip of her coffee. ‘For the last five years. I was lucky, I was able to transfer from Washington to San Francisco on my residency programme. And when I got here, the programme included covering shifts down here. They never needed to ask me twice. Once I was qualified, the paediatrician post came up that included coverage down here and I leapt at the chance.’

Luke nodded. Things started slotting into place. She’d transferred almost immediately after they’d broken up. It wasn’t easy to swap residency programmes, so someone must have pulled some strings. He watched as Abby spread butter over her pancake.

‘What, no syrup?’

She shook her head. ‘My tastes have changed— just like yours.’ She pointed to his coffee.

Luke blinked. What did she mean, her tastes had changed? Was that a dig at him? She hadn’t kissed him as though her tastes had changed. She’d kissed him as though they’d never been apart. The silence in the air was heavy between them.

Luke opened his mouth to speak again but she interrupted him.

‘So what have you been doing in Washington? I’ve seen your name on a couple of research papers.’

‘You have?’ His eyes lit up with genuine excitement. His job was his passion. But more than that, she’d obviously been keeping tabs on his work. Why would she do that if she wasn’t interested? ‘Well, you’ll have seen I’ve helped in the development and clinical trials of one of the newer types of stents.’

She nodded in appreciation, her mouth now stuffed with pancake.

‘I’ve also been doing some drug trials—some in kids with cardiac conditions. I’ve been working with a paediatrician called Lisa Jones. Do you know her?’

It was all she could do not to choke on her pancake. Abby nodded again. Oh, she knew her all right. Lisa Jones, paediatrician extraordinaire—or so you would believe if you spoke to her. ‘Luscious Lisa’, her friends called her. Along with the motto *Never leave your man alone in a room with her*. Lisa did most of her best work in the horizontal position, especially around promotion time.

Her eyes were automatically drawn to Luke. With his blond hair, pale blue eyes and surfer-boy build and tan, he would be a prime target for Lisa. Something that made her feel physically sick. She pushed her pancake away.

‘So what *exactly* has Lisa been doing for you?’

Luke raised his eyebrows at the tone in her voice. ‘She’s been identifying suitable candidates for the study,’ he said pointedly. He bent forward and took a sip of his coffee. ‘I can see you’re obviously not in her fan club.’

‘Show me a woman that is.’

He shook his head. ‘She’s actually really clever and has a good grasp of the research ethics and principles required for drug trials.’

‘That’s not all she usually has a good grasp of.’

Luke put down his glass, a smile creeping across his face. ‘Abby, are you jealous?’

‘Why on earth would I be jealous?’ Right now she would cheerfully pull every one of Luscious Lisa’s mahogany locks from her head if she had a chance. A fist tightened around her heart. What on earth was wrong with her? She hadn’t seen Luke in five years—she had absolutely no right to feel jealous of any relationship he may, or may not, be having. So how come the thought of him playing bedroom hockey with Lisa Jones was driving her insane?

Luke shook his head and reached across the table for her hand. ‘I’ve never seen you so riled up. You’re usually so laid back you’re horizontal.’

‘Just like Lisa?’ The words were out before she had time to think about them.

Her pager sounded loudly, causing both of them to jump. They’d been so caught up in each other that they’d almost forgotten about the situation surrounding them. Luke reluctantly released her hand.

Abby glanced down at the number on her pager attached to her scrubs. She stood up immediately, pushing the chair backwards with a screech. ‘It’s Dr Fairgreaves. He needs to speak to me now.’

Luke stood up, the tell-tale worry lines appearing on his brow instantly. ‘Mind if I tag along?’

‘Not at all.’

They headed out the doors towards the ER. Abby couldn’t shift the uncomfortable feeling in her gut. He hadn’t exactly answered her question. What had Lisa Jones been doing for Luke? And why the hell couldn’t she get thoughts of the two of them out of her mind?

\* \* \*

Dr Fairgreaves was sitting in one of the two doctors’ offices in the ER, writing furiously in the First Lady’s notes. He was still wearing his dark green fishing hat over his unruly hair but had donned a more traditional white coat. He leaned back in his chair as Abby and Luke came into the small room.

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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