MILLS & BOON

On Wings Of Love

Ashley Summers

Vintage 90s

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Аннотация

JUST A FLING…Katy Lawrence wasn't the kind of woman who could have a meaningless affair. But her broken heart needed a distraction. And sexy Thomas Logan was there for the taking. He was mighty persuasive and wouldn't take no for an answer.OR THE REAL THING?Thomas Logan recognized a passionate spirit in Katy the first time he saw her. But although she was his willing lover, she held a secret part of herself back. And suddenly Thomas knew he couldn't let her walk away - not without discovering the truth… .

“Are You Sure You Want Me To Stop, Katy?” Letter to Reader Title Page ASHLEY SUMMERS Dedication Chapter One Chapter Two Chapter Three Chapter Four Chapter Five Chapter Six Chapter Seven Chapter Eight Chapter Nine Chapter Ten Chapter Eleven Copyright

“Are You Sure You Want Me To Stop, Katy?”

He was so close, his breath brushed her mouth. The voice coming from deep in his chest was pure, sensuous persuasion.

“I don’t know, Thomas,” she whispered, meeting his gaze. “I truly don’t know.”

He ran his fingers down her cheek, his blood leaping at the feel of smooth, warm skin. Passion hardened his body, coiling low and deep and demanding. She made a sighing sound. Her lashes fluttered down as she lifted her face to his in soft surrender.

Thomas stilled, his body and mind clashing. The urge to take was maddeningly strong. But there was something else. His hand fell from her cheek.

“I think you should know whether or not you want me to stop. After all, we are adults,” he said matter-of-factly. “I want you very much. I also want the feeling to be mutual. It’s been a long day, so...good night, Katy....”

Dear Reader,

Welcome to a wonderful new year at Silhouette Desire! Let’s start with a delightfully humorous MAN OF THE MONTH by Lass Small—The Coffeepot Inn. Here, a sinfully sexy hero is tempted by a virtuous woman. He’s determined to protect her

from becoming the prey of the local men—and he's determined to win her for himself!

The HOLIDAY HONEYMOONS miniseries continues this month with Resolved To (Re)Marry by Carole Buck. Don't miss this latest installment of this delightful continuity series!

And the always wonderful Jennifer Greene continues her STANFORD SISTERS series with Bachelor Mom. As many of you know, Jennifer is an award winner, and this book shows why she is so popular with readers and critics alike!

Completing the month are a new love story from the sizzling pen of Beverly Barton, The Tender Trap; a delightful Western from Pamela Macaluso, The Loneliest Cowboy; and something a little bit different from Ashley Summers, On Wings of Love. Enjoy!

Lucia Macro

Senior Editor

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On Wings Of Love

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ASHLEY SUMMERS

is an insurable romantic who lives in Texas, in a house that overflows with family and friends. Her busy life revolves around the man she married thirty years ago, her three children and her handsome grandson, Eric. Formerly the owner and operator of a landscaping firm, she also enjoys biking, aerobics, reading and traveling.

To Virginia and John McKinney

and my beloved niece, Terry Hartley

One

Katy Lawrence parked her car in the shade of an ancient apple tree and slowly got out. Oblivious to the gravel under her bare feet, she stared at the place that would be her home for the next five weeks. A chill of wonder went up her spine. The Victorian house, all sparkling white paint and lacy gingerbread trim, drowsed in the mists like a sweet, vague memory from the distant past. It was a most bewitchingly haunting feeling.

Keeping her gaze on the house, Katy found her sandals and slipped them on with only a quick downward glance. The mossy brick walkway leading to the front door was a perfect touch, she thought. She felt another feathery chill.

"For heaven's sake, it's just an old house, Katy," she chided herself. She was not usually given to whimsy.

She quickened her pace and mounted the steps, then crossed the veranda. Above the old-fashioned door knocker hung a handwritten sign that read, "Come on in, I'm around somewhere."

Hesitantly she opened the door and stepped into the cool, shadowed entryway. "Hello?" she called. "Hello, anyone home?"

No answer. She waited for a moment, then walked on. When she reached the living room, her peculiar sense of déjà vu deepened to tiny shocks of recognition.

Katy nibbled her lip as she gazed around the airy room. She had never seen this house before, yet each object her eyes encountered evoked the same puzzling sense of familiarity. The words Of course! sang through her mind. Of course there were lace curtains at the windows. Of course there were gleaming wooden floors, and the sensuous curves of wicker furniture stained the exact hue of sweet-clover honey. Even the fresh flowers were a given, as was the basket of green apples on the coffee table.

Three perfectly round, black-and-white stones lay beside them, luring her fingers to caress their water-smoothed surfaces. Resisting the urge to touch, she made another appraisal of the

room with a travel writer's critical gaze. Since it was a bed and breakfast, not a hotel, she'd give the place three stars on first impression alone, Katy decided. Whoever lived here had a good eye for the small touches that made a house so welcoming to a traveler.

Who lived here? she wondered. This was a professional establishment, surely accustomed to the arrival of guests at some point during the afternoon. So where were the hosts?

Silence. The soft heat of an island summer drifted through the open windows, fragrant with the enticing scent of new-mown grass and the faint seawater tang of Puget Sound. Catching back the golden strands of hair tickling her cheeks, Katy eyed the tray sitting on a wicker table. It contained a pitcher of iced lemonade. For guests? Deciding it was, she poured a glass and drank it with hearty enjoyment.

Cold lemonade on a hot summer day. With a poignant sense of loss, Katy suddenly realized why this warm, elegantly time-worn room tugged at her heartstrings. It reminded her of her grandmother's house in Spokane.

"God, I haven't thought of Grammy in ages!" she whispered, shivering as the long-ago memory opened a tiny crack in the mental dam that had kept her safe. The specter of loss slipped through, and she was overcome with a frightening sense of vulnerability.

"No," Katy said, squaring her shoulders. She forced herself to focus on the photographs adorning the fireplace mantel.

She studied them, her mouth softening. Children, parents and grandparents. Two young couples in various poses, with and without the children. A handsome teenager holding up a string of fish which, judging from the rod in his other hand, he had caught. Family, she thought, and felt the familiar pinch of longing.

Her gaze shot back to the young fisherman. Above the mantel was a large framed portrait of the same man. He appeared to be thirty or so at the time it was painted. His skin was tanned, his coal-black hair charmingly tousled. Her gaze stopped on his face, suddenly riveted as a sweet quill of feeling arrowed through her. He had a strong, aquiline nose and a stubborn chin. But it was his eyes that caught and held her attention. Those sky blue eyes seemed to be looking directly at her.

Entranced by the clarity of his gaze, Katy studied his face. There was something about his expression, an openness she found very pleasing.

She started as a sound broke her bemusement. Someone was whistling. Turning, she glanced through an interior doorway, past a golden-oak table and out a bank of windows that overlooked the back lawn. Behind the house lay a meadow. And striding through the lush green grass was the man in the picture.

Whistling as he walked, he swung a small metal bucket in each hand, brimful with ripe raspberries. He was dressed in a T-shirt, faded jeans and scruffy sneakers. Her breath caught, and she had to force herself to exhale. Even from this distance he was an arresting man.

Drawing herself up to her full height of five-feet-three and one-quarter inches, Katy took a step forward, only to stop in sudden indecision. Should she wait to be discovered or walk to meet him? And while she stood here and dithered, he swung lithely across the lawn and down the redwood deck to the screened door.

Katy reminded herself that she was twenty-nine and a little too old to be thrown by an attractive male. But damn, he was appealing! Ruggedly so, with the kind of muscles that came from hard work, not a gym.

She saw his vivid blue eyes widening as he stepped inside and saw her, then crinkle at the corners with a smile.

"Well, hello!" he said. "This is one of my nicer surprises today." He set down the buckets and stuck out his hand. "I'm Thomas Logan. And you are...?"

Katy started to shake hands, then realized she still held her empty glass. Putting it down, she slipped her hand into his hard, brown fingers.

"Katy Lawrence." She paused expectantly. "I've just arrived. On the ferry," she went on when he tipped his head quizzically Idiot! Of course you arrived on the ferry, she chided herself silently. How else could you get on and off the island? Except by plane-and you've just driven all the way from California to avoid flying.

"Mr. Logan, I called and made reservations. For five weeks?" she prompted. "A woman answered the phone."

“That would be Maddie. She handles most reservations.”

Who was Maddie? Katy reclaimed her hand, conscious of a tingling in her fingers. “Maddie? Is she the owner?”

“Maddie’s the maid. I’m the owner.”

Her eyebrows rose. “You run this B&B?”

“Yes. Shouldn’t I?”

That quizzical smile shaped his mouth again.

Katy blushed, a maddening trait. “Yes, of course, I was just...Mr. Logan, do I have a room or not?”

“Yes, Miss Lawrence, you have a room.” His voice deepened. “It is miss, isn’t it?”

Rattled, she gave a brusque nod.

He relaxed into a grin that weakened her knees.

“Welcome to Tumbling Brook Farm, Miss Lawrence.”

“Thank you. Is it a real farm?”

“No, not really, not anymore. But I liked the name, so I kept it.” Pulling a red bandanna from his rear pocket, he wiped his damp forehead. “Warm out there! Where are you from?”

“Southern California. San Diego, to be exact.”

“And you drove here?”

“Yes. I like to drive.” Hearing the hint of defensiveness in her reply, Katy lifted her chin, her gaze a tad defiant.

Thomas turned away. “Well, you’ll find this a very restful place, ideal for restorative purposes,” he said lightly. “Your bags still in the car? Five weeks, you say?”

“Yes.” Katy followed him out the door. “That’s not a problem,

is it?"

"Not at all."

He glanced back at her and she noted the laugh lines around his eyes and mouth. Mid-thirties, she decided. An experienced charmer, no doubt. Why hadn't she been told about him? Her friend, Patsy Palmer, lived on the island and had recommended Tumbling Brook Farm. But she hadn't mentioned its handsome owner.

All those telephone chats, Katy thought dryly, and not once had Thomas Logan's name come up. "That little minx!" she muttered wryly.

Thomas's long legs had already carried him to her car. She hurried past him and unlocked the trunk. Easily he lifted out the two large leather bags, leaving only a camera case and favorite pillow for her to carry.

Just as she reached inside the trunk for her things, Katy heard a sound that stiffened her slim body to a taut line. A small airplane flew overhead, its engine loud enough to hurt her ears. She stilled, mentally following its flight. She felt a scream welling up—the plane was too low, surely it was too low! She shuddered, struggling for control. But the sound swelled into a snarling roar that filled her entire being. Suddenly, reality vanished, and she was caught in a steely web of memory.

For a desolate moment, Katy felt powerless to free herself; the memory that froze her in place was crystal-clear. The combination of grief, horror and impotent rage was so strong she

could taste its bitter tang...

"Miss Lawrence? Are you all right?"

The husky male voice had the effect of a soft touch on bare skin. There was incredible tenderness in it. Like splintering ice, the spell broke, and Katy let out the breath she'd been holding. A swift glance over her shoulder located Thomas standing at the edge of the driveway, waiting for her. Had he noticed her reaction to the plane? Idiot! Of course he'd noticed. Color scalded her cheeks as she met his concerned gaze.

Katy forced a laugh. "Yes, my goodness, of course I'm all right! It was just..." She inhaled, laughed again, shook her head at her foolishness. "I don't usually freak out when an airplane flies over, but this one was so loud. And so low!"

"Just a friend buzzing me. On his way to pick up a couple of tourists, I imagine," Thomas said. "I'm sorry it disturbed you."

"It just startled me. Let me get my camera and pillow, and I'll be right with you." She'd covered pretty well, Katy thought. She picked up her camera case. The sound of the plane had faded into the distance. The memory had faded, too, but it had left its calling card.

With practiced discipline, Katy drew a long, deep breath and stilled her inner trembling. Then she grabbed her pillow, closed the trunk and turned to face him with a bright smile. "Can't sleep without my special pillow! I've had it since college."

His deep chuckle sent a rush of warmth through her body. Katy stepped around him and led the way back up the mossy,

brick walkway. Her gaze, circling the yard, was curious and eager. On one side, young pear trees held a bounty of miniature fruit. On the other, a well-tended bed of huge pink peonies backed by white daisies flowed along an old stone fence. Pots of pansies and sweet alyssum flanked the steps. An inviting white wicker swing graced the porch.

"Who's the gardener?" she asked.

"I am. It's a great way to forget your troubles."

What kind of troubles? Biting back the question that sprang to her lips, she stepped over a sleeping calico cat and preceded Thomas Logan to the door.

Once inside, he took the lead. The wide staircase rose to a windowed landing, turned sharply and continued to the second floor. He stopped before an open door and allowed her to enter the airy room that would be her private haven for a while.

A bed with carved pineapple posts centered the room. A goose-down comforter in pale blue with tiny white polka dots suggested cozy nights. There was a fluffy rug for her bare feet, and on the dresser, a pewter vase of blue delphiniums.

Lovely, Katy thought. Who was the decorator? Not that there were any signs of professional decor; everything was comfortably worn. Just enough to invite a person to kick off her shoes and relax, she thought, eyeing the maple rocking chair heaped with plump pillows. A stack of snowy towels and washcloths lay on the trunk at the end of the bed. No private bath?

"No," he said when she voiced her thought. "But it's just down

the hall, and you're the only one here." He put down her bags and leaned against the doorsill. "You like it?"

"Yes, I do. Very much." Katy gave a silent gasp as she turned to speak to him. Either the room had shrunk or he'd stepped closer. Of course, neither had happened. As far as she could tell, the room was the same size and he still leaned against the doorsill. She placed her camera on the dresser.

"Do you live here alone, Mr. Logan?"

"Thomas, please. And yes, we're alone. But you needn't worry, I'm quite well known on Orcas Island, and there's a lock on your door." His mouth quirked, and there was a hint of devilry in those heavenly blue eyes. "And I've yet to ravish a female left at my mercy."

Katy found herself blushing again, as much from the melting effect of his azure gaze as from his words. "I was simply trying to get some idea of my surroundings," she replied haughtily. "You mentioned a maid?"

"Uh-huh, Maddie. She comes in at eight and stays until five or so. Your credit card is on record?" he asked without much concern. Katy nodded. "Well, then," he concluded briskly, "I'll leave you to get settled in. Any questions?"

"No, no questions."

His teeth flashed. "I have one. How did you come to choose my place? I don't advertise at all."

"I didn't choose it, my girlfriend did. She lives on the island, so naturally I asked her to find me a decent place to stay," Katy

said. He was smiling at her again, his smile especially for her, it suggested. She felt another rush of warmth, this time in the vicinity of her heart.

Disconcerted by her lightning-quick responses to this stranger, she placed a hand on the bedpost to steady her nerves. What's with you today, Katy? she demanded. First his house and now the man!

Realizing he'd asked the name of her friends, Katy hurriedly replied, "Patsy Palmer. Do you know her? She's a potter, has what she calls a 'wee place' at that artists' colony down by the ferry landing."

"Of course I know Patsy. I'll have to remember to thank her," Thomas murmured. Maybe even send her flowers, he thought, listening to Katy's spontaneous little laugh.

He put one of her suitcases on the luggage rack, using the act to cover another quick but thorough study of his guest. Which he'd been doing since that first dazzling glimpse of her, he admitted. Her image was already fairly well set in his mind, the golden curls intent upon escaping from beneath her baseball cap, her apple cheeks and slanting eyebrows, the soft, sweet, generous mouth he had a compelling urge to taste.

His own mouth insisted on curving as he watched her place her pillow on the bed just so. Her eyes were an incredible color, somewhere between purple and blue. Violet, he decided. She was small, even fragile in appearance, but he sensed the steel in that slim spine. Expertly he appraised the white silk blouse tucked

into tan slacks, the diamond solitaire that glittered at her throat, the tiny gold watch on her wrist.

Her nails were tapered ovals of soft, glossy pink. Nails that had never dug in a garden, he'd warrant. She wore sandals, and even her toenails were the same shining color as her fingertips. Pedicured feet, he decided. Pretty feet. Not that he had a foot fetish, but... Thomas raked a hand through his hair, a nervous gesture. Not that women made him nervous... Oh, hell. Enough already, he admonished himself.

His guest was beautiful, all right, but he couldn't help wondering at the shadows that haunted those enchanting eyes. What had caused the sadness that lay deep within their depths? Had someone hurt her? A man? Clamping down on his unsettling need to know, Thomas gave himself a brisk mental shake. "As I said, if you need anything... Oh, I'll leave a key on the table by the front door. You can pick it up at your convenience. You can also sign the register later."

"Yes, I will. Thank you."

"You're welcome."

He certainly seemed eager to leave, Katy thought with an unseemly touch of resentment. Biting her bottom lip, she watched him stride out the door. His hair curled at his nape like a little boy's. But this was no little boy, she was quick to warn herself. This was a man, a sinewy length of vibrant masculinity that warmed a woman all over.

He must drive the females on this island crazy, she thought.

Patsy, too? Chagrined, Katy turned away to unpack. Even so, she was very much aware of him leaving the room.

It felt a little strange to think she'd be here alone with him. "Oh, Katy, he's the host, for heaven's sake!" she disparaged her nervousness. "Don't go getting any crazy ideas about him."

A late-afternoon breeze wafted through her window, and with it, the sound of Thomas Logan's voice. He was speaking to the cat, chiding it, his laugh gentle.

The same gentleness she had sensed when he'd asked if she was all right. "When you went into orbit just because an airplane flew by a little lower than usual, Kathleen. Idiot!" she muttered.

Realizing she'd called herself an idiot for the third time in less than an hour, Katy smiled at herself. The usually derisive term was actually an affectionate catchword between two sisters. Katy even remembered the first time they'd used it. Karin, nine years old, red-faced and furious, lobbing Easter eggs at Katy and screeching, "You're an idiot, you know that, Katy? An idiot! I do not like that creepy Bryant Hurst!"

Punishment was swift, of course; Nell, their beloved nanny, did not tolerate rudeness, not from anyone, and especially not from her young misses...

Oh, Karin, I miss you, I miss you! The lump in Katy's throat, for all its familiarity, was painfully hard to dislodge. Suddenly aching with loneliness and grief, she hugged herself with a little swaying motion until the pain dulled to a manageable level.

With a physical effort, she closed the door on her memories

and indulged in an elaborate stretch. Lord, she was tired! Every muscle ached with the strain of her long trip. She glanced at her watch. Six o'clock, too late for a nap and too early for bed. A walk, then, she decided. From her window overlooking the meadow she could see woods and inviting glades. The fragrance of clover and wild grasses beckoned to her.

Katy changed clothes, choosing sneakers, walking shorts and a cotton blouse, then tied the sleeves of a pink cardigan around her shoulders. Her hair, trapped under a baseball hat for so many hours, was a tangled mess and required a thorough brushing. The heavy, loosely curling, perennially tousled mane contained a dozen shades of gold, from dark honey to the palest blond. Leaving it loose around her shoulders, she hurried downstairs.

Thomas Logan was not in sight. She walked through the dining room to the French doors leading out to the back terrace. Borders of pink shrub roses separated the yard from the meadow. A fieldstone path led down the slight incline and impulsively she took it, following the sound of running water.

Just as the name of the B&B suggested, there was indeed a brook and it did tumble over black rocks, through banks of wild yellow iris and tall pink and white foxgloves in full, regal bloom. Beyond, the path ran uphill for a way before forking sharply. She followed the right fork to a gazebo perched near the edge of a bluff that descended almost straight down to the water.

Her absent Mr. Logan was painting the small structure; his lithe torso lengthening as he brought the paintbrush upward in a

long, powerful sweep. A sharp little thrill rippled under her skin. Katy stopped, trying to decide whether to go on, or go back.

But, too late; he'd already seen her. "Hello, again," she called, making her way along the stony path. Coming round the side of the gazebo, she gave a little gasp of pleasure.

"Nice view, huh?" he murmured.

"Nice," Katy answered, thinking wryly that nice didn't do it justice. Below her, spread out like dark green jewels on a velvet cloth of water, the San Juan Islands lay drowsing in the sunlight. The Washington coast was a dark blur in the distance, and clouds drifted down the highest hills to become tangled in the tops of soaring firs. Her camera was in her room, worse luck. But there would be plenty of time to take pictures.

She looked up and found his gaze on her face. "It's s lovely," she said.

"Yeah, lovely." Putting down his brush, he walked over to stand beside her. "I love it. Always have."

"Always? You've lived here all your life, then?"

"No, this was my grandparents' home. I grew up in Baltimore, but I loved to spend the summers here when was a boy."

She had turned her attention back to the view. While he spoke, Thomas let his gaze play over her again. Honey-toned skin everywhere he looked, face, arms, long shapely legs. Masses of honey-colored hair blowing in the wind.

"I guess you think Tumbling Brook's a pretty fancy name for this place," he said idly.

“I did wonder, yes.” She swept out her small hands in a movement that reminded him of butterflies. “It doesn’t suit you,” she said simply.

“It doesn’t, huh?” He chuckled. “Actually, Grandmother named it, and since Grandfather thought she hung the moon, Tumbling Brook it was.”

Katy smiled at the colloquial expression. Obviously, his grandfather had adored his grandmother. It must be nice to be adored, she thought with disarming wistfulness.

“Well, the brook does tumble,” she said, and they both laughed. “Do you grow the roses? They’re lovely.”

“Yes, the roses, the flowers, a few choice vegetables. I supply the local merchants with fresh produce.” He grinned. “A hobby more than a money-making endeavor.”

He was so easy to be with, she reflected. Some small part of her insisted she knew him, from some other time, some other place. A little shaken, Katy reminded herself that he was also a stranger. “Mr. Logan, I need to make a telephone call. Long distance, but I have a calling card. I need to check in with my... family.”

“Of course,” Thomas said. “Telephone’s in the kitchen.”

“Thank you.” Excusing herself, Katy turned back and followed the left fork for a while. At length, she retraced her steps to the house and called Nell for a brief, reassuring chat.

Hanging up, Katy yawned with catlike languor. Perhaps she’d have that nap, after all.

Katy woke disoriented. Blearily, she noticed the sunset and wondered why Nell had let her sleep through dinner when she was so hungry. Then awareness returned fully and she sat up. This wasn't home and that wasn't her beloved nanny-turned-housekeeper she heard stirring downstairs. She sighed. Where was she going to eat tonight? She hated the thought of getting dressed and going out.

She lay there for a few more minutes, luxuriating in the perfect warmth of the goose-down comforter. She was still tired, still drowsy. But if she didn't get up now, she wouldn't sleep tonight. Well, this was the purpose of her trip, to rest, relax, unwind. Get away from it all, she reflected, without permitting her mind to explore the all.

Her gaze fell upon her camera and the rolls of film she'd stacked beside it. A freelance writer and photographer, she had combined her vacation with an assignment from a travel magazine she had worked with before Karin's death. At the time Katy had felt ambivalent about accepting it. Although she had always loved her work, right now it seemed more of a burden than a pleasure. But both her therapist and her editor thought it would be good for her.

Well, maybe they were right, she reflected. Maybe working in this lovely place would revive her zest for life.

Her mind abruptly shifted to the hunger pangs knotting her stomach. They surprised her, for she hadn't really been hungry for so long she'd almost forgotten how it felt. It felt pretty good,

Katy decided.

Clad only in a tiny gold ankle bracelet, she padded to the closet in search of a robe. She needed a shower and the bathroom was down the hall. An inconvenience, but one often encountered at such establishments.

Catching sight of herself in the full-length mirror on the closet door, she made a face. Napping had removed some of her makeup, and mascara darkened the shadows under her eyes. She wondered what the charming Mr. Logan would think of her were he to see her right now. Grimacing, she pulled on her robe, opened the bedroom door and nearly bumped into him.

"Oops! Sorry!" he exclaimed, dropping the towels he'd been holding and catching her arms just below the short, fluttery sleeves of her robe.

His touch on her flesh was electric. Katy jumped from both the unexpected encounter and the lovely sensations racing down her arms. God, it's been so long since I've had these feelings, she thought, thoroughly surprised. When she moved, the tips of her breasts touched the hard male chest covered only in a thin T-shirt. She could feel his body heat. And her own.

His quick, indrawn breath gifted her with another shivery thrill.

"Are you okay?" he asked huskily. "I didn't mean to bowl you over."

Strangely reluctant to look at him, she understood why when their eyes met. Something disturbingly strong and splendid

flowed between them, something not entirely physical.

"I'm fine, really." Shaken, she pulled away and smoothed her tumbled hair. He knelt to pick up the towels he'd been carrying.

"Oh, I'm glad you have those—I forgot mine," Katy said, somewhat breathlessly.

"I was just bringing these to you. I wasn't sure you had enough. It's been my experience that women require a lot of towels," he drawled.

Experience in what capacity? Holding her tongue, Katy accepted the linens he handed up to her and thanked him.

"You're welcome." As his gaze swept upward, Thomas felt a vital quickening. From his kneeling position he had a fine view of sleek, satin-covered thighs and the sweet flare of her hips. Seen from below, her breasts were high and pointed. Proud breasts, he thought, small, but rich enough to satisfy the sudden itch in his hands.

He stood up and smiled at her. Her lips parted and he watched them curve up at the corners in a little answering smile that was at once seductive and innocent of seduction. How would her mouth taste? he wondered. And how long had it been since he had been so acutely aware of a woman?

She stepped around him, the shimmery robe clinging to her enticing form. She smelled delicious, he thought distractedly. Why did she want to shower?

As she walked from him, desire coiled low in his stomach, a deluge of yearning that stunned him a tittle, for it was mixed with

other things. Nameless things, but very much there.

When she glanced over her shoulder, his tight mouth softened. Her face had the fresh, fragile beauty of a wildflower.

"Just a minute, Katy," he said abruptly. "There are a few other things I want to tell you. One is that the living room is for your pleasure, also the kitchen should you want to prepare tea or coffee. There's television downstairs... Let's see, what else? The front door isn't locked until eleven. After that, you'll need your key. Oh, one more thing—what are you doing for dinner tonight?"

Unprepared for his question, she stammered, "Why, I—I'd planned to go out for dinner, that is, if you'd kindly point me toward a restaurant," she ended with a small laugh. "Do you have a map of the island?"

"Yes. But I thought, well, you've obviously had a full day already, so if you'd like, you can have a bite with me tonight."

Her mouth shaped an "Oh!" before she said, "But feeding your guests dinner isn't one of your services, is it?"

Such beautiful eyes, Thomas thought. Big and dark and vulnerable. His voice gentled. "Not ordinarily. But now and then I do go out of my way for a guest. Dinner's nothing fancy, just ham and fresh pinto beans and corn bread. Raspberry shortcake for dessert, though," he added as an inducement when he saw doubt clouding her face. "I'd be delighted to have you join me."

Katy bit her lip, devilishly tempted despite her habitual wariness. It would feel so good just to put on a comfortable outfit

and have dinner here, rather than driving to a restaurant. Down strange roads, she reminded herself. And it would be nighttime when she returned.

Better to keep your distance, Katy. “Thank you, but I’ve had a nap and now I feel a need to get out for a while.” Her smile was spontaneous, warm. “But I appreciate your kind offer.”

“Anytime,” he said, apparently unbothered by her rejection.

He didn’t move. She hurried into the bathroom, closed the door behind her and leaned against its heavy surface. She could feel his presence tugging at her even through the wood.

After a moment she straightened. She’d forgotten her shampoo. Opening the door, she peeked out. He was going down the stairs. She hurried to her bedroom, then stopped just outside the door as she noticed for the first time the photographic gallery he had created on the hallway walls.

More family pictures: babies, graduations, weddings, outings, all the special occasions that bond a group of people. But what riveted her attention were two pictures of Thomas Logan.

In one, he waved from the cockpit window of a plane that bore the insignia T. L. Airlines and a decal of Pegasus, the mythical winged horse. In the second picture, he stood beside a sleek little jet that flaunted the same proud insignia. He wore a captain’s hat and a uniform bearing that unmistakable logo.

Katy recoiled. So this was his true profession, she thought with chilling disappointment. He was a pilot.

Becoming conscious of her tense stance, Katy released her

breath and drew in air. This is absurd, she told herself. Why should you care what he does for a living?

But a pilot! She shivered and hurried into her room.

A moment later she returned to the bathroom. As she closed the door, she heard him downstairs, laughing as he scolded the cat. The sound of that husky laughter struck some vibrant chord deep inside her. Bemused by her spontaneous reaction, she grasped a corner of the mirrored shower stall to steady herself.

His effect upon her was startling, to say the least, Katy thought flippantly, trying to minimize its intensity. But she had never felt such a warm and immediate response to a man. And she knew with a profound feminine awareness that the feeling had been mutual. This thrilled her, and confused her. If she wanted intimacy, there was nothing stopping her. In fact, a little summer fling could be an exciting new experience.

"All you have to do is whistle," Katy murmured with a wry smile for her rosy-cheeked image. She already knew he could whistle...

She sobered, her features tightening as she came back down to earth with a jarring thud. What if it didn't remain just a pleasant little fling?

He's a pilot, she reminded herself, and shuddered as a host of images shot through her mind with the swiftness, and destruction, of summer lightning. To Katy, the plane he touched so proudly was a symbol of devastating loss. Flying was synonymous with death.

Hot tears surged to her eyes, then spilled down her cheeks. All day she had tried not to think of the date. An anniversary of sorts, she thought bleakly. The nine-month anniversary of the death of the person she loved more than she loved herself, her sister Karin.

Karin, her identical twin, her other self. Katy drew a breath against the stabbing hurt. Love, to her, had become simply another word for loss. Fate had taken her entire family, parents, grandparents, sister. She'd even lost the man—had been dumped by the man, she corrected with searing honesty—she had loved. Or thought she had loved. Whatever it was, it didn't matter, she decided, suddenly ragingly furious. Love, lust, illusion. Whatever you called it, it was still devastatingly painful when it ended.

So she'd become wary. "Built myself a wall against love," Katy conceded wearily. But wariness was both natural and sensible, she insisted as Thomas Logan's clear blue gaze shot to mind. She was still in mourning. And she was still healing from the destruction of the hopes and dreams she'd brought into her marriage.

She'd had far too much trauma in her life already. No more risks equaled no more pain. An intelligent rationale, Katy told herself fiercely, swiping at tears.

Suddenly, she wished she had someone to hold her. But as usual, the only arms around her were her own.

Two

Thomas Logan walked downstairs still smarting from

his encounter with the elusive Miss Lawrence. He wasn't accustomed to having his dinner invitations rejected.

Besides, it made no sense for her to go out to eat when she was obviously exhausted. A nap hadn't done that much for her, he thought moodily.

A fine rain had begun falling, shortening the dusky evening into twilight. His mood lowered even more. He didn't mind eating alone, didn't even think about it, most times. But he would have enjoyed looking across the table at that intriguing face tonight. Enjoyed it tremendously, in fact. And they could have talked, answered the dozens of questions whirling in his mind. He wanted to know everything about her.

"Curious, the feelings she stirs up," he thought aloud. Sighing, he went to the kitchen and checked the fragrant pot of beans he'd been cooking. There was no better eating than fresh pinto beans, in his opinion. He grinned at himself. This from a man who used to dine in New York's trendiest restaurants?

Just then, the telephone rang; someone wanted a reservation for the weekend. For a moment he nearly refused. Then common sense asserted itself. He'd hate to have to explain to his mother why he couldn't provide a room to her best friends, especially when he had rooms to spare. The house was big, four bedrooms and two baths upstairs, the master suite and living areas downstairs.

After jotting down expected arrival times and replacing the receiver, he took the pan of corn bread from the oven and set it

on a cooling rack. Bending over sent a dull ache down one hip, a rainy-day reminder of injuries sustained in the car wreck that had nearly killed him.

His thoughts lingered on the subject. Before his near-death experience, he'd been a Wall Street wizard whose main interest in life was what he'd arrogantly termed the easy-money game. Making money was a power-trip that had utterly consumed him, until the day he'd rounded a curve too fast and sent his Porsche and himself over the edge of a deep ravine.

During the ensuing days of pain and confusion, he realized what a joke his life had been up to that point. Motivated by the radical change in his outlook, he'd left New York and returned to the islands to help his adored grandparents run this lovely inn.

Remembering, he shook his head in wry amusement. No one could believe that he'd given up his glamorous, high-profile lifestyle for the rough urbanity of Orcas Island. They'd believe even less how happy he was here, he thought, uncapping a beer. He had taken up flying immediately upon settling here, got his license, discovered the sheer, rapturous glory of soaring into the sky. He could, and often did, spend hours in his plane, alone or taking people out on chartered flights.

True, since his grandparents had moved to Florida, it was lonely here sometimes, on nights like this, especially. But for the most part he was content. Or would be, if the rest of his needs were met, he conceded with another sigh. He was thirty-five, time to be getting on with the rest of his life. But he hadn't found

anyone he wanted to get on with, he mused as he uncovered the baked ham.

He had many women friends because he was a friendly, caring man. But they just stayed friends. Still, some were eminently qualified to become Mrs. Thomas Miles Logan. But all or nothing was his motto, though sometimes he wondered if such a thing as deep, passionate love really existed. Certainly passion did, and love, too. But together?

And if it did exist, would he ever find it?

A sound from upstairs tightened his stomach. Katy. A pretty name. A pretty lady. Who had no business going out tonight.

He fetched a tray and set it with silverware, dipped beans into a bowl, sliced the savory ham and cut a wedge of golden corn bread. Angel food cake layered with fresh raspberries and whipped cream made a sumptuous dessert, at least in his opinion. Then he spared a thought as to why he was bringing her a tray of food. The gesture probably came from having three sisters, he decided. His mother's words rolled across his mind: "Watch out for your sisters, Thomas. Take care of your sisters, Thomas."

Chuckling at the cozy memory, he carried the tray upstairs and tapped on Katy's door.

She opened it, her damp hair drifting around her shoulders as she stared up at him. She was wrapped in a long white terry-cloth robe that clung to every gorgeous inch of her. Any brotherly thoughts instantly vanished from Thomas's mind.

"Good evening."

“Good evening. Oh!” Katy’s eyes flew wide as she noticed the tray.

“I saw no sense in your going out tonight just to get something to eat,” he said gruffly. “So I fixed you a tray.”

“Well!” She looked at the tray and then up at him again. “My goodness, you shouldn’t have done that. I mean, it’s really very kind of you, but totally unnecessary. Oh, Lord, that does smell good!” She sighed, inhaling the savory aromas.

Thomas gave her a smug smile. He was a damn fine cook, if he did say so himself. “Tastes as good as it smells. Now you can stay in and get a good night’s sleep, instead of wandering around the island in the dark.”

Her eyes narrowed, instantly challenging his sensible suggestion. All right, command, but still sensible, Thomas insisted, holding out the tray

“I’m sure the food is delicious,” she said, taking the tray. “I may still go out, however.”

“It’s raining and the roads are narrow two-lanes, with few street signs,” he said, frowning.

“I think I can find my way around. After all, I do live in a large city,” she returned with a hint of coolness that irked the devil out of him.

“Well, whatever you choose to do, enjoy the meal,” Thomas said. He turned on his heel and strode back downstairs.

“Mr. Logan?” Her soft voice stopped him on the landing.

“Yes?”

thank you."

He heard her door close. "You're welcome," he mumbled, feeling pushed and pulled by the change in that silken voice.

The telephone was ringing again. No more guests, he thought irritably. But it was the airport. He had an eleven o'clock charter in the morning.

Thomas jotted down the client's name, then just stood there, staring, unseeing, out the kitchen window. His mind had already winged back to the woman upstairs. He'd seen those violet eyes flash, seen the twist of mouth that bespoke fire and temper. She looked as cool as a glass of ice water, but that mouth would never kiss a man coolly. She'd put her entire self into every hot, passionate kiss, scatter a man's senses to the wind, wrap his heart around those slender fingers...

With a snort of self-disgust, Thomas hauled himself back to reality. What the hell was he thinking? This morning he didn't even know she existed, and here he stood dithering about kisses and passion and wrapped-up, hearts.

"It's been too long, Logan," he muttered. Maybe he ought to clean the kitchen. At least put the food away. But he didn't feel like cleaning kitchens. What he felt like was...

Making another sound of disgust, he decided to sit on the porch a while and let the cool evening air chill the many little fevers inside him.

Katy jerked awake with a soft cry. She had been dreaming, that recurring nightmare that tormented her sleep. She exhaled

a long, tremulous breath. Thank goodness it wasn't one of her really bad dreams. Sometimes she awoke screaming.

Sitting up, she drew the drapes and peered out at the new day. It was only four-thirty, but daylight, soft and misty, streamed in through the windows. The air had a tang to it that was almost a taste on her tongue.

She stretched, yawning, and touched her eyelids. They didn't feel red or swollen, or even gritty. She hadn't cried anymore last night. She hadn't gone out, either, just enjoyed her delicious meal and went to bed to read a paperback romance. They were her weakness, tales of beautiful love and dreams and happy-ever-afters. She wasn't sure any of it was true, but some secret part of herself wanted to believe it was possible.

Unbidden, her thoughts leaped to the memory of Thomas's blue eyes glinting at her when she had opposed his will. Preposterous, of course. Who was Thomas Logan to decide if she should or should not go out?

Thomas. She liked his name, the soft, clipped sound of it. He was certainly full of himself, she reflected, swinging her feet to the floor. And so good to look at that just picturing his face pleased every part of her lissome body.

Reminding herself that California was full of good-looking men, Katy tumbled out of bed and headed for the bathroom.

To her annoyance, she brought a nagging sense of guilt with her. Bossy or not, Thomas had been nice to her last night and she'd been a bit, well, ungracious.

“Not too smart, Katy,” she muttered, slathering cleanser on her face. “After all, you’re spending several weeks with the man as host, you can at least be friendly.”

Friendly, yes, but that’s all, she warned herself, rinsing off the cream. If you can’t think of him as just your host, consider the man an intriguing new acquaintance.

Satisfied with her pragmatic solution, she dried her face and patted on an oatmeal mask. Then she walked back to her room, snuggled under the comforter once more and finished her book.

At six o’clock she stepped into the hallway again and listened for a moment. Noises from the kitchen, and then the aroma of hot coffee wafted up the stairs, a siren song she couldn’t resist.

After a quick shower, she dressed in jeans and a yellow linen shirt, and swirled her hair atop her head. Contrarily, the open window drew her and she scampered onto the window seat. The sunlight was stronger now, and shadows pooled under tall fir trees. A streak of blue caught her eye as a tiny bird landed on the lawn and began a diligent search for insects.

Splendor in the grass, Katy thought with humor. Suddenly eager, for the first time in months, to experience whatever the day would bring, she ran downstairs to the kitchen.

Except for the calico cat sleeping on the windowsill, the house appeared to be empty. She glanced at the table, set with a pink cloth and white china. Coffee steamed in a pot. Pecan muffins rested on the sideboard. The fragrance of bacon made her mouth water. Where was he?

Outside, she bet, enjoying the glorious morning. And here he came, strolling through the yard carrying a basket of freshly picked strawberries. A fragile sense of well-being stole over her. Katy let out her breath, unaware that she'd been holding it, as he walked in and let the screen door slam behind him.

Seeing her, he stopped, eyes crinkling, a smile tugging at his fine mouth as he looked over her formfitting attire.

Their greetings collided. Deciding she had some fence-mending to do, Katy laughed and said, "Those strawberries look wonderful. I don't know when I've last had them right from the patch. Mr. Logan—"

"Thomas, please."

"Thomas. I want to thank you again for the tray last night. It truly was a godsend, I didn't really feel like going out," she confessed. "I realize I may have been a little ungracious about that." She paused, shifting under his keen gaze.

"Why was that?" He motioned her to sit down at the table.

Obliging him, she replied, "I suppose it's because I don't enjoy being ordered around. You were just a trifle bossy, Mr.... Thomas." Why was it so hard to say his name? Because it implied an intimacy she didn't want? And did want?

"Sorry about that," he said, looking not in the least sorry about that. "Force of habit, I suppose."

"Oh? Your women like to be bossed around, do they?" she asked, then could have bitten her tongue.

"Sometimes." He grinned at the berries he began rinsing.

“When it’s by me.”

She nibbled back a smile—he was impossible!

Unfolding her napkin, she inquired, “Am I your only guest?”

“Thus far. An older couple are coming in this weekend. Friends of my folks, so I couldn’t say no.”

“Oh.” Intrigued, she asked, “Did you want to say no?”

Apparently her question caught him by surprise; Thomas glanced at her, then slowly shook his head as if perplexed.

“I suppose guests can be a bother at times,” she mused.

“At times.” His quick glance was accompanied by a grin this time. “Present company excepted. Help yourself.” Dumping the berries into a ceramic colander, he set it on a plate then on the table. “I’ll just reheat these muffins and we can eat. Did you sleep well?”

“Very well, thank you. That goose-down comforter is marvelous. And I love that old-fashioned fan. In fact, I love your house. Ah.” She sighed as he took the muffins from the microwave and emptied them into a cloth-lined basket. Everything he did was done with an expert’s ease. Glancing at the tall figure in navy blue slacks and shirt, she commented, “You seem to be an old hand at this.”

“Oh, I’ve cooked for myself for years. Even before I took up the bachelor’s life in the Big Apple, in fact.” Bringing the coffeepot with him, he sat down beside her.

“You lived in New York?”

He cocked an eyebrow. “Why are you so surprised at that?”

“Oh! Well, from Baltimore to a rustic little island is a big stretch, not to mention New York City.” Katy fought a brief and unsuccessful battle with her curiosity. “Were you a pilot before you moved here? I noticed the hallway pictures,” she hurriedly explained. “T. L. Airlines. Yours?”

Thomas nodded. “Mine. And yes, I flew planes before, but just for pleasure. When I decided to make this my permanent home, I needed something to keep me busy. There was already a small charter service on the island, so I bought it, added two more planes and voila! T. L. Airlines: offering commuter service between San Juan Islands and SEA-TAC as well as private charters.”

She smiled, touched by the pride in his voice. “How many planes do you have?”

“Five in all.”

“And you run this B&B, too? My, you are a busy man!” She tasted her coffee. “Umm, good coffee. You said your grandparents owned the house. Have they passed on?” she asked with exquisite delicacy.

“Heck, no! They just moved on. To Florida, where it’s s warm and sunny all year round. I was fed up with New York and they were tired of rain and cold, so I bought this place from them, and they flew off like two lovebirds escaped from their cage!”

Katy laughed delightedly, her spirits lifting as her laughter ignited his. Something warm and sparkling had entered the atmosphere. Her heart, her body, even her soul responded to its

effervescent magic.

"You really like this house, hmm?" he said.

Her eyes veiled. "Yes."

"Me, too." Sensing her unease, Thomas swallowed his probing questions and cast about for something that would bring them close again. "You ever lived on a farm?"

She laughed. "Certainly I have. A whole summer, in fact. I loved it"

"You're kidding!" He squinted at her. "A working farm?"

"Yes. I milked cows, baled hay, fed pigs, drove a tractor, you name it." She took a bite of buttered muffin. "Mmm, this is good. The butter, too."

"The butter is made by the nuns on the next island. They have the smallest dairy in the world, three cows. They also make cheese."

Somewhat bemused, he stared at her. Unbelievable that those elegant hands had ever milked a cow. And baled hay? She must not be as fragile as she looked.

He ate a handful of strawberries while he examined her heart-shaped face. Her wide, generous mouth was a delicious contrast to the aristocratic little nose. Her hair was tamed today, firmly caught in a knot that was already spilling curls down her neck. Silver earrings graced her ears, and a wide, matching bracelet clamped one thin wrist.

Why was she so thin? Because that was the style now, all skin and bones and sharp angles. Although she didn't look to have too

many sharp angles. None at all, in fact.

He put another muffin and two strips of bacon on her plate. “You a vegetarian?” he asked.

“Not entirely. Not with bacon this good. Organic?”

“Yeah, friend-grown pork. No chemicals, no growth hormones. I sure wouldn’t have figured you for the farm life. What are you doing in California?”

“I’m a writer and photographer-travel books, scenic tours, that sort of thing, for magazines.”

Without thinking, she poured him a cup of coffee and took pleasure in the small service.

It pleased him, too, inordinately. He shook his dark head. “Fascinating. But I’d have guessed you for an actress.”

Her nose wrinkled. “Hardly.”

“How’d you get started in photography?”

“Just came naturally, I guess. I loved taking pictures even as a girl. I had one of those cheap little cameras that took fuzzy pictures, but I thought they were great.” Katy stirred her coffee round and round as the past crowded in with surprising force. “You’re lucky to have such a close relationship. with your grandparents,” she said softly.

“You don’t?” Thomas watched her spoon make another lap around the cup before she answered.

“No. Dad married Mother against his parents’ wishes. So there was very little communication between them. It’s ironic, really,” she said musingly. “That they inherited us, I mean. After our

parents died, we lived with Grammy Rose, Mom's mother, for three years. A lovely, loving woman... Then she died, and we were passed on to our paternal grandparents in Boston. None of us were very happy about the situation."

Katy halted, chagrined at her loose tongue. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean for this to get so personal."

"No! Don't be sorry," Thomas protested. He was aware of her discomfort, but his need to know the forces that had molded and shaped this beguiling woman had become incredibly strong. "Why weren't you happy?" he asked urgently. "How old were you?"

"Seven." Her voice thinned. "Our grandparents were...well, they were old. Even though they were only in their sixties, they were old, quite incapable of reorganizing their life-style around two little girls."

"I see." Suddenly, nebulously angry, Thomas hunched over his coffee mug. "What was their solution?"

"Boarding schools. The very best, of course. But we did spend the holidays at home."

"That must have been tough," he said, and for an instant she thought he had touched her, so warm and soft was his voice.

Tensing, she sipped her coffee and welcomed its scalding heat on her tongue. To her astonishment, she was battling an urge to pour out her entire life story.

She shrugged. "Not so tough. We had everything we needed."

Except love, Thomas thought grimly. But instinct warned him

against displaying his compassion. She might mistake it for pity. “You said two little girls,” he remembered. “Who was the other one?”

“Karin. My twin sister.”

“Good heavens, you mean there are two of you?” he asked with mock horror.

“No, not anymore.”

Thomas sobered. Her lashes swept down, but not before he caught a glimpse of the sadness sheening those darkened eyes. His voice roughened. “What happened?”

“She died last year.”

The starkness of her reply unsettled Katy as much as Thomas. Why on earth had she told him about Karin? It was too personal, too intimate! She shot to her feet with a glance at her watch.

“Gosh, look at the time! I’ve got to go—I’m meeting Patsy in a few minutes. She’s showing me some of the sights. Breakfast was wonderful, Thomas. Thank you.”

Thomas gave a courteous but absentminded response. He was thinking how much he’d like to show her the island. “Will you be home late?”

Her eyes narrowed.

Back off, Logan, Thomas castigated himself. She’s a paying guest. It’s none of your business when she comes in!

But he damn well wanted to make it his business.

“Well, that really doesn’t matter,” he went on briskly. “You have a key, so... Enjoy your day, Katy.”

“You, too,” she said, and then she was gone, leaving behind a strange new emptiness.

Katy found her way back to the harbor, and soon located her friend’s house and store. Patsy rushed out shrieking with delight at seeing her again. Although they kept in touch, it had been four years since Patsy left California. The women were college friends. A friendship that had lasted through thick and thin, Katy thought, hugging Patsy with the same wild fervor.

“How do you like the B&B I recommended?” Patsy asked as they started toward the house.

“It’s lovely, of course.”

“Oh, good.” Patsy gave her a sly glance. “And the host?”

“He’s lovely, too,” Katy said dryly. “It’s really odd that you forgot to mention him.”

“Um, well, you know. What do you think of him?”

“He seems nice enough,” Katy allowed. “Bossy, though.”

“Yeah, he is that. Comes from all those women chasing him around the islands,” Patsy said, nodding agreement with herself.

“Does that include you?”

“No. For some obscure reason, there’s never been any chemistry between that gorgeous thing and me. My hormones must be getting thin.” An eyebrow arched. “How are yours doing?”

“The last time I checked, my hormones were doing just fine. Are we going to stand here on the steps or can we go inside?”

Laughing, Patsy ushered her through the door. The house was

small, just two rooms and a bath. One room to sleep, eat and cook in, the other to display her pottery wares and store supplies.

"This is why I didn't invite you to stay with me," she said. "I wanted to, believe me, but as you can see, we just don't have any room."

"We?"

"Yeah, we. Right now I've got a roommate. His name is Ken. That's his picture on the mantel."

Sighing, Patsy pushed at the lock of red hair falling across her face. She was freckled all over, and beautiful, Katy thought.

"He's quite a hunk, Patsy," she said as she studied the picture. "Is it serious?"

"Not yet. This is sort of a tryout period." Patsy's little nose wrinkled. "I mean, hey, you road test a new car, don't you? Why not a new relationship? Might keep a person from making another mistake. Which, in my case, would make me a three-time loser," she said with acerbic humor. Eyes bright, she cocked her head. "You, though, hold the record for short-lived marital harmony. I mean, really, Katy, nine months? What kind of a marriage was it, for heaven's sake?"

"A bad one. He was a womanizer and control freak." Katy's mouth twisted wryly. "Sort of like that soap-opera role he's playing now." Using her bitter drollery as armor against remembered pain, she sketched a picture of the marriage she had ended five years ago. "Everyone seemed to know what kind of guy he was but me. Well, me and Karin, I should say. Even she

was fooled by his charm. But he was an actor, and so handsome, so boyishly sweet—I was nuts about the man, even thought he was just being masterful when he insisted on supervising my every move."

She gave a dry laugh. "But then, everyone loved Rhys! And Rhys loved everyone. At least he tried to. When I had the effrontery to object to his infidelities, be walked out.

"Anyway," she concluded crisply, "I'm not keen to try it again, with tor without a road test."

Dismissing the subject, Katy picked up one of the pottery pieces strewn around the room, a tall jug done in cream, rust, gold and brown, with an uneven band of blue. The colors formed a pattern that resembled an otherworldly landscape. "This is lovely, Patsy. You've really improved since you left California."

"It's island living. The serenity just sort of seeps into my hands when they're on the wheel, and voilà!, I get a piece like that." Patsy hesitated, then asked softly, "Katy? You still having problems? I mean, well, are you still scared of planes and flying?"

"Petrified," Katy said simply. "Every time I remember that plane crash, I—I just can't get past it, Patsy. Seeing it was so close to living it! I felt everything, everything!" She stopped and drew a shuddery breath. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to get so emotional. Look, I know we haven't discussed Karin yet and I know she's heavy on your mind. But I didn't come here to cry on your shoulder, honey. I'm here to laugh and have fun. To forget, for a little while, anyway. Let's just enjoy being together again.

So, are you ready to show me the town?"

"That won't take long," Patsy said. "Eastsound is ten by fifteen. Blocks, that is. But there are lots of little shops, and the town itself is picturesque, especially this time of year with flowers blooming all over the place. Do you still like yellow roses? There are some gorgeous ones at Putte's Café."

"I adore yellow roses," Katy declared. The two women shared another hug, then went out to Patsy's Jeep for their sight-seeing tour.

On the way to town, they stopped at an overlook, and Katy got out with her camera in hand. "Step into the picture, Pat," she wheeled. Patsy, red hair blowing in the wind, knee-deep in wildflowers and lush green grass, was a gorgeous advertisement for the island.

A short while later, as they wandered through the small town, Katy snapped pictures in seemingly haphazard sequence. This was the first assignment she had accepted since her sister's death and she was grateful that she still possessed a keen eye for detail. Although she wasn't an artist, she did enjoy creating the pictorial equivalent of a painting. She and Karin had planned to open a gallery that would feature mainly photographic art...

"It's nearly noon." Patsy shattered her pensive reverie. "Let's go have lunch and I'll tell you all about my sweetie."

"Super!" Katy said, shoving back the painful memory. "I'm starving!"

Dusk had long since fallen when the car pulled into his

driveway. Thomas had been listening for it and his immense relief irritated him. He hadn't been able to get Katy out of his mind all day. He knew it was crazy to be so preoccupied with a woman he'd just met, crazy to be listening for her footsteps on the porch.

Nevertheless, anticipation danced in his blood. And just what are you anticipating, Logan? he mocked. He checked his watch again. Almost ten o'clock. She'd had another long day.

He stepped forward as she came into the house. They both stopped abruptly. An awkwardness hung between them that neither fully understood. All Thomas knew was that he was very glad to see her and the gladness tightened his throat unmercifully.

"Hello," she said, putting a hand on the newel post as if to show him she meant to go right upstairs.

"Hi. How are you?"

"Fine. And you?"

"Fine. I'm fine. Never better," he said.

He began laughing, leaving her torn between annoyance and amusement. "You weren't waiting up for me, were you?" she asked, tilting her head to look up at him.

"No, I was just reading. I heard you come in so I thought I'd check and make sure you were okay. I mean, it is late."

"Yes, it is," she agreed coolly.

"Very late." Thomas scowled, his self-irritation growing. Why was he acting like this? He'd never bothered worrying about any of his other guests. His sisters again, no doubt. Reining in his

sudden wild urge to hug her, he went on with exaggerated dignity, "I'm overstepping again, so sue me. I was simply concerned that you might have difficulty finding your way here after dark. The roads are rather badly marked."

Katy was trying to be gracious, but his concern acted like a lash on sensitive skin. Damned if she would account for her time away from this house! She'd had enough of that from her husband. He had needed to control her every action...

But this was Thomas, Katy thought, jerking herself back to the present. And he did have a point. "I'm sorry, Thomas, I do appreciate your concern." She sighed. Why did she feel she had just yielded something with her soft apology? "Actually, I did take a couple of wrong turns. But I'm here now. I wonder, would you have any of those raspberries left? The ones you were bringing in yesterday when I arrived."

Was it only yesterday? she thought with a small shock. It seemed much longer. "I didn't have dessert tonight and I'd like some to nibble on in my room."

"There are a few left." Turning, he led the way to the kitchen.

Katy stopped beside him as he opened the refrigerator and suddenly found herself caught between him and the counter. Her nerves jumped as their eyes met. She felt too warm. Warmth quickly turned to heat. His gaze fell to her lips. He shifted, closer somehow and her heart was pounding.

He didn't touch her, but he might as well have. The sensation was there, on her skin, in the palms of his hands.

He didn't kiss her, but he could taste the kiss, imagine mouth meeting mouth, body meeting body.

Hard to soft, masculinity to femininity. Desire licked at his skin like little tongues of flame.

His eyes deepened, intense and hot.

She wondered if hers were dark with the smoke of her own desire. If they were, she couldn't help it.

She was angry. Angry at him for being so attractive. Angry at herself for being so drawn to him. She refused to shrink back against the counter. Instead, she stood her ground, meeting his gaze steadily, defiantly.

It was the defiance that got to Thomas. She looked as crushable as an eggshell, yet that pointed chin was stuck firmly in the air. A sneaky little worm of shame curled in his gut. Logan, you ass, you must have the worst case of lust in the whole damn world.

Expelling a long breath, he shifted his gaze, took out the berries and shut the refrigerator door. At least he'd put a name to what ailed him. That always made a man feel better. He stepped away from her and reached for a smaller bowl.

"I nearly kissed you," he said matter-of-factly.

She cleared her throat. "I know."

"What would you have done if I had?"

"Stopped you."

His eyes challenged. "Would you?"

"Yes." Katy leaned against the counter and regarded him with

quick, sparkling mischief. “Going a few rounds with the island’s resident Lothario isn’t on my agenda tonight.”

Amusement tugged at his mouth. “Now who have you been talking to?” he chided, eyes twinkling. “Patsy? I swear, that woman’s convinced I have a regular harem stashed on the island.”

She arched an eyebrow. “And you don’t?”

“No, I believe in quality not quantity,” Thomas retorted with an easy shrug. “Your raspberries, ma’am.” He swept a hand toward the table. “Here, sit down here and eat them,” he invited like the gentleman he was most of the time.

Becoming aware of the warm, easy intimacy that had crept between them, Katy felt a stab of alarm. “Thank you, but I’m about all talked out after spending the day with Patsy,” she confided. “If you don’t mind, I’d like to eat them in my room.”

“Sure.” He handed her the small bowl of berries.

She took them, her smile suddenly shy. “Thanks again, Thomas, for the berries, and for caring. I really am grateful, even if—” her nose wrinkled “—I don’t act like it sometimes. I just don’t like answering to anyone, I guess. Well, good night.”

“Good night, Katy,” he said huskily.

Controlling her urge to flee from those discerning blue eyes, Katy strolled to the staircase, and ascended the carpeted risers with slightly more speed.

She wanted to shrug it off. All of it, him, the kiss she’d craved despite her denial, the excitement still rocketing through her bloodstream.

The tender yearning in her heart.

"Impossible!" she whispered.

She wondered if he had flown today. Just imagining him up there, his beautiful body encrusted to the fragile fabric of a plane, his very life at risk... She shuddered, her mind caught and held in memory's harsh grasp.

Gradually, the evening's drowsy silence stole around her like a soft cashmere cloak. Katy sat down on the window seat and closed her eyes, marveling at the complexity of her feelings. Before coming here—or before meeting Thomas Logan, she amended—she could pinpoint her emotions with deadly accuracy.

Right now they were as wildly tangled as a cat's ball of yarn.

Three

For the second morning in a row, Katy was up early to have breakfast with Patsy. She showered and dressed with equal haste. Slinging a tote over her shoulder, she ran downstairs. But this time, unlike yesterday, the sound of her footsteps brought Thomas from the kitchen.

"Katy, wait a minute," he said, and caught her arm.

Her skin felt the heat of his fingers. Just his touch set her heart beating faster. For an instant, Katy felt outraged; she simply wasn't used to reacting this strongly to a man, and why didn't he stop it, whatever it was!

Her mouth quirked with quick self-humor. "Good morning to you, too, Thomas."

He laughed. “Good morning, Katy.”

The excitement his nearness created made her breath catch. Realizing how much she liked this man was another hindrance to normal breathing. Well, she’d liked her ex-husband, too, at first, Katy reminded herself. A gifted actor as well as an exciting, charismatic hunk whose bedroom eyes promised heaven on earth for the right woman, Rhys had played his role well, the tender, caring quintessential male. But she’d soon found out that what she liked went no deeper than the beguiling twist of facial muscles that passed for his smile.

She’d been a fool, Katy freely admitted. But even a fool could learn the dangers of accepting someone at face value.

Her reflective moment had a restorative effect. Putting a hand on the doorknob, she smiled and said, “You’ll have to excuse me, I’m in kind of a rush this morning.”

“Not even time for breakfast?”

“’Fraid not,” she said lightly.

The curve of his mouth melted something.

“Okay, how about meeting me in town for lunch?”

“That sounds lovely,” Katy said with an involuntary little sigh. It does but you can’t, she told herself sternly. You’ve already accepted Patsy’s luncheon invitation, and to cancel out on a girlfriend for a man is the height of rudeness. “But I’ve already made other plans.”

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