

BRONWYN
JAMESON

QUADE: THE
IRRESISTIBLE ONE



Desire

Bronwyn Jameson

Quade: The Irresistible One

Аннотация

A seemingly strong, independent woman, Chantal Goodwin had always had an unsuspected weakness, a secret hunger, for one breathtaking man - and now that man was back in town. The merest glance from Cameron Quade still made her ache like the lovesick schoolgirl she'd once been. But Chantal was a woman now, a woman who could take what she wanted - and what she wanted was a single shattering night of passion with this man. Though their encounter shook her to the core, she told herself she could still watch him walk away forever. But that was before she learned about the new life their night of passion had created.

Содержание

| | |
|---|----|
| “It’s Been A Long Time Since I’ve Been Interested In A Woman,” | 5 |
| Quade: The Irresistible One | 8 |
| BRONWYN JAMESON | 9 |
| Contents | 10 |
| One | 11 |
| Two | 28 |
| Three | 42 |
| Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. | 54 |

**“It’s Been A Long Time Since I’ve
Been Interested In A Woman,”
Quade Said. “Yet The Instant
I Saw You In My Bedroom...”**

“You were interested?” Chantal’s voice was barely a whisper.

“Oh, yeah. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve replayed that first encounter. Those satin sheets sliding across the floor. You leaning over the bed. The creaking mattress.”

“So...” Her gaze drifted to his lips, and it might have been his imagination, but she seemed to drift closer, too. When he breathed, his senses swam with her scent. “Where does that leave us?”

“Do you want there to be an us?” he asked.

“Do you?” she countered.

“I don’t know,” he said, smoothing his fingers down the length of her arm before he stepped away. “Hell, I can’t even make up my mind if I like you or not.”

Dear Reader,

Get your new year off to a sizzling start by reading six passionate, powerful and provocative new love stories from Silhouette Desire!

Don’t miss the exciting launch of DYNASTIES: THE

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Ring in this new year with all six brand-new love stories from *Silhouette Desire*....

Enjoy!

Joan Marlow Golan

Joan Marlow Golan

Senior Editor, Silhouette Desire

Quade: The Irresistible One

Bronwyn Jameson



www.millsandboon.co.uk

BRONWYN JAMESON

spent much of her childhood with her head buried in a book. As a teenager, she discovered romance novels, and it was only a matter of time before she turned her love of reading them into a love of writing them. Bronwyn shares an idyllic piece of the Australian farming heartland with her husband and three sons, a thousand sheep, a dozen horses, assorted wildlife and one kelpie. She still chooses to spend her limited downtime with a good book. Bronwyn loves to hear from readers. Write to her at bronwyn@bronwynjameson.com.

For Jen, my best writing buddy—without your friendship and support and selflessness, I might never have finished this story.

Contents

Chapter One

Chapter Two

Chapter Three

Chapter Four

Chapter Five

Chapter Six

Chapter Seven

Chapter Eight

Chapter Nine

Chapter Ten

Chapter Eleven

Chapter Twelve

Chapter Thirteen

One

Cameron Quade wasn't surprised to see the sleek silver coupe parked in his driveway. Irritated, yes, resigned, yes, but not surprised. Even before he identified the status symbol badge on the car's hood, he'd figured it belonged to his aunt or uncle, one or the other. They probably owned a matched pair.

Who else knew of his impending arrival? Who else had just cause and reason for waving the Welcome Home banner? He'd been expecting Godfrey and Gillian to show up sooner or later but he'd have preferred later. Several years later seemed around about perfect.

As the front door clicked shut behind him, Quade let the weighty luggage slide from his fingers and a weightier sigh slide from his lips. His travel-weary gaze scanned the living area of the old homestead he'd grown up in, then narrowed on a wince.

The place had been unoccupied for twelve months yet the gleam coming off every highly polished surface was damn near blinding. Someone had been busy but his aunt Gillian wielding a duster? If he could have summoned the necessary energy, he'd have laughed out loud.

As he wandered from room to room he did manage to summon a mild intrigue. The funky R & B tune piping from the stereo—a boy band?—didn't seem like Aunt G.'s taste, although the classic gray suit jacket looped over the hall stand did. As for the flowers

—he traced a finger along the rim of a hothouse orchid—yeah, the artful arrangement on said hall stand reeked of her touch.

But the woman in Quade's bedroom, the woman in the classic gray skirt peeling back his bedclothes, was not his father's sister.

No way, no how.

“Come on, come on, pick up the phone!”

The woman's voice—low, smoky, impatient—drew his gaze away from the gray skirt and up to the cell phone clamped to her ear. She raked her other hand through her hair, one sweep from brow to crown that brought the thick dark mass into some sort of order. Temporary, he predicted, watching one curl bounce straight back up again.

“Julia. What were you thinking? Did I not specify guy sheets? Something practical, no frills?” She wrenched at the bedding, ripping it free from the mattress. “And you chose black satin?”

Practically hissing the last words, she flung the sheets behind her. They slithered across the highly polished floorboards to land just shy of where he stood, unnoticed, in the doorway.

“Good grief, Julia, you might as well have left a box of condoms on the pillow while you were at it!”

Quade's brows lifted halfway up his forehead. Black satin sheets and condoms? Not the usual homecoming gift, leastways not from his aunt and uncle. And he wasn't expecting welcome-home gifts from anyone else, especially this unknown Julia, the one copping an earful from the stranger in his bedroom.

“Call me when you get in, okay?”

Correction. Whose answer machine was copping an earful.

Equal parts amusement and bemusement curled Quade's lips as the discarded phone skidded across a side table and bumped to a halt against the wall. Still the same blue paint he recalled from his childhood. He'd wanted fire-engine red but his mother had stood firm. Luckily.

His nostalgic smile froze half-formed when the woman leaned across his bed. Holy hell. Quade tried not to stare, but he was only human. And male. And at his lowest point of resistance, completely lacking in willpower. Ten thousand miles of travel did that to a body.

Riveted, he watched her straight skirt ride up the backs of smoothly stockinged thighs. Watched the fine gray material stretch from classic to seam-threatening across a stunning rear end.

It was the first sight to snare Quade's total attention in those thousands of miles of travel.

Hiking her skirt higher, she slid one knee onto the mattress and stretched even farther, and he realized, belatedly, that she was remaking his bed. No, not his childhood bed but the big old double from the guest room—the antique one with the rusty springs. And as she leaned and bent and stretched and tucked, the mattress squeaked and creaked with a sound evocative of another kind of movement, a sound that stoked Quade's warm enjoyment of the scene to hot discomfort.

Hot discomfort as inappropriate as his continued silent

observation, he decided with a wake-up-to-yourself shake of his head. He stepped out of the doorway and into the room and asked the first question that came to mind. "Why are you changing the sheets?"

She whipped around in a flurry of fast-moving limbs that put her off the mattress and onto her feet in one second flat. Or, more accurately, onto one foot and one shoe in one second flat. Her other shoe had sailed free midflurry and now lay on its side, stranded halfway between the bed and the discarded sheets. She faced him with one hand splayed hard against her pink-sweatered chest, with her eyes round and startled.

Eyes, he noticed, almost as intensely dark as her hair. Both contrasted starkly with her pale complexion, although her softly rounded face was in perfect harmony with her body.

"I haven't the foggiest who Julia is or why she's been choosing my bed linen," he continued softly, toeing the heap of satin out of the way as he came further into the room, "but I have nothing against her taste."

Her gaze whipped to the phone and back again, and he knew that she knew exactly what he'd overheard, but she offered no explanation, no comment, other than an accusatory, "You're not supposed to be here for another hour. Why are you early?"

She looked annoyed, sounded put out, and there was something about the combination that seemed oddly familiar. Quade tried to place her as he dealt with her objection. "We had a decent tailwind across the Pacific and got into Sydney ahead of

schedule. Plus I'd allowed for fog over the mountains but it was surprisingly clear for August. I made good time."

Her attention slid past him, toward the doorway. "You're alone?"

"Should I have brought someone?"

When she didn't reply he lifted a brow, waited.

"We didn't know if you were bringing your fiancée," she conceded. "We decided to play it safe."

Hence the double bed. Hence the black satin and condoms. At least that made some sort of sense, or it would have done if he still had a fiancée to share his bed. As for the rest...

"We?" he asked.

"Julia and I. Julia is my sister. She's been helping me out." Or not helping, if her disgusted glare at the abandoned sheets was any indication.

Again, he felt that inkling of familiarity. Nothing solid, but... Gaze fixed on her face, he came a little closer. "Now we have Julia sorted, that leaves you."

"You don't recognize me?"

"Should I?"

"I'm Chantal Goodwin." She lifted her chin as if daring him to disagree.

He almost did. Hell, he almost laughed out loud in startled disbelief. While at university Chantal Goodwin had clerked in the law firm where he'd worked. Hell, he all but got her the gig but he didn't recall ever seeing that spectacular rear end. He did,

however, recall her being a spectacular pain in the rear end.

“It was a long time ago,” she said stiffly. “I dare say I’ve changed a bit.”

A bit? Now there was a classic understatement. “You had braces on your teeth.”

“That’s right.”

“And you’ve rounded out some.”

“Nice way of saying I’ve put on weight?”

“Nice way of saying you’ve improved with age.”

She blinked as if unsure how to deal with the compliment, and he noticed her lashes, long and dark and natural. If she wore any makeup, he couldn’t tell. And in the sudden stillness, the total silence, he realized that the music had stopped. And that a nice warm hum of interest stirred his blood.

“So, Chantal Goodwin,” he said softly, “what are you doing in my bedroom?”

“I’m an associate in your uncle’s law firm.”

“Well, that explains you being in my bedroom.”

She had the good grace to flush, prettily, he thought. “I also happen to live just across the way—”

“In the old Heaslip place?”

“Yes.”

“So, you’re making my bed as a neighborly gesture? Kind of a welcome-home gift?”

That pretty hint of color intensified as she shifted her weight from one foot to the other. When the other turned out to be the

shoeless one, she listed badly to the left. Quade steadied her with a hand beneath her elbow, taking her weight and enjoying the notion that he'd thrown her off balance almost as much as he was enjoying her pink-sweatered, softly flushing, female-scented proximity.

Clearing her throat, she pointed beyond his right shoulder. "Before I fall flat on my face, would you mind fetching my shoe?"

Quade retrieved it; she thanked him with a smile. It was no more than a brief curve of her wide unpainted mouth but it softened her eyes. Not quite black, he noticed, but the deep opaque brown of coffee...without the cream. That was reserved for her skin, skin that looked as velvety smooth as those orchids in his hallway.

"As I was saying—" She paused to slip her foot into the shoe. "Godfrey and Gillian wanted your place habitable before you arrived and because I live so near, I was...I volunteered."

Ah. His uncle—her boss—had volunteered her for the job. The Chantal Goodwin he remembered would have just loved that! "You cleaned my house?"

"Actually I employed a cleaning service. But the linen's all packed away and I didn't like going through your father's things. That's why I asked Julia to buy the sheets."

"Does Julia work for Godfrey, too?"

"Good grief, no." She shook her head as if to clear it of that staggering notion. "I was running short on time so she was helping me."

“By buying sheets...?”

“Exactly. Anyway, these ones—” she indicated the sheets on the half-made bed behind her “—are mine and because I had to go fetch them, I’m running late.”

“For?”

“Work. Clients. Appointments.” With quick hands she resumed her bed making. “Julia also shopped for groceries. I’m sure you’ll find there’s enough to get by on. I took the liberty of having your phone connected, and the power, of course.”

Quade folded his arms and watched her tuck the plain white sheets into ruthless hospital corners. “Leave it,” he said, feeling unaccountably irritated by her seamless switch to business mode.

She straightened. “Are you sure?”

“You think I can’t make my own bed?”

Unexpectedly her mouth curved into a grin. “Well, yes, actually. I’ve never met a man yet who could make a bed worth sleeping in.”

Her wry amusement lasted as long as it took their gazes to meet and hold, as long as it took for images of rustling sheets and naked skin and hot elevated breathing to singe the air between them.

“I—” She looked away, off toward the wide bay window and the wild gardens beyond, then drew a breath that hitched in the middle. “I have to go. I’m running so late.”

She started to turn, on the verge of fleeing, Quade thought. With a hand on her shoulder, he stopped her and felt her still. He

picked up her discarded phone and pressed it into her hand.

Slowly, finger by finger, he wrapped her hand around the instrument. No rings, he noted, with a disturbing jab of satisfaction, just neatly filed nails, unpolished, businesslike. But he felt them tremble, and she retrieved her hand quick smart and took a small step backward. A reluctant step, he knew. Chantal Goodwin didn't like stepping back from anything.

"One thing before you go." He waited for her to turn, to meet his gaze. "You've done a first-rate job here considering you're not a professional housemaid."

An almost-smile touched her lips. "Thank you...I think."

"So, what's in it for you?"

"Like I told you, it was convenient for me to help out, living so near."

"And this—" he waved his hand expansively to indicate the whole buffed and sparkling house "—has to be worth a whole truckload of brownie points."

One dark brow arched expressively. "You think?"

"Yeah, I think."

"Then I'd best go see what I can negotiate."

This time he let her go although he stood unmoving, listening to the sharp click-clack of her sensible heels all the way down the long hallway, around his dumped luggage, and out the front door. Not fleeing, but hurrying off to work, to collect those brownie points.

To further her career. He should have figured that one out

without any clues.

Funny how he hadn't recognized her, although in fairness to himself, she hadn't merely changed, she had metamorphosed. Even funnier was the way he'd responded. Hell, he'd been practically flirting with her, circling and sniffing the air. And it wasn't even spring yet.

Scowling darkly, he put it down to sleep deprivation and the complex mix of emotions associated with his homecoming. Combine that with the unexpectedness of finding her in his bedroom, leaning over his bed, and no wonder he'd forgotten himself for a minute or ten.

The next time they met he'd be better prepared.

Chantal didn't slow down until a passing highway patrol officer flashed his headlights in warning, but even after she eased her pressure on the accelerator her heart and blood and mind kept racing—not because of her near brush with a speeding fine, but because of her brush with Cameron Quade.

With time weren't teenage crushes supposed to fade? In this case, obviously not. Right now she felt as warm and flustered as when she'd first met the object of her teenage infatuation. He had fascinated her for years before that, what with all the retold stories—from her parents via Godfrey and Gillian—of his glorious achievements at the posh boarding school he'd been sent to after his mother died, then at law school, and finally his appointment to a top international law firm.

He'd done everything she aspired to, and everything her

parents expected of her. Oh, yes, she'd heard a lot about Cameron Quade even before she met him, and she'd worshiped from afar. Up close he was worth all of the worshipping. Her skin grew even warmer remembering the moment when she'd turned and found him in that doorway. The perfect bone structure, the strongly chiseled mouth, the brooding green eyes and thickly tousled hair.

So long and lean and hard. So unknowingly sexy, so irresistibly male. So exactly how a man should look.

Chantal tugged at the neckline of her sweater and blew out a long breath as she recalled the way he'd looked right back at her. Like she was there in his bedroom for another purpose entirely. What was that all about?

Back in the Barker Cowan days he'd never looked at her with anything but annoyance or dismissal or—on one painfully embarrassing occasion that even now caused her to wince—with blood-freezing disdain.

And didn't he have a fiancée back in Dallas or Denver or wherever he'd been living the past six years? Kristin, if memory served her correctly. He'd brought her home for his father's funeral and she'd looked exactly like the kind of woman Cameron Quade would choose as a mate. Tall, stunning, self-assured—the direct antithesis of untall, unstunning, self-dubious Chantal.

She must have misinterpreted that look. Perhaps he'd been even more exhausted than he looked. After all, he hadn't even recognized her. As for Chantal herself...well, her wits had been completely blown away by his sudden appearance. Not to

mention what he'd overheard.

Good grief, Julia, you might as well have left a box of condoms on the pillow while you were at it!

Had she laughed it off or explained that she usually didn't go around tossing phones at walls? Oh, no. She'd just stood there staring at him like some tongue-tied teenager...some lopsided tongue-tied teenager.

In her mind's eye she saw one low-heeled black court shoe spiral through the air in stark slow-motion replay. She groaned out loud.

Way to make an impression, Ms. Calm Efficient Lawyer!

Especially when making an impression was the whole point of the exercise. Godfrey had asked her to help him out, to check that the cleaners did their job and maybe stock the fridge, but she'd wanted Merindee prepared within an inch of perfection.

To impress the boss's nephew, to impress her boss.

She'd intended to be finished and long gone before said nephew arrived, but then she hadn't counted on the whole bed and sheets debacle...for which Julia had to wear some culpability, she decided, frowning darkly at her cell phone. She punched Last Number Redial and waited nine rings—she counted them—for her sister to pick up.

"Hello?" Julia sounded breathless.

"Were you outside? You better not have run—"

"Relax, sis. You know I'm beyond running anywhere."

In the background Chantal heard a deeper voice, followed by

a muffled shush. Her frown deepened. "Shouldn't Zane be at work?"

"Oh, he has been." Julia sounded suspiciously smug. "We're working on our honeymoon plans."

Chantal rolled her eyes. "Good grief. You're six months pregnant. Shouldn't you be working on your nursery?"

Julia laughed, as she did so often these days. "It's been finished for weeks. Where are you, by the way?"

"On my way to work." In fact, she was just passing the Welcome sign at the eastern edge of the Clifton city limits. "And, thanks to you, I'm running way late."

"Thanks to me?"

"You didn't hear the message I left earlier?"

"Sorry, we've been busy." Julia laughed huskily then added in cavalier fashion, "Well, whatever the prob, I'm sure you'll deal with it."

"The prob is those black sheets you bought."

"Oh, no, they're midnight-blue. They look black but in the light they have this deep blue shimmer. Very classy but sexy, too, don't you think?"

Chantal didn't think about sexy sheets, at least not consciously. Before Zane Julia hadn't, either, and Chantal was still adjusting to this new mouthy version of her formerly meek and mild sister.

"Now, about tonight..." Julia shifted to a more businesslike tone. "Would you be able to collect the party platters seeing as you're in Clifton?"

“Well, actually, about tonight—”

“Uh-uh, no way! You are my only sister and half of my bridesmaids and you will be at my shower.”

“I was only going to say I may be running a little late.”

“Oh. Then I’ll have Tina bring the supplies. But don’t be too late and don’t forget it’s costume.”

How could she forget? The other bridesmaid, Zane’s sister Kree, had taken complete control of the wedding shower arrangements because, in her words, Chantal’s party skills needed serious surgery. A matter of opinion, Chantal sniffed. Some people preferred her quietly elegant dinner parties.

“You won’t forget?” her sister prompted.

“No,” Chantal said on a heavy sigh. “But I liked this relationship much better when I was bossing you around.”

Julia laughed again then asked, her voice laced with suspicion, “What are you coming as?”

“A lawyer.”

Julia groaned and Chantal smiled. “Before I go I should thank you.”

“For?”

“Doing that shopping job for me. Sheets aside, you were a big help.”

“Don’t thank me, just give the man my business card.” Chantal closed her eyes for a second and wondered if she could put the card under Quade’s door. Or in his mailbox. “Oh, and you might toss in a personal recommendation. If this Cameron Quade saw

your garden, he'd know I do good work."

"Look, sis, he may not want to do anything with the old place. He might not be staying."

"You didn't ask Godfrey?"

"I asked but I don't think he knows any more than I do about his nephew's plans."

"Easily fixed. What's the man's E.T.A.?"

Chantal shifted uneasily in her seat. For some inexplicable reason she didn't want to share news of the Cameron Quade encounter with her sister, at least not until she'd come to grips with it herself. "Today some time."

"So, when you pop over to welcome him to the neighborhood, you ask how long he's staying."

Chantal's response fell halfway between a snort and a laugh. When you pop over. Huh!

"What? I thought asking questions was what you lawyers did for a living."

"You watch too much television," Chantal replied dryly. Far more of her time was spent on reading and researching and documentation than in courtrooms. She cast a quick glance at the box of files on her passenger seat and felt her heart quicken. Some day soon she hoped that would change, and that the brownie points she'd earned this week would speed the process along.

"So, you'll see him over the weekend?" Julia persisted.

"You don't think this garden design thing could wait, say, until

after your wedding?”

“No way! I need something to do other than worry about what we’ll do if it rains.”

“You did have to choose a garden wedding,” Chantal pointed out.

“Yeah, yeah, I know. I chose a garden wedding and I chose to wait until spring so my guests would have something to look at other than bare-limbed trees.”

“Like your belly?” Chantal teased, and was rewarded with her sister’s laughter. Better.

They said their see you tonights and disconnected as Chantal braked at the first of three traffic lights in Clifton’s main street. The way her day was going, she’d likely catch every red. Her CD player flipped to the next disc and she remembered the one she’d left in Quade’s house. Wonderful. As if she needed another reason to call on her new neighbor...

When you pop over, you ask.

If only Julia knew the half of it!

This morning she hadn’t asked any of the questions that needed asking, and she wasn’t talking about Julia’s garden design aspirations. She was talking questions that had been gnawing away in her mind like a demented woodworm ever since she first heard of Quade’s imminent return.

Questions such as, What’s a hotshot corporate attorney like you doing back in the Australian bush?

And, Has Godfrey asked you to join his firm?

Questions whose answers might impact on her own career aspirations. Straightening her shoulders, she reminded herself that she was no longer a gauche teenager with no people skills. She was a mature twenty-five-year-old professional who had worked hard on her inadequacies, on overcoming her fear of not measuring up, at focusing on what she was good at, namely, her job.

As such, there was only one option.

Tomorrow she would pop over to Merindee and ask her questions.

Two

Two minutes later Chantal swung into the car park behind Mitchell Ainsfield Butt's offices and—thank you, God—found a vacant spot. Maybe her day was about to get better, although she wasn't betting any real money on it.

Juggling keys and phone in one hand, she jammed her briefcase under the other arm and balanced the box of files on one hip. With the other she nudged her car door shut—one of the few instances when a sturdy pair of hips proved an asset, she noted as she crab-walked her load between the closely parked cars.

The back door to the office block swung open just as she reached the stoop. And yes, her luck did seem to have changed for the better. The man holding the door for her, the man taking the box and briefcase and carrying them into her office was Godfrey Butt himself.

"Quite a load," he said, sliding it all onto her desk.

"The Warner files. Since I spoke with Emily I've been doing some further research—"

"Good, good."

Chantal bristled at the interruption, but didn't have a chance to object before he continued.

"And that other little job? Merindee all ready for Cameron's arrival, I trust?"

“Yes, absolutely.” She forced herself to smile. “I called in this morning to drop off food and flowers.”

“Flowers, eh? Nice touch. I’m sure Cameron appreciates your efforts.”

Chantal wasn’t so sure but who was she to quibble when Godfrey looked so pleased? Wasn’t this exactly why she’d worked so hard on that dang house? “Do you have a few minutes, sir? Because I would really like to talk to you about Emily Warner’s concerns.”

“I was about to go out. Is this urgent?”

“It’s important.”

“What time frame—today, next week, this month?”

“The last,” Chantal conceded reluctantly. “But I would appreciate your input sooner.”

“See Lynda about finding some time next week.” He was almost at the door before he paused, lips pursed consideringly. “Do you play, Chantal?”

Caught midway through a mental happy dance, his question caught her unprepared. Did she play...what? Then he started to swing his arms in a mock golf shot and the light dawned. Friday. Of course, the partners’ regular golf date with People Who Mattered.

As Godfrey completed his follow-through, as Chantal considered the implications of his seemingly casual question, her heart kicked hard against her ribs. Visions of green fairways and time-consuming strolls and relaxed back-slapping bonhomie

with Partners Who Mattered popped into her mind.

“I haven’t played in a while,” she supplied slowly. How far should she bend the truth? “My game is probably a tad...rusty.”

“Take some lessons. The new pro at the Country Club worked marvels with Doc Lucas’s swing. When you’re up to par, you can join us for a round.”

“That would be...” She struggled to find the right description. Perfect? What I’ve been waiting for? Terrifying? All of the above? She swallowed. “Thank you, sir.”

After the door closed behind him, Chantal spent several minutes riding a dizzying emotional seesaw. One second she wanted to punch the air with elation, the next she wanted to thwack her head—hard—against the desk. Because Godfrey’s invitation came with a proviso.

Once her game was up to scratch.

Once she could be relied upon to spend some time on those verdant fairways of her imagination, instead of watching ball after ball leap into the water trap like lemmings into the sea. That’s precisely what had happened the last time she’d attempted the “game.” She deliberately inserted quotation marks because the word “game” connoted fun, and there’d been no fun in learning golf under her big brother’s tutelage.

“But Mitch lacked the necessary teaching skills,” she reminded herself, standing and pushing her chair aside. She never could debate worth a fig sitting down. “Not to mention how he rushed me and bullied me and laughed at my ineptitude. How

could anyone learn under such conditions? With a decent teacher and the right motivation, I can learn how to hit that stupid ball.”

Same way she learned everything else. Preparation and practice and patience. With that personal credo, nothing had yet defeated her.

What about sex? a tiny voice whispered.

No contest, she argued. Inadequate preparation, insufficient practice, impatient tutor.

Sinking back into her chair, she reached for the phone and phone book. With receiver clasped between ear and shoulder, she flipped pages, dialed, then opened her schedule. She combed a hand through her hair, grimaced at the overgrown mess, but deleted Make Haircut Appointment. Ruthlessly she X’ed another six items on her To Do list—including Shop For Skirts One Size Bigger—and substituted Golf Lessons, all the while ignoring the nervous palpitations in her stomach.

Sure she hated golf, but she would push that little white ball from hole to hole with her nose if it helped raise her profile at Mitchell Ainsfield Butt, if it helped her earn enough respect to represent clients like Emily Warner. It wasn’t that her current work was boring, more like...routine, when what she really craved was a stimulating challenge.

“Cliffton Country Club Pro Shop. May I help you?”

“I hope so,” Chantal replied briskly. “I need lessons and lots of them. How soon can I start?”

Twenty-four hours later Chantal was peering through the

window closest to Cameron Quade's front door into a still, silent, seemingly empty house. The lack of response to her first dozen raps could simply mean he slept soundly. But, dear God, she did not want him opening the door straight from his bed. Possibly half-dressed, probably bare-chested, definitely ruffled.

Apprehension shivered up her spine...at least she figured it might be apprehension, or indecision, or, God help her, cowardice. Rubbing her hands up and down her arms, she turned and took six steps across the porch before halting her hasty retreat. Retreat? Cowardice? From the nebulous threat of a bare-chested man? No way, José. Last night she had braved a Kree O'Sullivan hosted bridal shower. A bare-chested man should be a walk in the park after that fracas.

The breath she puffed out formed a white vapor cloud of warmth as it met the chill morning air, but with renewed determination she strode back to the door and gave the brass knocker all she had. She figured the strident metallic clanking would carry all the way down to her house, three paddocks away.

Even if he were in the farthest of the sheds out back, he couldn't not hear it...could he?

The seconds ticked by. She tapped her foot—in the schmick two-tone golfing shoes purchased three years ago and worn, like the rest of her outfit, a handful of times. Tapping aside, the only other noise she detected was the scuffling of feral chickens in the undergrowth. She turned back to peer through the window one last time, pressing her face right up to the pane in a vain attempt

to see around the corner...

“Looking for someone?”

She swung around too quickly. That was the only explanation for her sudden breathlessness, that and the enveloping sense of guilt at being caught in classic Peeping Tom mode. Caught, needless to say, by the very Tom she had hoped to catch a peep of.

He wasn't bare-chested, she noted irrelevantly. He hadn't just left his bed...not unless he slept in a snug-fitting olive polo knit with jeans worn near white in some interesting places. Not unless he was a very vigorous sleeper. For a film of perspiration dampened his brow, and as he came up the two shallow steps onto the porch she felt the heat of recent exertion radiating from his body.

One dark brow lifted, asking a silent question. Or prompting her to answer the one already asked, the one she couldn't quite recall with him standing so close, filling the air around her with body heat.

Looking for someone?

Yes, that's what he'd asked, in that smooth low voice that did strange things to her breathing. She waved a hand behind her, toward the front door. “I tried the knocker and when you didn't answer—” She shrugged. “I had decided you mustn't be home. Or that you were down the back in one of the sheds. Or taking a walk.”

“You could tell all that by looking through that little bitty

window?”

Wonderful. Now he'd not only caught her snooping, but he'd made her feel like a fool. Straightening defensively, she forced herself to meet his eyes. This morning they looked exceedingly green, as if they'd absorbed the color of the garden at his back. "I could tell by the lack of response. I rang long and loud enough to wake the neighbors."

Mentally she rolled her eyes. She was the only neighbor and she'd been awake for hours.

"I heard," he said dryly. "I was around the back, chopping wood."

Which explained the sleeves carelessly shoved up to his elbows and the way his top clung in places, as if to sweat-dampened skin. She cleared her throat, averted her eyes, tried to concentrate on something else. Like the fact he was chopping wood. Dang. She hadn't considered firewood. "I didn't think you'd bother with the log fire."

"And if you had thought I'd bother?"

"I would have had a load of split wood delivered."

"Then I'm glad you didn't think of it."

He moved away to lean against one of the pergola's timber uprights. This is good, she told herself, trying not to notice the pull of denim across long muscular thighs and the dark dusting of hair on his bared forearms. Trying to ignore the little jump of response low in her belly.

Concentrate, Chantal. From this distance you can enjoy a nice

neighborly conversation and extract the necessary information without it sounding like an interrogation.

“Why are you glad I didn’t have firewood delivered?” she asked.

“I enjoyed the exercise.”

His gaze rolled over her, taking in her daffodil-yellow sweater complete with crossed-golf-clubs logo, her smart tartan A-line skirt, her thick stockings (it was winter, after all), and the shoes she loved to death. He crossed his arms over his chest—not bare but impressive nonetheless. “Looks like you’ve got the same thing in mind.”

It was her turn to lift her brows in question.

“Exercise,” he supplied.

“Yes. I have a golf...” She stopped herself admitting to a lesson. “A game of golf this morning.”

He made a noncommittal sound that could have meant anything. Then he shifted slightly and the sunlight streaming between the overhead beams caught his hair, burnishing the ordinary brown with rich hues of chestnut and gold.

Of course he didn’t have ordinary brown hair—how could she have even thought it? Inadvertently her fingers tightened... around Julia’s business card in her left hand. “My sister, Julia—”

“The bedroom decorator?”

“Actually, she’s a garden designer. An absolutely brilliant gard—
—”

“Was she responsible for the flowers?” he interrupted again.

“No. I brought the flowers.”

“And the food?”

Inhaling deeply, she fought her simmering irritation. “Julia brought the food and the first round of sheets. I brought everything else—”

“Except the firewood.”

For crying out loud, did the man have a license to exasperate? First he had to turn up looking so...so distractingly male, and then, just when she'd composed herself, he had to interrupt every second sentence.

Chantal impelled herself to breathe in, breathe out, before continuing in a reasonable, patient tone. “Julia adores redesigning old gardens and would love to draw you up a design, if you're interested. If you're staying that long.”

A coolness came over his expression. “So, the real reason for your visit is to find out how long I'm staying.”

“I can't say we're not curious because the whole town is agog —”

“And are you visiting on behalf of The Plenty Agog or to satisfy a more personal curiosity?”

Chantal lifted her chin. “I promised to pass on Julia's message about the garden.”

“Come on, Chantal. You didn't come here to talk garden design. What is it you want to know?”

“Why do you think I have an ulterior purpose?”

“You're a lawyer.”

Affronted, she stiffened her spine. "And you are?"

"An ex-lawyer."

Ex? Chantal moistened her suddenly dry mouth. "So you haven't come home to join Godfrey's practice?"

"Hell, no." He shook his head as if the idea were ludicrous. "Scared I was after your job?"

"I just like to know where I stand," she replied stiffly. And on a more personal level? Yes, she was curious. Yes, she had to ask. "What are you going to do?"

"Short-term, as little as possible. Definitely nothing that aggravates me. Long-term, I haven't made up my mind."

"About staying here?"

"About anything."

Chantal's curiosity grabbed a tighter hold. "And your fiancée...?"

"I don't have a fiancée." Expression tightly shuttered, he looked toward her car. "Haven't you a golf game to get to?"

She wanted to stand her ground, she ached to stand her ground, to ask the rest of the questions hammering away in her brain, but he took her elbow firmly and turned her toward the driveway. She had the distinct impression that digging in her heels would have led to a forcible and undignified removal. As it was she had to scramble to keep up with his rangy strides.

"Nice car," he said, opening the door of her brand-new Merc. "A country lawyer must do better than I thought."

Partway into the car, she stilled. It wasn't so much the words as

his cynical tone. "You have something against country lawyers?"

"Not if they leave me alone."

He said it mildly but that didn't prevent barbs of irritation blooming under her skin. Before she could form a cutting comment about this country lawyer's work prettying up his house, he surprised her by saying, "I didn't picture you ending up back here working for Godfrey."

For a second she was speechless. She hadn't imagined Quade picturing her at all. "How did you picture me?" she asked slowly.

"Corporate shark. You still got that bite, Chantal, or did you lose it along with the braces?"

Chantal bared her teeth and he surprised her by laughing. Right there, up close, with only the car door separating them, she felt the effect zing all the way into her bones. Wow.

Still smiling—how could she have forgotten those dimples?—he tapped his watch face. "Don't want to miss tee off."

She lowered herself into the driver's seat and scrambled to regather her wits. No way was she driving off without saying all she'd come to say. "If your heart is set on minimum aggravation, you need help with this gard—"

"I can handle my garden." He closed the door.

She opened her window. "It's going to take more than sweat and muscle to get this mess in order."

"I said I can handle it."

He projected such an aura of confidence and competence, Chantal didn't doubt it. He would chop his own wood and fix his

own garden and in between times he would probably round up all the renegade poultry and start an egg farm. Which didn't mean that she wouldn't have the last word in this particular debate.

Kicking over the engine, she tossed him a trust-me-I-know-what-I'm-talking-about look. "Julia does wonderful work. If you want evidence, come down and take a look at my garden sometime."

Without a backward glance she spun her car in a tight circle and headed down the driveway, wondering why the heck that last line had sounded like come up and see me sometime. When delighted laughter bubbled from her mouth she reprimanded herself severely.

You should be feeling ticked off, Chantal, not turned on. That crack about country lawyers was completely uncalled for. And although you asked your questions, his answers weren't exactly expansive. Doing nothing won't keep a sharp mind like his happy for long, and what then? Do you really think Godfrey won't ply him with offers that would tempt a saint? And Cameron Quade has never been accused of being a saint.

But despite her self-cautioning, despite the fact that Julia's card remained clutched in her hand and she'd again forgotten all about her CD in his player, she found herself turning up the volume of her car stereo and humming along. However the words buzzing around in her brain were very much her own.

She had got the last word in.

She had made him laugh.

He didn't have a fiancée.

Hands on hips and eyes narrowed against the brightening morning sun, Quade watched her drive away. It was only then that he realized he was smiling—smiling in response to that last exchange, in response to her determination to win the last word. She was quite a competitor, Ms. Chantal Goodwin. That much hadn't changed.

The smile died on his lips, gone as quick as a blink of her big brown eyes. If he could expunge the residual buzz of sexual awareness from his body as easily, he'd be a happy man. No, a satisfied man, he amended. The word "happy" hadn't fit his sorry hide in...hell, he didn't even know how many years.

Immersed in the take-no-prisoners race up the corporate climbing wall, he hadn't noticed his priorities turning upside down. He hadn't noticed the lack of enjoyment and he had ignored the lack of ethics. Happy hadn't even figured. It had taken a soul-shattering event to open his eyes, to send him flying home to Merindee. True happiness—the kind you didn't have to think about, the kind that was just there, as natural as breathing—seemed intertwined with his memories of this place, back before his mother succumbed to cancer and his broken father lost all his zest for life.

Twenty years.

Quade scrubbed a hand across his face, then cast his gaze across the rolling green landscape. He had no clue how to pull his life back together only that this was the place to do it. He

hadn't lied about his plans. He did intend doing whatever he felt like, day to day, hour by hour. He was going to live in jeans and unbuttoned collars, and sample as much wine as he could haul up from his father's cellar. Who knows, he might even start sleeping upward of four hours a night.

Away in the distance, where the Clifton road climbed a long steep incline, a silver flash caught his eye. Chantal Goodwin on her way to golf and he just bet it wasn't a hit and giggle weekend jaunt with her girlfriends.

Oh, no, Ms. Associate Lawyer would have an agenda on the golf course same as she'd had an agenda fixing his house and visiting this morning. She hadn't come to tote business for her sister's garden business. Worry about her career had sent her snooping for information.

To find out if he was after her job.

A short ironic laugh escaped the tight line of his mouth. He didn't doubt that Godfrey would make overtures. He expected it. But uncle or not, benefactor or not, he had no qualms about turning him down. Some time in the future he might feel like putting on a suit and tie and going back to work. But not to the law. Long-term he intended staying clear of all things pertaining to his former profession.

Especially the women.

Three

There she went again. Bobbing up and down and scurrying back and forth like a squirrel gathering stocks for the winter. What was she up to?

Distracted by the distant figure, Quade lifted a hand to swipe at his sweaty forehead but a blackberry thorn had snagged his sleeve. Ripping his arm free, he pushed to his feet and let out a long whistle of frustration. After three hours of hacking and pulling and chopping and cursing, he'd had it with this weed. There had to be an easier way.

Hands on hips, he squinted out across the paddocks to where Ms. You're-Going-To-Need-Help popped in and out of view. He would as soon flay himself with one of these briar switches than admit it to her face, but she was right.

After she'd driven away the previous morning, he'd taken a hard look at the jungle that used to be his mother's pride and joy, and immediately gone searching for tools. But for all the inroads he'd made, there were sections he didn't know how to tackle. And—he glared pointedly at the blackberry outcrop—sections he wished he could take to with a bulldozer. He needed help in the form of expert advice. If said expert happened to be driving said bulldozer, he wouldn't complain...although he couldn't imagine Chantal Goodwin's satin-loving sister at the controls of heavy machinery.

While he enjoyed the fantasy elements of that mental image, Quade watched and waited, but the bright red of his neighbor's sweater didn't reappear. He wasn't surprised. She'd been following the same pattern ever since he first spotted her shortly after lunch. Suddenly she would appear out of the thicket of trees that cloaked the western side of her house, a bright dab of color and motion ducking about on a lush green backdrop, then she would disappear back behind the trees.

What the hell was she up to?

One thing for sure and certain, standing here peering into the lengthening afternoon shadows was providing no clues. Hadn't she invited him down there to inspect her sister's handiwork? And hadn't the small matter of not thanking her for her efforts preparing his house been nagging at his conscience ever since yesterday morning? He could almost see his mother shaking her head reproachfully.

Didn't I teach you better manners than that, Cameron?

Determined to make amends, he hurdled the back fence and set off across the paddocks.

The thicket of trees he'd been studying on and off all afternoon proved to be a windbreak protecting a good-size orchard, and that's where he found her. There at the end of a soldierly row of bare-branched trees with a golf stick clutched in her hands and a look of such intense concentration on her face that she neither saw nor heard nor sensed his approach.

Dressed in the same cute little skirt as yesterday morning, she

stepped up to the first in a line of balls and adopted the stance. After swiveling her hips in a way that caused Quade's mouth to turn dry, she started into her backswing. With his gaze fixed hip height, he saw her lower body lock up and wasn't surprised when she lost the ball way off to the right.

She rolled her shoulders, stiffened her spine and moved on to the next ball. One after another she sent them spraying all over the closely mown pasture that fronted her house.

Suddenly her squirrel-like behavior made sense. She'd been scurrying about collecting golf balls, bringing them back, then hitting them all out there again. Time after time after time. He'd witnessed that same dedication firsthand working alongside her, but golf was supposed to be a game of relaxation. And this was Sunday afternoon.

After the last ball rebounded off a tree trunk at least forty degrees off-line, her shoulders dropped again.

"Do I take it yesterday's game didn't go well?" he asked.

Near black with startled indignation, her gaze swung his way. "How long have you been standing there?"

"Long enough."

"Well, there you go." She laughed, but it was a short, sharp, humorless sound. "You're a firsthand witness to my disproving an old adage. Practice does not always make perfect."

"Ever heard the one about not reinforcing bad habits through practicing them?"

"What bad habits?" she asked warily.

“You’re locking up in the lower body. You need to keep loose, relaxed.”

Eyes narrowed and faintly indignant, she watched him approach. “You were watching my lower body?”

“Guilty. But in my defense, you are wearing that skirt.” Quade allowed himself a pleasurably slow inspection of that skirt, before lifting his gaze to meet hers. She did that surprised blinking thing he’d noticed before, the one that made him think she wasn’t used to handling flattery. Strange from a woman with her looks.

Then she straightened her shoulders and looked him right in the eye. “So, Quade. I’m sure you didn’t come down here to critique my golf swing. What is it you want to know?”

Quoting his words right back at him...how like a lawyer! He almost smiled and it struck him that ever since he walked into her orchard he’d been enjoying himself. A discomfoting notion, given the company. “After you left yesterday it struck me that I hadn’t thanked you for the effort you put into my house. I know it’s belated but thank you.”

“You walked down here to say thank you?”

“And to repay you for the cleaning service and shopping.”

“Godfrey took care of the accounts.”

Quade’s lips tightened. This wasn’t good enough. Not the way she deflected his thanks or the way she dismissed his attempt to recompense her. “Fine,” he said shortly. “But I do owe you for the time and the inconvenience.”

“That’s not nec—”

“How about a quick golf lesson?” He rode right over the top of whatever objection she’d been about to make. “We can work on your lower body.”

A faint, rosy flush tinged her throat as her gaze fell away from his. Hell. He hadn’t meant that kind of work but now his lower body responded. “I do mean golf.”

“Of course.” She lifted her chin. “How do I know that you know what you’re doing?”

“Good question.”

Did he know what he was doing? Did he really want to tempt himself with hands-on-Chantal-Goodwin lessons? In anything?

But when her expression narrowed with skepticism he took the seven-iron from her hand, grabbed a handful of balls from the pail by her feet and tossed them to the ground. After a couple of idle swings to limber up, he hit one with a macho swagger he’d forgotten he possessed. It felt good.

“Easy as that,” he concluded as they both watched the ball soar into the next paddock.

“You’re a man. You hit long without even trying.”

“Sure, length’s important.” And he was talking about golf, despite the way her gaze flicked down his body. Despite the way his...length...felt compelled to answer for itself. “But it’s not the only consideration. Accuracy is crucial.”

He illustrated by turning around and knocking the next ball smack down the center of the gap between two rows of fruit trees.

“You do realize you’re going to have to fetch those balls you’re

hitting all over the countryside.”

“Later, but first you’re going to hit a few yourself.”

He offered her the iron, but she didn’t take it. Annoyed by her hesitancy—and, hell, couldn’t she have at least acknowledged the sweetness of that last shot?—he folded her unyielding fingers around the handle. They remained stiff, so he wrapped his hands over hers, molding them into a grip. Soft hands, he noticed, with a sinking feeling in his gut. Exactly as he’d feared.

“What have you done to your hands?” she asked, her question hitching a little in the middle.

Quade followed the direction of her gaze, down to where his large hands completely overlapped hers on the iron. For a moment he could only think of that, her soft warm hands under his, wrapped firmly around the hard shaft...

“Your hands?” she repeated.

Dragging his mind up out of the gutter, he noticed the raw scratches. He’d forgotten about the thorns. Standing this close, with erotic imagery pumping through his body, he could be excused for not remembering his name.

“I’ve been gardening,” he said shortly.

“I thought you intended doing nothing aggravating.”

“I intended doing whatever I felt like. Today I felt like gardening.”

“Gardening or attacking blackberries with your bare hands?” She drew a breath, then let it go. “Have you put anything on those wounds?”

“Such as?”

“Antiseptic. Salve. Peroxide. I don’t know what you’re supposed to use.” Her voice rose sharply, aggrieved, and when he looked into her eyes he noticed they echoed her distress. Something stirred deep in Quade’s gut, something that wasn’t lust.

Something that scared the bejeebers out of him.

He let her hands go and took a quick step backward. Away. “I guess that means you’re not going to play nurse,” he teased, desperate to lighten the mood.

But the words acquired a sensual weight of their own and hung there between them as her gaze roamed his hands, his forearms, his abdomen. Color rose from her neck to taint her cheeks, and he knew she was thinking about tending his wounds, about touching him in all those places.

This time the heat in Quade’s gut was lust, pure, simple and so intense it held him paralyzed while he imagined the soft hot caress of her hands on his skin.

She lifted her face to look right at him. Standing this close he could see the black rim of her coffee-dark irises, could feel the allure of their rich depths. Eyes a man could sink right into, he thought, if a man wanted to lose himself. There had been times these past months when Quade had wanted to lose himself, badly, but never to another woman whose only passion was career.

“I’m not much good at playing anything,” she said finally, and

her voice held a husky edge that stroked every place her roaming gaze had missed. “Nurse, sports, golf.”

Smiling at her wry quip, he took another mental step backward, although his libido lagged behind. “And your golf swing needs a lot more attention than my scratches. Come on, Chantal.” He gestured from the iron in her hands to the golf ball at her feet. “Show me what you’ve got.”

“You want me to just hit it?”

“Yup. Relax and slog it.”

“What about the accuracy you mentioned as crucial? What about caressing the ball?”

Quade lifted a brow. “Who’s been telling you about caressing the ball?”

“Craig.” The admission came slowly, reluctantly. “The local pro.”

“Huh.” So that’s why she was all decked out by Golfers R Us. To impress Craig, the ball-caressing pro. Feeling unaccountably snippy, he watched her go through the same shoulder-rolling attempt at relaxation he’d witnessed earlier. Her white-knuckled grip indicated a distinct lack of success. “Didn’t your Craig mention two hands as one?”

“He’s not my Craig.” Adjusting her grip, she stepped up to the ball. “And I usually get that bit right.”

Quade stopped her with a hand on her shoulder. Through the plush warmth of her sweater he felt her tension ratchet up a notch and had to stop himself kneading the tightness. “Just relax, no

pressure. We'll start without the ball. Transfer your weight," he instructed quietly.

"Like this?"

"Not bad." With a sense of fatalism riding him hard, he moved close behind her, puffed out a breath. Okay, he could do this. Adjust her hands without allowing his to linger. Guide her arms without wrapping his around her waist. Steady the sway of her hips without drawing them snug into the cradle of his. "Can you feel the difference?"

"All I can feel is you breathing on my neck," she murmured in that sense-stroking voice.

Quade closed his eyes for a moment. He decided not to tell her he'd been thinking about putting his mouth on her neck, right there on the delicate pale skin behind her ear.

"How was that?" she asked, finishing off her swing.

"Better, but follow right through."

He kept her at it, correcting, adjusting, suggesting, encouraging. Trying not to admire her determination, trying not to admire anything about her.

"The trick is having your weight in the right spot when you connect with the ball."

Dark gaze hot with frustration, she swung around to face him. "When do I get to connect with the ball?"

"When you stop lifting your head."

"Craig said my head position is just fine."

"Craig was probably too busy watching your ass to pay any

attention to your head.”

Outraged, her eyes widened along with her mouth. He didn't give her a chance to speak. He placed a hand at the back of her neck and directed her head into the correct position.

“Head down, like this, when you strike the ball.” The tension in her neck vibrated into his hand. The heat of her skin hummed into his blood. He moved his palm, just a fraction, massaging gently. “You're not relaxing.”

With an angry exclamation she swung away from him. “How can I relax with you touching me?”

Holding his hands out, palms up in a conciliatory gesture, he retreated several yards. “Hey, I'm not feeling too relaxed, either, not with that club aimed in my direction.”

She lowered the iron she'd been brandishing like a weapon and sighed. “I'm sorry. It's been a long day.”

“You're right. But before we pack it in, how about you give that swing one last try?”

She looked dubious.

“I'll stand way over here. No breathing. No instructions.” He gestured toward the ball. “Have at it.”

When she connected with a solid thunk, when it sailed out in an almost straight trajectory, he could see the delight in her face. In her smile. Felt it shining as brightly as the late-afternoon sunshine, reaching out to wrap him in its warmth. What could he do but smile right back?

“There you go,” he said through his smile.

“No need to sound so smug.” She swung the club around in several rapid-fire circles, like a gunslinger after a showdown. “I was hitting an occasional decent one before you happened along.”

“You were woeful.”

“Was not.”

Quade laughed out loud—at her belligerence and because he simply felt like it—and when she closed the distance between them and stood smiling up at him, he felt a powerful urge to capture that delight between his hands, to taste it on his lips. When he felt her gaze focus on his mouth, he knew he’d been staring at the source of his temptation.

That full-lipped, soft-textured, smart-talking mouth.

Sobering instantly, Chantal stared up at him. “Thank you.”

“My pleasure,” he replied with equal gravity.

As she absorbed the shift in mood, everything inside her stilled. He was looking at her as if it had been a pleasure, as if he’d enjoyed standing close enough to breathe on her neck, as if he wanted to kiss her.

Now. On the lips.

A wave of longing washed through her, blindsiding her with its intensity, urging her to move closer, to place her hands on the broad wall of his chest. His heart pounded reassuringly loud so she slid her hands higher, up toward his neck.

She moistened her lips. Her lids drifted shut.

Suddenly hard fingers circled her wrists, forcibly removing her hands, setting her firmly back on her feet. When Chantal

opened her eyes he was already striding out across the pasture, bending to pick up a golf ball, then moving on. Dang. No, this situation deserved a much harsher word than that old crock. Damn.

Damn, damn, damn, damn, damn.

She'd been a whisper away from his lips, from his kiss. And she had no doubt that Cameron Quade would kiss with the same confidence, the same sure-handed skill, as he'd employed when tutoring her golf swing. Missing out on a kiss like that was enough to make a woman weep, especially a woman who'd never been kissed by a true craftsman. With a heavy sigh, she picked up her pail and stomped off after him.

Had she read him wrong? She didn't think so, although perhaps she'd moved too fast. How fast was too fast? Some men didn't like aggressive women...although her lame attempt at a kiss hardly fit that tag. And that girlfriend he'd had at Barker Cowan, that Gina Whatsername in Contracts, she hadn't possessed a passive bone in her long, tightly strung body.

Perhaps she should have grabbed hold of his sweater. Or his face or his hair. Lord knows, she wanted to bury her fingers in that thick dark head of hair. Whatever, her prekissing technique obviously needed as much work as her golf game. Perhaps she should enquire if the local community college ran any classes along those lines. Seduction for Beginners. Or Bedroom Technique 101.

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