

Chapter One

Scarlett tugged at the short skirt of her dress, wishing she'd worn something longer.

Was it always this short? Maybe it shrank or maybe I gained weight, she thought as she sipped her margarita.

Glass was packed that night. Partiers came out en masse to dance, drink, and watch the live band.

Scarlett, Shayla, Rose, and Tinker came out to celebrate Tinker's thirtieth birthday.

Shay called out. "Selfie. Get close."

The women smiled as everyone clicked their camera one at a time. Scarlett's attention was momentarily pulled away when a group approached the bar. Mostly couples from what Scarlett could see, but that didn't stop her eye from being drawn to one tall hottie with the best fitting jeans she'd ever seen on a man.

She swallowed and turned her attention back to her girls.

When Bruno Mars came on, Tinker jumped up. "Woo hoo. My song. Let's go."

Scarlett smiled. Just about every song was *my song* to Tinker.

Tinker was the music buff. Rose was the movie buff. Seemed like every movie was her "all-time favorite". Shayla was the health and nutrition nut. Scarlett, well, she was the hopeless romantic. Anything and everything from romance books and toys to Valentine's Day and hot dates. Her mind constantly raced with ideas for dates, positions, poems. Shay would tell her it's because she was a Scorpio and her keyword was sex.

That'd made Scarlett laugh out loud. She'd had a total of four boyfriends.

As the girls danced, some men would join in for a dance or two. By the fourth song, Scarlett was ready to sit, but lookie there! Mister Nice Jeans showed up on the dancefloor.

His arm muscles told her he had a very intense job or he was a gym rat. Which might explain the incredible way his jeans fit him. His dark brown hair had a gentle wave to it that Scarlett imagined would be great running fingers through. Her fingers.

Oh. He had a dance partner.

Scarlett sighed inside. Why was it all the good-looking ones were taken?

His gaze caught hers, and she almost froze. He had the most incredible gray-blue eyes. Maybe it was the colored lights; she'd never seen a color like that on a person.

Scarlett couldn't look away. Her breathing came shallow. His gaze drew her in.

Then, the girlfriend with her long blonde hair, her eye-popping lush boobs, and her perfect tight butt said something and pulled his attention.

Scarlett looked toward the bathrooms in need of some space. "Be right back," she called to her girls.

They nodded.

Scarlett leaned against the vanity countertop, a flush evident in her cheeks. She wetted a napkin and patted her face, then reapplied her lip gloss. She didn't know what came over her. He was just a guy. She couldn't think, couldn't move, and couldn't breathe.

It was some kind of weird, cosmic reaction that would be best forgotten.

She slung her tiny purse across her body, pulled down her dress, and made her way out to the chaos.

She stopped at the bar for a fresh drink, deciding to hang back at the table for the next few dances.

“What can I get ya’?” the bartender leaned forward.

“A Truly, please.”

“Hi.” Mister Nice Jeans strode up beside her.

When Ryan first locked eyes with the beauty across the bar, he had to make some contact with those penetrating eyes. He felt drawn to her, might she feel the same? He’d watched her head to the bar and thought this was his chance.

She looked over. “Hi.”

“I’ve never tried those. I guess they’re pretty good.” The lame opening line made him cringe inside.

“They are.” Her smile and eyes were captivating.

The bartender set down her drink with a napkin. As she reached into her purse, Ryan had his credit card ready. “Two more of those, all on this, please.” And handed the card to the bartender.

“Thank you.” She gazed up at him.

He smiled. “You’re welcome.” He offered his hand. “Ryan McManus.”

She clasped it. “Scarlett Jones.”

He repeated her name in his head and he liked the sound of it.

He lingered a bit too long and broke their handshake. If Janis looked over at that point, it would be awkward.

As much as he hated to leave, he lifted his drinks and said, “Well, nice to meet you Scarlett Jones.”

“You too. And thanks again for the drink.”

He raised a can and smiled as he walked away.

The inexplicable warmth crept over Ryan. No matter how brief it was, he went out of his way to meet Scarlett.

He handed the Truly to Janis. “Here ya’ go. I thought we’d try something new.”

“Oh, Ryan, I don’t know if I’m gonna like this.” She wrinkled her perfect nose.

“If you don’t, I’ll go get you an Old Fashioned.” He should have known not to try and surprise Janis. She hated surprises.

As the group waited for the band to start, Ryan stole a few glances at Scarlett from across the room. He watched her dance and laugh. Her eyes sparkled when she smiled.

Derek leaned close, snapping him out of his gaze. “The guys wanna head to Benny’s.”

“We haven’t even been here an hour.” Ryan wasn’t ready to leave.

Derek shrugged a shoulder. “They don’t like the band.”

He stole one last glance at Scarlett, and they headed out. It was great while it lasted.

Chapter Two

If there was ever the dreaded Monday, this was it.

Scarlett dragged her ass into her apartment and kicked the door closed behind her. She plopped her bags on the table, then looped her purse on the back of a kitchen chair and started rifling through the few groceries she'd purchased. After reaching for the open bottle of white wine on the fridge door, she poured herself a glass.

This was what she needed to forget work awhile.

Before she could take her third sip, Shayla strolled in.

"Hey, chica. How's it going?"

"Long day. A typical Monday."

Shay grimaced. "Pour me one of those, and I'll be right back." She strode down the hall toward her bedroom.

Scarlett poured her a glass and sank into a chair. After a few short minutes, her roommate took the seat next to her at the kitchen table, clinked her glass, and said, "Cheers."

"I bought chicken for dinner."

Shay nodded. "Great. Now, wanna talk about your day?"

Scarlett let out a sigh then filled Shayla in on her crazy and exhausting day. Handling a portion of the online marketing for the largest orthodontia practice in Texas put a lot of responsibility on her shoulders. She had come up with an advertising campaign for Amarillo, doing the best she could with the limited info on the brief sent in from the field rep.

A brief was a request of what the field offices needed to run a marketing promotion. Her proposal got kicked back with a nasty note stating it was all wrong. *And* the rep had copied her boss.

"So, go back, clarify the brief, and give these guys what they're looking for. If anyone can turn out a gorgeous product, you can." Shay always had a straightforward and simplified way of seeing things.

Scarlett grinned and saluted her with her wineglass.

Over less serious conversation, the two made dinner and within twenty minutes were sitting together and eating a nutritious, low-carb dinner.

"When does Dave come back?"

Dave was Shayla's boyfriend for the last six months. He'd left the night before for a business trip to Chicago. He did accounting with First Financial and rarely needed to travel, and Shay missed him already.

"Thursday." She glanced at her phone. "He's doing the group dinner thing, so I'll call him later."

"Good. Wanna watch a movie tonight?" Scarlett could use a good distraction, have some laughs, crash in bed, and get ready to do it all again the next day.

Shay rose from the table, taking the empty plates to the sink. "I have a better idea. You've had a rough day. Let me get my table, and I'll give you a massage."

Scarlett wanted to do backflips. "Really?"

"Yes, really. All you have to do is ask," her friend insisted.

"I know, Shay, but I feel like I'm imposing since this is your job. Fifty plus hours a week."

“Oh, please. Strip,” she commanded as she walked out of sight in search of her portable massage table.

Scarlett knew not to argue. She stripped out of her clothes as Shay set up her table. Then she laid face down. “Thanks again.” She was too tired to feel guilty; she needed this massage in the worst way. She knew she’d feel a million times better afterward.

Shayla covered her with a blanket before she turned on music on her smartphone and dropped it into the speaker. She flipped off the lights. Scarlett heard the top pop on the lotion and felt Shay’s hands caress her neck and shoulders.

“Try not to think about work.” Shay made several passes down her back and out over her shoulders. “Think about that hottie from Glass.”

“Ryan.”

“Yeah. Think about him.”

“Uh, that could be dangerous,” she said with a smile. “It’s been eight months since I’ve been with a man.” She feigned an exasperated tone.

Shay snickered.

“Where are you tight the most? The usual?”

“Yes, plus I’m horny.”

Shayla belted out a laugh, and Scarlett joined in.

Shayla swatted her behind. “Stop making me laugh. I can’t concentrate.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Most of the massage continued in silence. There was the occasional comment or question, or the involuntary groan slipping passed Scarlett’s lips. The massage was all she could have asked for. Plus, Shay gave special attention to her glutes and hips.

Shay was the best in her field. She would implement different techniques based on what the muscles felt like. With years of experience, she had a clientele list a mile long. She loved her job, and it showed.

Every once in a while, she’d hit a tough spot. “Take a deep breath and blow it out.”

Scarlett grimaced when Shay worked on a knot.

“Pretend I’m Ryan giving you a massage.”

She smiled. “I can do that.”

“He was fine. Handsome face, nice muscular body, and a smile that could cream your panties.”

Scarlett chuckled. “He *was* hot. Too bad he had a girlfriend.”

“Seriously.”

“Okay, flip.”

Scarlett rolled over, and Shay repositioned her blanket and started on her arms and pecs.

After some time, Shay continued working her magic up and down her legs, hips, and feet. Interestingly enough, the suggestion about a hot man doing this to Scarlett’s awaken her lady parts. Her nipples peaked, and her breathing changed.

Shay must have noticed because she asked, in that caring way she had, “How ya’ feelin’?”

“Fine.”

“You seem a little turned on right now.”

She smirked. “I guess.” Scarlett knew she was if the ache at her sex was any indication. A small pause. “Hm. Do you want me to give you an orgasm, babe?”