Silhouette
1701
December
The Nanny's Plan
DONNA CLAYTON
SILHOUETTE Romance

Donna Clayton

The Nanny's Plan

«HarperCollins»

Clayton D.

The Nanny's Plan / D. Clayton — «HarperCollins»,

When glamorous Amy Edwards agreed to be temporary nanny for unruly twins, she didn't expect to enjoy the adorable boys–or fall for their handsome, brilliant uncle. But she knew that if Dr. Pierce Kincaid ever discovered her dark secret, he would never be attracted to her. Or would he…?Workaholic Pierce couldn't resist Amy's sunny nature. Her sweetness–and his matchmaking nephews–drew him like a moth to a flame, but when Pierce got serious, Amy backed away. He knew she was hiding something, and he was determined to use all of his scientific methods–including romantic kisses–to unravel her mysteries!

© Clayton D.
© HarperCollins

Содержание

The Nanny’s Plan 6
Contents 8
Chapter One 9
Chapter Two 16
Chapter Three 24
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. 26

"Well—" said Pierce, clearing his
throat "—would you like to have your
first swimming lesson right now?"

The edginess that had infected him must have been contagious. Amy's head bobbed, and her intriguing brown gaze turned aside momentarily. Finally, her eyes lifted to his as she answered with a tiny nod.

The timidity she exhibited did something strange to the air surrounding him. Even though he was standing waist-deep in the bay, he felt flushed, overheated.

She looked the very essence of freshness. Of vitality. And until this very instant, he'd never realized how her energy enthralled him. His heart tripped against his ribs as he realized that in order to teach Amy to swim, he was going to have to get close to her—very close.

Dear Reader,

Discover a guilt-free way to enjoy this holiday season. Treat yourself to four calorie-free, but oh-so-satisfying brand-new Silhouette Romance titles this month.

Start with Santa Brought a Son (#1698) by Melissa McClone. This heartwarming reunion romance is the fourth book in Silhouette Romance's new six-book continuity, MARRYING THE BOSS'S DAUGHTER.

Would a duty-bound prince forsake tradition to marry an enchanting commoner? Find out in The Prince & the Marriage Pact (#1699), the latest episode in THE CARRAMER TRUST miniseries by reader favorite Valerie Parv.

Then, it's anyone's guess if a wacky survival challenge can end happily ever after. Join the fun as the romantic winners of a crazy contest are revealed in The Bachelor's Dare (#1700) by Shirley Jump.

And in Donna Clayton's The Nanny's Plan (#1701), a would-be sophisticate is put through the ringer by a drop-dead gorgeous, absentminded professor and his rascally twin nephews.

So pick a cozy spot, relax and enjoy all four of these tender holiday confections that Silhouette Romance has cooked up just for you.

Happy holidays!

Mavis C. Allen

Associate Senior Editor

The Nanny's Plan
Donna Clayton

www.millsandboon.co.uk
This book is lovingly dedicated to
Mrs. Margaret Edwards, the third-grade teacher
who sparked my lifelong love of books
by introducing me to Beverly Cleary.
Books by Donna Clayton
Silhouette Romance
Mountain Laurel #720
Taking Love in Stride #781
Return of the Runaway Bride #999
Wife for a While #1039
Nanny and the Professor #1066
Fortune's Bride #1118
Daddy Down the Aisle #1162
*Miss Maxwell Becomesa Mom #1211
*Nanny in the Nick of Time #1217
*Beauty and the Bachelor Dad #1223
†The Stand-By Significant Other #1284
†Who's the Father of Jenny's Baby? #1302
The Boss and the Beauty #1342
His Ten-Year-Old Secret #1373
Her Dream Come True #1399
Adopted Dad #1417
His Wild Young Bride #1441
**The Nanny Proposal #1477
**The Doctor's Medicine Woman #1483
**Rachel and the M.D. #1489
Who Will Father My Baby? #1507
In Pursuit of a Princess #1582
††The Sheriff's 6-Year-Old Secret #1623
††The Doctor's Pregnant Proposal #1635
††Thunder in the Night #1647
The Nanny's Plan #1701
Silhouette Books
The Coltons
Close Proximity

DONNA CLAYTON

is the recipient of the Diamond Author Award For Literary Achievement 2000 as well as two HOLT Medallions. In her opinion, love is what makes the world go ‘round. She takes great pride in knowing that, through her work, she provides her readers the chance to indulge in some purely selfish romantic entertainment.

One of her favorite pastimes is traveling. Her other interests include walking, reading, visiting with friends, teaching Sunday school, cooking and baking, and she still collects cookbooks, too. In fact, her house is overrun with them.

Please write to Donna c/o Silhouette Books. She’d love to hear from you!

Dear Mom & Dad,

We are having fun this summer wit Uncle Pierce. We were worryed at furst becuz Uncle Pierce doesn’t have any kidz & he doesn’t really no how to have fun & he works to mush much! But the new nanny is fixing that. Amy keeps us buzy every day. She helped us bake the cookies four this care pakage. Yummy chocklit chips! Our favrite! We ate a few, but maled you most of them.

We are afraid that Uncle Pierce & Amy are cu coming down with some kind of straynge dize di getting sick. They keep looking at each other with funny goo-goo eyes like how youz look at each other befour you send us to watch movies on kidz nite and cloze your bedroom door. We dont no what is going on, but if they start runing a fever, we will call the dokter doctor.

Hope you are having a good time in Africa! don’t wory about us! We are fine!! But we are not so sure about Uncle Pierce & the nanny.

With love from your suns sons,

Benjamin & Jeremiah

Contents

Chapter One
Chapter Two
Chapter Three
Chapter Four
Chapter Five
Chapter Six
Chapter Seven
Chapter Eight
Chapter Nine
Chapter Ten
Epilogue

Chapter One

Amy Edwards had spent her whole life avoiding the traps: relationships, love, marriage and, most of all, kids. So why had she agreed to spend the summer caring for a set of six-year-old twins?

The only answer she could come up with was that she'd totally lost her mind.

She chuckled as she cut the engine. "Imagine that," she murmured, pulling the key from the ignition and opening the car door. "Temporary insanity made me a temporary nanny."

Because an inner ear infection had caused the airline's company physician to ground her for two months from her new job as a flight attendant, all she'd have been doing was watching the corn grow in Kansas while she waited to heal. And the pay offered to her had been generous.

Still …taking care of children.

If anyone other than her father had asked this of her, she'd have turned them down flat. But she'd have crawled to the top of Mount Everest on her hands and knees for her dad. The good Lord knew he'd sure sacrificed for her.

She pulled her suitcase from the trunk and lifted her gaze. The stone-and-stucco house looked like something right out of the pages of a glossy architectural magazine. The vast grounds were neatly manicured, and flowers bloomed in a riot of color. The blue-green water of the Delaware Bay served as a tranquil backdrop to the setting. Even the idea of minding children couldn't dampen the bright prospect of spending eight weeks in this paradise.

Giddiness churned in her belly, urging her to go and take a quick peek at the cove. She should fight this feeling. This overzealousness that swallowed her up since escaping the Midwest made her feel so…small town. So unrefined. But before a few short weeks ago, she'd never seen a body of water larger than the man-made fishing pond just outside Lebo. The Delaware Bay was out there just waiting for her to feast her eyes on the view. Veering off the path that wound its way to the front door, she made a beeline for the water.

She heard the young voices before actually spotting the boys. Her charges, she quickly surmised. Two peas in a pod. Or rather, in a rowboat. They bobbed on the surface of the bay just offshore. She frowned and searched the area for whoever was supposed to be with them. Young children and deep water didn't mix well, in her mind.

"Jeremiah!" she called, lifting her hand in friendly greeting. "Benjamin!"

When the boys' mother had flown to Kansas to reacquaint herself with Amy, the woman had been clear that Benjamin was called Benjamin. Not Ben. Not Benny. But Benjamin.

The twins seemed startled by Amy's appearance; however, they tentatively returned her wave. She realized then that one of the boys had been crying.

She dropped her case to the grass. "What are you guys doing out there?"

It was impossible to tell one boy from the other, so she had no idea who it was who tipped his chin up defiantly and said, "We're going east. We're rowing out into the Atlantic Ocean."

Amy's mind raced. She quelled the urge to shout at them to return to shore this instant. Instead, she thought it better to make friends and coax the boys to safety.

"I'm not an expert in geography," she told them amiably. "But I'm pretty sure that, if you head due east, you're going to run smack into New Jersey."

The boys looked surprised by this news.

Before they could regroup, Amy called, "How about if you come ashore and we'll go inside to check the atlas and you can see for yourself where you are."

The child with the red-rimmed eyes stood up, clearly impatient with her suggestion, at the same time stating, "We know where we are."

Panic made Amy's tone grow more stern. "Sit down. Right now."

The boat was hit with a gentle wave that sent it rocking, and both boys' eyes widened in alarm. An oar slipped from its ring, momentum sending it bobbing several feet from the boat.

"I'm coming." Without thought, Amy slipped off her high-heeled shoes and started toward them. She hoped the water wasn't too deep. Swimming wasn't much of a concern in Kansas, where you were surrounded by farmland.

The bay was cold, despite the clear, sunny sky overhead. Her skin broke out in goose bumps when the water reached waist level, and she shivered. She was nearly within arm's reach of the rowboat when the thought passed through her mind that the twins had gone oddly silent. That's when she heard a masculine voice behind her say, "Maybe this will help."

She twisted around just as her hand closed over the wooden bow.

Sunlight gilded the man's jet-black hair, sparked the greenest gaze in all the universe. The honed angles comprising his features made for an utterly handsome face. A breath-stealing face.

Amy gaped.

Inexorably, she slowly became aware that the gorgeous man standing on the shore had a rope in his hand. Her gaze followed the dripping line, and her cheeks burned with embarrassment when she realized that one end was tethered to the front of the rowboat.

"Jeremiah," the man said, "sit down."

The child obeyed. The boat swayed under her grasp.

"Hold on," he told the twins. "I'm going to haul you in."

Out of the corner of her eye she spied the oar. She waded toward it, and when her fingers curled around the smooth surface, she was struck with the realization that the salty bay water had surely ruined her silk shirtdress. She was going to look a wreck when she trudged ashore.

Confidence. She must remember to don an air of self-assurance. Her instructor at flight attendant school had been adamant—perception was everything. If a traveler sensed you were calm and in control during any given situation, then the battle was nearly won.

She slogged onto the sand, the fabric of her dress sticking to her thighs as if it had been glued on.

The man had pulled the bow of the boat onto dry land and was plucking the boys from it when he said to her, "You're Amy Edwards? The nanny?"

"Yes. That would be me." She stepped forward meaning to offer him her hand, but realized her fingers were cold and damp, so she eased them behind her back. "You're Dr. Kincaid. The boys' uncle."

Her well-practiced, cocksure tone came without thought, but she was anything but certain. The boys' parents had been scheduled to leave before she arrived in Glory, Delaware. But for all Amy knew, plans could have changed. Cynthia Winthrop had told her that her brother would be with the boys when Amy arrived; however, the man could be anyone—another relative, a family friend, a neighbor.

He smiled, and Amy's brain went haywire. She felt as if she might melt right into the carpet of thick grass beneath her bare feet.

"That's right," he told her. "Call me Pierce."

He crouched down on his haunches then, turning his attention to the children.

"I thought I left you in front of the television watching a video," he said, a distinct reprimand in his tone.

"But the movie's been over for a long time, Uncle Pierce," one of the boys complained.

"A long time," the other parroted.

Surprise lifted his features. He studied his wristwatch. Then his shoulders rounded a bit and he looked down at his nephews. "So it has. I'm sorry, boys. I guess I got caught up in my work."

Once again that vivid green gaze was on her, and it unsettled her all over again. She fought the urge to smooth her hand over her soggy dress.

"I have to say," he told her, placing his palms on his knees and standing, "I'm impressed with your quick attempt to fetch the boys. Although I find it amusing that you went at the rescue the hard way. The lanyard was lying right there."

Her heart pounded. Explaining herself wasn't something she did very well, especially when she felt put on the spot. Her father had warned her that Dr. Pierce Kincaid was a highly intelligent man… and Amy usually avoided highly intelligent men. For very good reason. However, neither her dad nor Cynthia Winthrop had warned Amy that the doctor could be a grumpy Gus when he wanted to be.

During her two-day drive from Kansas, she'd pondered a hundred possible situations that might leave her looking like an idiot in front of the doctor, as well as means to avoid them. Walking into the Delaware Bay, fully clothed, had not been a scenario she'd anticipated.

"How could I see it?" she asked when the idea came to her like a bolt from the blue. "It was under water until you picked it up."

The man's oh-so-perfect mouth went flat. He murmured, "I guess that's true enough."

She added, "Besides that, someone had to rescue the oar."

He nodded, his features relaxing as he looked at her.

"They shouldn't have been out here alone." She hadn't meant to criticize, but the opinion seemed to roll off her tongue by its own volition.

Contrition darkened his green gaze. "You're absolutely right. I shouldn't have lost track of time like that." After a moment, he sighed and then focused his attention on the twins.

"What were the two of you thinking?"

"The boat wasn't on the list of rules you gave us," one child quickly replied, blatant defensiveness in his tone. "So we thought it would be okay."

One of the man's dark eyebrows arched dubiously.

"Obviously your powers of deduction haven't fully matured."

The second twin said, "It was Benjamin's idea."

"Was not!"

"Was too!"

"Boys."

Although his voice hadn't risen at all, the children went quiet. Amy chuckled.

Horrified that all eyes were on her, she reached up and pressed her fingers to her mouth. It was nerves. No doubt about it. This situation had her as tense as a lop-eared rabbit in a rocking-chair factory.

"I'm sorry," she said. Unwilling to reveal her state of anxiety, she only shrugged. "The twins sure are cute when they squabble."

One corner of his mouth turned up. "They're cuter when they're not getting into trouble."

Automatically Amy's gaze drifted to the twins. The red, bleary eyes of one, the defiant chin thrust of the other. A strange thing happened to her insides. They turned all warm and mushy.

"You said you were heading east," she said. "Out into the Atlantic. You were going after your mom and dad, weren't you? You were heading for Africa."

The child who had been crying blinked, his chin trembling at the mention of his parents, and Amy thought her heart would dissolve right there in her chest.

She went to him, bent down and tilted her head to one side. His cheek was downy soft against her fingertips. "Are you Jeremiah? Or Benjamin?"

"Jeremiah." The child could barely speak around the emotion lumping in his throat.

"Well, Jeremiah, I know how you're feeling. I miss my parents, too."

He sniffed. "Did your mom and dad go to Africa?"

Her mouth curled. "No. My dad is back in Kansas." She paused, not quite knowing how to explain about her mother. "My mom went far, far away."

"Farther than Africa?" Benjamin's tone was awed.

“Farther than Africa.” She gave both boys a smile. “But you know what I do when I’m missing them something fierce?”

The children waited, subdued anticipation holding them still.

“I keep busy doing fun things,” she told him. Then she grinned. “And that’s just what we’re going to do this summer. You and me. Lots of fun things.”

“Speaking of fun things,” the boys’ uncle interjected, “who’s ready for dinner?”

She straightened and saw that he’d picked up the suitcase she’d left on the grass. He’d also gathered up her shoes. Having him carry her shoes felt too…personal to Amy. She hurried to take them from him. Their gazes collided and she murmured her appreciation. For a moment it seemed as if the cool breeze died and the sun grew hotter. Amy found it difficult to swallow.

But the stillness was broken when Jeremiah got upset all over again. He wailed, “But I don’t like ruffled sprouts.”

Benjamin’s nose wrinkled. “They smell bad.”

“They’re Brussels sprouts.” Pierce corrected his nephew with a laugh. “And they’re good for you. Packed full of vitamins. If you don’t like them, you don’t have to eat them. All I ask is that you try them.”

The boys trudged ahead of them toward the house, grumbling a warning that they intended to try only one, and that their uncle would know they didn’t like it by all the gagging they would surely make.

Beside her, Pierce sighed. “I should have set an alarm clock or something. I shouldn’t have left them alone for so long.”

“You’ve got your work,” Amy said. “When Mrs. Winthrop flew out to meet with me last week, she stressed that you had just been offered some kind of special contract. That you were on a pressing deadline. It’s understandable that—”

“But the boys could have been hurt.”

Guilt seemed to pulse from him.

“I’m sorry there was a time lag between the boys’ parents’ departure,” Amy felt compelled to say, “and my arriving. But it really couldn’t be helped.” She lifted one shoulder. “I’m unable to fly.”

“Yes. Cynthia told me that you’d been grounded.”

Amy pointed to the side of her head. “It’s an inner ear thing. I’m not in any pain. Can’t even tell there’s anything wrong. But the company physician refused to risk a perforated eardrum that might be caused by in-flight pressure changes.”

“I see.”

Silence fell like a lead balloon. Her bare feet made her feel oddly vulnerable, but she didn’t want to ruin her shoes by putting them on when salt water was still dripping down her legs from the hem of her dress. She wondered if he noticed the faint but tangy odor of the bay emanating from her. She really was a mess.

“Do you have experience with children?”

“What?” The question startled her. “No, I don’t. But your sister thought I’d do okay with the boys.”

“This isn’t an interview,” he quickly assured her. “I’m not questioning your skills.”

Maybe not, but he was probing for information that would cause him to form opinions about her. It was her habit to avoid talking about herself as much as possible. There were certain facts about herself she’d rather no one discovered.

“It’s just that you were so good with them,” he continued. “With Jeremiah especially. He’s been pretty miserable since Cynthia and John left.”

The slate stones of the patio were cool and smooth under the damp soles of her feet.

“Well, it’s easy to imagine how he’s feeling.” She moistened her lips, shifted her shoes to her other hand. “Anyone who’s hurting deserves a little compassion.”

"It eases my mind to know that you would reach out to him like you did."

That odd stillness descended on them again, that strange heating up of the temperature, although Amy knew that was impossible.

"You must be exhausted," he said, his voice feather soft. "You've been driving for two days. I'll show you to your room so you can freshen up."

He slid open the French door through which the boys had already disappeared and motioned for her to enter before him.

"But I'm wet," she said, eyeing the carpet. "I'll ruin—"

"It's okay. Go on in."

The cream-colored rug felt luxuriously thick as she stepped inside on tiptoes.

"And don't worry if you don't make it down to eat with us," he told her, closing the door behind them. "Take your time freshening up. I'll keep a plate warm for you."

Just then they heard what sounded like a chair being dragged across the kitchen floor, then a loud thump, then the murmur of children's voices.

"Why don't you let me find my room by myself," she suggested. "It sounds like the boys might be getting…hungry."

"It does, doesn't it? They are a handful. Go up the back stairs there—" he pointed the way "—and your room is the yellow one just to the right. You can't miss it. Oh, and maybe later, after things quiet down, the two of us can meet in my study and discuss our schedules over a glass of wine. You'll need some time off. We can figure out which days you'll have free."

"That sounds good," she told him.

He started off toward the kitchen.

"Excuse me," she called.

He turned to face her.

"Um, I will need my suitcase."

"Oh, of course." He brought her the case with a murmured apology. "Sorry about that."

A grin that sexy should be deemed illegal, and his absentmindedness made him less formidable. It made him quite appealing, in fact.

She was smiling when he started off again. She couldn't help but call out his name a final time. From the expression on his face when he looked at her, it was clear he was baffled by what else could have slipped his mind.

"I just wanted to tell you that I like ruffled sprouts."

There was absolutely no logical reason for the odd feelings pulsing through Pierce. No logical reason whatsoever. He sat at his desk worrying his chin between his index finger and thumb.

He'd taken great care planning this room when he'd had the house built. With its floor-to-ceiling bookcases, the long oak conference table, the reading nook and the wall of wide windows, his study doubled as a library. A place he could feel comfortable reading, deciphering the data of his research and writing up his scientific findings. This richly paneled room was his oasis.

However, tonight he was finding no solace here.

"Amy Edwards is a great girl," his sister had told him. "She's unassuming and, well…very sweet. She'll be great with the boys, and you'll like her, I'm sure."

Cynthia had explained that for years Amy's father had owned a small motel just off the intrastate in Kansas. Amy had helped run the business. Cynthia and John had gotten to know the family while John had been the pastor of a small church in Lebo earlier in his career.

"She's honest and trustworthy," Cynthia had said, "and she's got a great work ethic."

His brother-in-law had added, "From what I remember, she was a mousy little thing."

Unassuming. Mousy. For some odd reason, those were the two adjectives that had stuck with him when he'd agreed to have the nanny in his home.

Pierce had always thought unassuming meant ordinary. And there was nothing ordinary about Amy Edwards. There was nothing mousy about her, either. She was the epitome of aplomb from the top of her coiffed head to the scarlet-painted tips of her toes…and they were very dainty toes, at that.

A scowl had his facial muscles tensing. He shouldn't be noticing Amy's bare toes. Or any of her other physical attributes, either. Like those shapely calves and thighs, and that nicely curved fanny.

But the wet silk had clung to her like the skin on a ripe plum. The sight had been just as enticing as a juicy piece of fruit, too, and he'd ended up feeling like a man who'd been starved for that particular food group.

His frowned deepened. He pushed himself from the chair and stalked to the window. What had gotten into him?

The reason he'd been so discombobulated by the woman, he guessed, was that he'd been expecting a plain Jane…but what had arrived was a stunning Stella. However, there had been more to it than merely her looks.

From his sister's accounting, Pierce had imagined Amy would be an average, regular, normal young woman—a barely grown kid, really, from the way Cynthia had described her. But the woman he'd seen when he'd gone down to the water's edge was polished and professional. Even standing up to her waist in the bay, she'd exuded a calm, no-nonsense air. When he'd questioned her methods of rescuing his nephews, she'd been quick to fire back a logical explanation that had exonerated her of any unsound decisions.

Although Pierce wouldn't have admitted this to anyone, he'd been a tad intimidated by the magnitude of her poise. He couldn't be sure, but at one point he suspected she'd actually chuckled at his handling of the whole situation. Of course, she'd explained away her sudden humor by expressing how cute the boys were, so his suspicion that she'd been laughing at his expense could be all in his head…

The knock on his study door made him turn. Amy stood at the threshold wearing a gold blouse that set off her rich brown eyes. Her skirt was short enough to show off her perfect knees. Her feet were clad in high heels that accentuated her narrow ankles and shapely calves. His gaze rose to her face, and when he noticed that her light brown hair was still swept up off her shoulders, he couldn't help but wonder how long it was and what it might look like in a tumble.

His mind was suddenly besieged with the image of him pulling the pins free himself, combing his fingers through those dark tresses. His gut tightened.

"Come in," he said, doing his damnedest to shove the alluring picture from his head.

"Is this a good time?" She entered the room, her shoulders square, her head high.

"Yes," he told her. "Have a seat. Would you like a glass of wine?"

Amy smiled. "That would be nice, thanks."

He went to the bar cabinet to pour their drinks. "I played a board game with the boys after dinner, gave them their baths and then tucked them into bed. They're settled for the night."

When he handed her the glass of merlot, he said, "They're in the room next door to you, by the way."

She took a sip, swallowed and then gazed off for a second. When she looked at him again her expression glowed with pleasure. "Delicious," she said, then her tongue smoothed over her lips.

Something happened down low in his belly. An odd fiery sensation sprouted to life.

"I'm ready to take over responsibility of the boys tomorrow morning."

She shifted in the seat, and Pierce was aware of the swish of her skirt fabric against the leather couch cushion. When she crossed her legs, the whisper of flesh against flesh had his breath stilling in his throat.

It was silly, really, this sudden fascination he found with that sound.

He took a drink—and a deep breath—desperate to clear this strange fog from his head.

"I'd like to gently recommend," he began, his gaze traveling down the length of her, "a change in your wardrobe."

A tiny crease appeared between her deep-set eyes.

"What I mean is," he rushed to explain, "Benjamin and Jeremiah are rambunctious boys. They run and jump and dig in the dirt and heaven only knows what else they'll have you doing."

"I see." Her smile was easy as she evidently realized he was only offering some friendly advice. "So I guess I'd be better off in pants."

"Exactly."

The tension in the room seemed to slacken then and the two of them spent some time talking about their situation—his work schedule and hers, and what each expected of the other.

As he refilled her glass, she commented, "This is a wonderful thing you're doing, letting the boys stay here. When Mrs. Winthrop and I met in Lebo, she was so excited about this trip to Africa."

Pierce topped off his own glass and then set the bottle on the marble-topped side table. His mouth screwed up in a grimace as he admitted, "I turned down her request at first."

"Oh?"

He eased himself back into the chair. "Yes. Cynthia came to me to explain that John had been offered the opportunity of his career. Six weeks as a missionary in Africa. Having the chance to do missionary work has always been my brother-in-law's dream, she said. She asked if I'd keep the boys for eight weeks, as the position required two weeks of studying the language and customs. I gently but firmly refused."

Pierce chuckled, remembering his well-reasoned denial.

"I reminded her," he continued, "that I wasn't the one who'd pined for hearth and home. That had been her. That I wasn't the one who'd been certain that parenthood would be the experience of a lifetime. That, too, had been her. And besides that, as she explained to you, I was just about to land a huge contract with one of the largest perfumeries in France. I couldn't afford to be away from the lab, away from my work…not for a single week, let alone two months.

"Cynthia seemed to understand." His smile widened. "But my sister is pretty stubborn. And it wasn't long before she returned with a whole new plan. A plan that involved you. She made it all sound so…workable. In the end, I agreed to take my nephews for the summer. As long as you were here to look after them during my working hours."

Amy set her empty glass on the table. "A reluctant hero is still a hero in my book."

Pierce had never thought of himself as a hero, reluctant or otherwise. The very idea unsettled him. He didn't know what to say, so he didn't say anything. The atmosphere stiffened up.

A few moments passed, and she stood. "I think I should head off to bed. If those boys are as rambunctious as you say, then I'm going to need a good night's sleep."

Her tapered fingers shot out and she tipped up her chin, and it took him a second to realize that she wanted to shake his hand. He stood and slid his palm into hers.

Her skin was warm against his. Smooth. And soft.

It was as if his every thought gurgled right out of his head.

"I want to assure you that I plan to do a good job," she proclaimed, giving his hand several good pumps. "We won't interrupt your work. In fact, when I'm with the boys you won't even know we're here."

Even though his gaze was riveted on the gentle sway of her bottom as she left his study, he did have enough of his wits about him to doubt her promise.

You won't even know we're here.

Her words echoed in his head. But he had serious doubts that he could be oblivious to the fact that Amy Edwards had invaded his home.

Chapter Two

"I'm so glad you told me about that tiny scar on your chin, Jeremiah," Amy said as she combed the child's hair neatly into place.

"It's the only way to tell me and Benjamin apart. I guess it's kinda lucky that I was jumpin' on the bed and fell on the bedpost."

Amy's nose scrunched. "I don't know that I'd call it lucky."

Benjamin looked up from where he was fussing with a stubborn button. "He had to get three stitches. With a needle and everything."

"I'll bet that hurt," Amy said.

"Nah. Not even a little bit." But Jeremiah's chest puffed as he scoffed at the experience. Then he added, "The doctor numbed my chin."

His brother's eyes widened. "With a needle."

"Mom still teases me about it," Jeremiah added, "because I started snorin' while the doctor was puttin' in the stitches."

"When did all this happen?" Amy asked.

"A couple of years ago," he told her. "When I was really little."

She wrestled with the grin that tugged at one corner of her mouth. One thing she'd learned in the past five days of caring for the boys was that there was nothing quite like experiencing life through the eyes of a child.

"Ah, so it happened when you were a petit garçon." She did her best to implement a perfect accent when she spoke the last two words.

"What's that?" Jeremiah asked.

Amy chuckled. "That means 'little boy' in French."

"You can talk in French?" Benjamin looked to be in awe.

"Don't be too impressed." She grinned. "I'm not very good. When I was a little girl I had teachers who were trained in France." She didn't think the boys would understand about the Oblate Sisters and the life of spiritual devotion they chose, so she just stuck to a simple explanation. "They introduced me to the language. All the students had to take French lessons, from the youngest to the oldest. I've tried to keep up with it by listening to audio tapes."

"Cool," Jeremiah said.

"Can you teach us some?" Benjamin's gaze lit with curiosity.

"Sure I can," she told them. "If you really want to learn." She ruffled Jeremiah's head of dark hair. "I think the luckiest thing about your ordeal with the bedpost is that your scar is so small. I have to squint to see it. But it is good to know I have a way of knowing which one of you I'm talking to." She smiled as she tapped the boy on the tip of his chin with the pad of her index finger, and then she reached to help Benjamin fasten his button.

Life had fallen into a comfortable routine very quickly, and that had surprised Amy. She'd wake early and get herself ready for the day. She'd help the boys dress, feed them breakfast and then they would plan the day's activities.

One day she'd taken them to Glory's public library, where they had found a huge globe on which Amy had pointed out Africa and the wide expanse of the Atlantic Ocean. Then they had read some children's books about the area where the boys' parents were serving as missionaries. They had spent another day exploring the small town of Glory together, and Benjamin and Jeremiah had been more than happy to point out the pizza place, the ice cream shop and the arcade. And yesterday she'd helped the boys pull out the fishing gear. Unable to deal with the idea of worms, she'd baited the hooks with bits of ham she'd found in the fridge. But they hadn't gotten a single nibble, so the

three of them had climbed on boulders at one end of the cove and watched the blue crabs shimmy sideways under the water.

Pierce had been right when he'd told her she needed to rethink her attire. The tailored skirts and dresses that had helped to bolster her confidence since her flight training simply weren't appropriate for traipsing around after the twins. To be honest, even the slacks and leather flats she'd reverted to wearing were still not fitting for this job. What she needed was sturdier, more casual clothing. Jeans and shorts, sneakers and sandals. The stuff she used to knock around in back in Kansas. However, she'd purposely yet unfortunately left those items in her dresser back home.

During her flight attendant training, it had been stressed to her over and over again that if she wanted to garner the respect due a professional, then she must be perceived as a professional. She had to dress and act the part.

One day during her training something had clicked. She'd realized that if she looked and acted assured and capable, that's what people would believe her to be—no matter what she felt inside, no matter how lacking her background. That had been the day she'd resolved to put on the armor that would protect her from her past: carefully applied makeup, hair that was styled, coordinated apparel and a cool, confident air.

She would make herself into what she was not. And no one would be the wiser. So far, her plan had worked like a charm.

However, climbing around on wet rocks wasn't easy when you didn't have a pair of rubber-soled shoes handy. Well, that was something she'd just have to deal with. Keeping her professional facade intact was more important than sore feet.

"What's for breakfast today?" Benjamin asked, pulling her out of her thoughts.

"What would you like?" She reached out and straightened the collar of his red cotton polo shirt.

"I'd like pancakes!"

"Me, too."

Amy grinned. "Then pancakes it is."

The boys cheered and raced from the room.

"Don't run," she called after them. But she'd learned that while the boys might want to listen and obey, there was something in their small bodies that urged them to attempt to fly. Everywhere they went.

Hurrying down the steps, she paused in the front hall to answer the ringing phone.

"Dad!" Her heart warmed when she heard her father's voice. "I'm just fine. Everything is going great. I'm so glad you called."

They talked for only a couple of minutes before she told him she had to get the boys fed, but she promised to call him for a nice long chat on her day off. She set the telephone receiver into its cradle and headed down the hallway.

The kitchen was empty. In fact, the whole house felt still.

Amy stood in the quiet for the length of several heartbeats. Then anxiety washed over her as her pulse thundered and the fine hair on her arms stood on end.

The bay!

She remembered how panicky she'd been seeing the boys out on the water in the boat the day she'd arrived. She rushed out onto the sunporch, scanning the yard and the shoreline. Seeing the rowboat right where it was supposed to be, she gulped in a relieved breath.

Amy went out into the sunshine and called out the boys' names. Where could they have gone so quickly?

That's when she saw that the door to the greenhouse was open.

"Oh, Lord," she murmured. She hurried across the lawn, knowing without a doubt that the twins had intruded on their uncle's work.

Had something like this happened when she'd first arrived, she'd have been panic-stricken about how Pierce might react to being interrupted, how he might respond to her falling down on the job and losing sight of his nephews. However, she'd learned a thing or two about the doctor.

He was a bona fide workaholic, yes. But although he often lost himself in his research, he genuinely loved Benjamin and Jeremiah. Whenever he saw them, his face lit up with pleasure. That thought made her smile even now. She'd arrived in this house expecting to face a daunting intellectual who would make her feel totally self-conscious. But Pierce's tendency toward absentmindedness somehow made him…safe. It took away all reason for her to feel ill at ease. In fact, she'd started experiencing the peculiar sensation of wanting to take care of the man.

Take dinnertime, for instance. That first night they had talked in his study, he had told her that he'd like to join her and the boys for their evening meal. But Pierce apparently had become so wrapped up in his research that he'd worked straight through dinner the following two consecutive nights. So Amy had taken to making him a plate, wrapping it up so it wouldn't dry out and slipping it into a warm oven so he'd have something to eat whenever he surfaced from his study or his lab or the greenhouse.

She stepped inside the building, cognizant that the air was warmer and more humid than outside. The greenhouse was long and fairly narrow, something you might find in a botanical garden rather than on someone's personal property.

"Benjamin? Jeremiah?"

The foliage on the plants was thick and glossy and green, and the atmosphere took on a heavy feeling, rich with oxygen, as she made her way down one aisle.

"Over here," she heard one of the boys call out.

"We're helping Uncle Pierce," the other said.

"Come join us, Amy."

From the tone of Pierce's voice he didn't sound at all annoyed that the boys had invaded his space. When she reached them, she saw that the twins were standing on stools at a planting table. Both of them had dirt smeared up to their elbows. Jeremiah was tamping down soil in what looked to be a plastic seedling tray and Benjamin was accepting a palmful of tiny seeds from his uncle.

"These seeds are special, Amy," Benjamin told her. "Uncle Pierce made 'em with cross-pollimation."

"Cross-pollination," Pierce corrected.

"And Uncle Pierce told us that seeds were first made like this," Benjamin continued, "by a man who lost his mind."

"Lost his mind? When did I say that?" Bewilderment bit into Pierce's forehead.

Benjamin said, "You said he was mental."

"Not mental." Pierce chuckled as he shook his head. "Mendel. His name was Mendel. Gregor Mendel."

"Oh." The child looked momentarily confused. "I thought you were telling us that the guy was crazy to try to, you know…cross-pollimate plants."

The sigh that issued from Pierce was brimming with good-humored surrender.

Jeremiah reached up and scratched his nose, smudging the bridge of it with soil. "Amy, I betcha didn't know that there are mommy plants and daddy plants. Just like people. Uncle Pierce was telling us that when they rub on each other, they make seeds 'steada babies."

"Yeah," Benjamin added without lifting his eyes from his work. "Plant sex."

This completely unexpected detour in the conversation stunned Amy into silence. She lifted her gaze and saw that all the color had drained from Pierce's handsome face. His lips parted in disbelief. Evidently he was having trouble finding his tongue, too.

What was so mind-blowing was not only what the twins had said, but also how they'd said it. They'd spoken as if the topic was no big deal, honestly detailing in their own words what Pierce had evidently explained to them.

The children didn't even look up from the task at hand. Benjamin had passed his brother some of the seeds and their fingers were busy carefully sprinkling them over the soil in the seedling tray.

Her eyes locked on Pierce's mortified green gaze. Heat flushed his face. He forced his jaw closed. He swallowed. Then he moistened his lips.

Finally he whispered, "That wasn't quite how I put things. I never once mentioned the word sex."

The situation struck a humorous chord in her all of a sudden, but the menacing look he gave her made it clear that he would not appreciate it if she surrendered to the laughter that bubbled in the back of her throat. So she did all she could to squelch it.

Evidently Benjamin noticed how quiet the adults had become. He lifted his chin, looked from Amy to his uncle.

"Oh, it's okay, Uncle Pierce," he said easily. "Me and Jeremiah know all about sex."

His brother nodded, adding, "Daddy doesn't know it, but our mommy watches soap operas."

The candidness expressed by the children tickled Amy's funny bone all the more. But Pierce didn't seem to find any humor in the moment. He looked downright horrified.

"All done," Benjamin announced. "Do we need to water the seeds, Uncle Pierce?"

"Yes. Go over there to the sink—" Pierce pointed the way "—and fill up the watering can."

The boys scrambled down from the stools and raced off.

"No running," Amy called out. "You'll fall and hurt yourselves."

She was in a quandary. She was trying hard not to smile, but she also felt awkwardness pressing in on them.

Then he murmured, "I'm going to have to speak to my sister about her television viewing habits."

Amy could stand it no more. Laughter gurgled forth. Her hand flew to cover her lips. But air rushed between her fingers, her cheeks stretched in a wide grin, her shoulders shuddered up and down.

"I'm sorry," she blurted, but it was hopeless. "It's just…funny."

A corner of Pierce's mouth quirked once, twice, and soon he was chuckling right along with her.

"It is pretty funny," he agreed.

"What's funny?" Jeremiah lugged the pail over, and it was so full that water sloshed over the rim.

Ignoring his nephew's question, Pierce asked one of his own. "So you've decided to sprout those seeds hydroponically, huh?"

Benjamin's whole face screwed up. "Hydro what?"

"In water," he explained.

"But we've already planted 'em in dirt," Jeremiah pointed out, confusion knitting his forehead.

"It was a joke," Pierce told him. "Here, let me help you."

He took the watering can and sprinkled the seeds.

Amy noticed how the muscles in his forearm firmed into long cords under his skin as he maneuvered the can. Like metal attracted by a magnetic current, she was helpless against the urge to move closer.

He smelled good. She didn't want to notice the luscious heated scent of him, but she was helpless against that, as well.

"Are those seeds part of that new contract work you've started?" she asked, craning her neck to see around his shoulder.

"No, those are hybrids. I have several flats in different stages of growth, so I need to vigilantly protect them from any foreign pollen."

After only a second, she gasped. "But I left the greenhouse door open."

"It's okay," he assured her. "The seedlings are across the way in the lab, where I can monitor and control everything. Soil and air temperature, humidity, nutrient intake."

Curiosity caught her in its grasp. "I've heard of hybrid plants. I've probably even seen them. But I've never been sure exactly what that term means."

"Hybrid means heterogeneous in—" He stopped suddenly, twisting to face her as he seemed to rethink his explanation. "It means a plant or animal that's the offspring of unlike parents.

"Hybrid plants are cultivated for different reasons," he continued, his gaze becoming intense. "Sometimes people want flowers with variegated leaves or petals. Or bigger blossoms. Or a hardier root system."

"And what are you going for?" she asked. "In your experiments, I mean."

"I'm cultivating flowers for new scents. A perfumery in France has agreed to finance the experiments, and if I can cultivate something usable, they'll get a portion of the seeds. I'll get the right to patent the scent and publish the work in scientific journals."

"So you're going to grow flowers that smell different from any other flowers in the whole wide world?" Benjamin looked quite impressed.

"I'm trying. In fact, I've grown a small sample batch for their approval. They have those in their labs. And now I'm working on cultivating more seeds."

"Cool."

"Can we see your lab, Uncle Pierce?" Jeremiah asked.

"Not today, boys."

They groaned and complained.

Amy wondered just how amazingly intelligent a person would have to be to take two different species of flower and create something brand-new, something that no one had ever seen—or smelled—before. There had been a passion sparkling in his gorgeous green eyes as he'd talked about his work, and she'd found that alluring.

"Some other time," he told the boys. "I've got data books scattered about in there. I'll have to clean up before you come look around. But I promise you can check everything out really soon, okay?"

Although they didn't like it, they finally acquiesced. And as children usually do, they then quickly changed the subject.

"I'm hungry," Jeremiah pronounced.

"Yeah." Benjamin piped up, "I'm ready for some pancakes."

"Both of you need to go get washed up before you do anything else," their uncle told them.

"Let's go!" They took flight down the row of plants.

"Slow down," Pierce called after them. Then he directed his gaze at Amy. "What is it?" he asked her.

"N-nothing." She was embarrassed that he'd caught her so deep in thought—about him. "I should make the boys their breakfast. I…I'm terribly sorry they barged in on you. I took a quick call from my dad."

"Is he okay?"

"Yes, yes." Her head bobbed. "He just wanted to say hi. I told him I'd call him later. I was only on the phone for a minute or two, but—" she grimaced "—Benjamin and Jeremiah were out of the house like a flash. I'll try not to let it happen again." She turned to leave.

"Wait." His fingers slid over her forearm. "You really looked contemplative a second ago. You obviously had something on your mind. And I'd like to know what it was."

What would it hurt to tell him? Anyone could have had the same reaction to all that he'd revealed.

"I was just overwhelmed by the very idea of it," she said. "The thought of creating something original. Something that, well—" she decided Benjamin's words had been perfect "—no one else in the whole world has ever seen."

"It's nothing, really."

His tone was low. Soothing as a cool hand against a warm brow. Her skin tingled as if he were actually stroking her face with his fingertips.

"Just a little plant sex."

Pierce's green eyes glittered mischievously…and Amy burst out laughing.

Later that night Amy was unable to sleep, so she crept down the darkened hallway and into the bathroom. The origin of this edginess jittering through her was unknown, but there was nothing that a good long soak couldn't cure.

She'd already taken her hair down and had given it a good brush when she'd gotten ready for bed. Twisting the length of it, she pinned it up so it wouldn't get wet. Then she turned on the taps and adjusted the water temperature.

Untying the sash of her robe, she shrugged it off and let it fall in a heap to the floor. She tugged her nightgown over her head, pulled off her panties and then stepped into the bathtub.

She'd had an exhausting day. Maybe her problem was that she was simply overtired.

When she'd suggested to the boys that they make cupcakes, Benjamin and Jeremiah had eagerly gathered the eggs, the flour, the sugar and the cooking utensils. By the time they had finished the job, though, the kitchen had been a mess. She'd packed up some sandwiches, fruit, juice and a few cupcakes, and they had gone outside in the backyard for a picnic. Then they had spent the entire afternoon running among the trees and shrubs.

But time and again, Amy had found her gaze drifting to the greenhouse. Pierce had intruded on her thoughts every few moments, and her mind had been bombarded by all sorts of questions.

How had he earned the money to build such an impressive business setup? Did a plant scientist command that kind of income? There were acres and acres of ground here on the shores of the Delaware Bay. He had a small laboratory and a huge greenhouse in which he performed his experiments on plants. And his house was beautiful. A dream home, really. His private library was stocked with all sorts of books on botany. Shelves of them, floor to ceiling.

She closed her eyes, and immediately her mind was filled with the image of his sparkling green gaze. His features had grown animated when he'd talked to his nephews—to her—about his work. He was an intense man. An intelligent man. An incredibly handsome man.

He was tall and sturdy. Built like a well-honed athlete rather than a scientist.

That thought made her smile. What kind of body would a scientist-type have? She'd never really thought about it before. But she could easily imagine that a man who was so focused on research and experiments would be stuck in the library with his nose in a book, or in the lab bent over a microscope. But Pierce looked tanned and healthy. His muscles were toned—she'd seen that for herself today as he'd lifted the watering pail.

The faucet gurgled, the warm water that filled the tub caressing her skin as it rose higher and higher. It was so easy to envision the tickle of the water replaced by Pierce's touch, his fingertips stroking her flesh ever so lightly.

Yes, he was the most handsome man she'd ever met in her life. However, she'd been surprised this morning to discover just how fascinated she was by his intellect. Normally she tended to avoid people who held titles and diplomas, people who had letters of educational distinction after their names. But when Pierce had talked about his work, she'd felt…drawn to him.

She sighed and thought of his perfect mouth, wondered what it would feel like on hers, imagined what his lips would taste like. Suddenly in her mind's eye she saw his tapered fingers, and then with very little conjuring she could almost feel his touch on her skin. His flesh was hot against her own. She envisioned placing her hand on the back of his, guiding his palm over her taut stomach, up toward her breasts until his fingertips were snuggled between them.

Again she sighed, and her back arched languidly in the heated bathwater.

Then her eyes opened wide. She blinked, and then she sat up so quickly that water sloshed onto the floor. What was she doing? Had she lost her mind?

Avoiding these kinds of situations, these kinds of feelings, had been her number one priority for years. Wasn't it sensual urges just like the ones floating around in her head that had caused her friends to ruin their lives?

Amy had watched as, one by one, her friends had fallen in love, gotten married and then gotten themselves pregnant. Sometimes not even in that order. But regardless of how they had gone about falling into the trap, they still had fallen. Right into the deadly snare.

Stuck for life in that small Podunk town. Never going anywhere. Never experiencing anything. That was the future her friends back in Lebo had relegated themselves to.

Oh, she'd allowed herself to date back home. She'd go out with a guy a time or two, maybe even three if he didn't appeal to her too much. But once she got that bug…the moment she felt that first inkling that the relationship might develop into something beyond cordial, she'd nip it right in the bud.

She'd broken a heart or two back in Kansas. But that couldn't be helped. She had a plan for her life.

The loofah sponge she snatched up felt rough against her fingers. She squirted some bath gel onto its surface and began scrubbing her skin in tiny circular motions.

A slight panic began to roil in her as Pierce's face loomed in her brain, his green eyes tempting her, his perfect mouth enticing her.

She wasn't going to ruin her plan, darn it! She'd just finished training as a flight attendant. She'd succeeded in getting out. She'd escaped the trap. She had a whole world to see. A slew of experiences to…well, to experience.

She wasn't going to let a little sexual urge get in her way.

Amy, a small voice in the back of her mind intoned, just because you're attracted to Pierce Kincaid doesn't mean you have to act on it. Control. That's all it takes. You can certainly ignore this temptation for the couple of months it will take for Jeremiah and Benjamin's parents to return.

Pierce would never be interested in her, anyway—of that she was sure. Not unless she began to sprout stems and leaves and big, fat flower blossoms.

"And there's little chance of that happening," she murmured to herself.

She inhaled deeply, let the air leave her in a rush. She relaxed. Control slowly returned.

Perception really was everything.

If she chose to perceive this situation as safe and nonthreatening to her life plan, then that's exactly what it would become.

And heaven knew she didn't need to worry about Pierce noticing her as anything more than the temporary nanny who was caring for his nephews. No, she had no worries there.

Pierce lay in the dark, staring at the ceiling. Ten minutes ago, he'd heard the water running in the bathroom down the hall. Evidently unable to sleep, Amy must have decided to have a bath.

At first he'd fought his imagination. He'd tried to ignore the image his brain conjured up of her slipping out of her nightgown, shimmying out of her lacy undergarments. But the more he attempted to disregard the inappropriate thoughts, the stronger and more persistent they seemed to become.

He "saw" her lift one milky foot, then the other, to step into the tub, and then his mind's eye watched as she eased her delectable body down into the water. Sweat broke out on his brow and his pulse skittered. Pierce kicked the sheet aside in an attempt to cool the fever rushing through him.

This was wrong. He'd decided a long time ago that his work was more important than anything else. Anything else.

He didn't want to think of Amy in a sexual manner—no, these thoughts were softer, fuzzier, and could only be described as a sensual manner. But whatever manner they were, he didn't want this. Not when he knew nothing could ever come of it. Nothing lasting, that was.

He rolled over onto his side, punched the pillow, shifted to a comfortable position and willed sleep to come. And when that didn't work, he prayed for release from this sweet agony.

However, all too soon he found himself on his back once again, staring at the ceiling…dreaming of the naked nanny.

Chapter Three

Sitting down at his work table in the lab, Pierce picked up a pen with the intention of recording the seedling growth measurement in his data notebook. But the exact number of centimeters dissolved from his mind as if it had been spun candy on his tongue.

But he'd just measured the darned things.

He tossed down the pen and went back to the seedling tray with his calibrated ruler in hand.

As he leaned over the tray of delicate sprouts, eyes the color of toasted cinnamon loomed in his mind. He straightened, his head tilting slightly to the side unwittingly as he pondered the color of Amy's hair. It was light brown, of course, but that just seemed too ordinary a description and left him searching for a truer one. There were blond strands that brought out a…a hue that was almost…butterscotch.

He smiled. That was it. Butterscotch.

Pierce went back to the worktable, set down the ruler, picked up his pen—and promptly discovered that he hadn't even taken the seedling's measurements.

Dropping the pen, he scrubbed at his face with both hands. Work had gone slowly all day. He had been preoccupied.

With Amy.

Last night his imagination had been stirred to a near frenzy as he'd envisioned her in the tub, the heated water lapping against her creamy flesh—

This was ridiculous. He heaved a sigh and snapped off the light on the table. It was time for him to get away from the lab for a while. He looked at his wristwatch and saw that once again he'd missed dinner with the boys.

He placed the tray of seedlings into the containment chamber, closed the data books and replaced them on the shelves. Tomorrow was another day. Maybe it would be one in which his head was clearer, his mind more focused.

The sky was dark when he locked the door of his lab and made his way across the lawn. He entered through the French doors at the back of the house and locked up behind himself. He could hear the muffled sounds of the television.

"Hi, boys," he called when he reached the family room. Then he directed his eyes to Amy. "Hi."

A smile invaded his face, his entire being.

And when she smiled back, he actually went buoyant inside.

"Hungry?" she asked. "You worked through dinner." One corner of her mouth quirked. "Again."

His nerve endings trilled and heat curled low in his gut at the sexy sight she made sitting there grinning at him…showing concern for him.

"I am, actually. Hungry, I mean."

For food? a tiny voice whispered from the back of his head. Or for Amy?

In a flash, all the fervor pulsing through him turned dour. He'd already told himself that he shouldn't be toying with this attraction he felt for the nanny, hadn't he? He wasn't fit relationship material. He knew that. Had figured it out long ago.

"Come on, then," she told him, pushing herself up from the sofa. "I'll fix you something." She looked at the twins. "I'll bring you back some popcorn and juice—would you like that?"

Both boys gave her an enthusiastic answer.

Softly she said, "Let's go."

Why hadn't he spoken up? Why hadn't he told her he was perfectly capable of finding himself something to eat?

Because he wanted to follow her gently swaying fanny into the kitchen, that's why.

Amy placed a bag of popcorn into the microwave oven and pushed the buttons to turn it on. As she pulled down glasses for the boys' drinks, she told Pierce, "Benjamin and Jeremiah asked for soup and grilled cheese sandwiches for dinner tonight. There's soup left. And it will only take me a minute or two to grill a sandwich for you. Will that be okay?"

"That will be fine."

She poured juice into the glasses and set a bowl on the counter for the popcorn. Then she went to the fridge and took out the container of leftover soup, the cheese and the butter. She pulled two slices of sourdough bread from the package.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, купив полную легальную версию на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.