

"Too too and very very. Hate to turn her loose in a roomful of sharks, but--uh oh, speak of the barracuda. Must be some kind of record for Ms. Thing zeroing in on a prey item," he watched in horrified fascination as the blonde predator made her way across the room towards Kris, never deviating in her very direct gaze that seemed to devour its object. "I'd better go and rescue her," David's hand on his arm arrested his impetus, "What?"

"Let her go. I have a feeling that little girl can handle herself better than you think."

Ralph sighed, but stood his ground, "Okay, we'll take a wait and see attitude. If the flag goes up, we're goin' in. You ready for another cocktail, honey?" he asked, wriggling his brows suggestively.

Kris turned and smiled at the touch on her arm. Gazing up into inviting eyes that immediately sought to capture her. "Hi..." Kris grinned disarmingly. It was McCallah Harrington who sat beside her in the pit.

"Friends call me Calla. And I do so want us to be friends."

"Sure," Kris shrugged as if it were a non-issue and took a sip of her drink.

"Waiting for la diva conductress to arrive and command attention?" Kris smiled sweetly, non-committal. "Aren't we all?" Calla answered her question with another. "You just wait and watch. She'll glide in alone dressed to kill--to entice, one would think--looking and smelling like sheer heaven, good enough to eat," Calla showed her very white, disturbingly even teeth, "do her requisite time, just to be polite, and after drawing and bewitching the eyes of everyone in the room and making most of our pulses beat considerably faster--she'll vanish into the night...alone. Sorta destroys the whole raison d'etre for a party, don't you think? What's the point if you don't go home with someone?"

Kris clinked her glass with her own. "Let you know tomorrow," she said enigmatically.

Just as Calla and Ralph had predicted, around midnight Diana made her entrance. As Kris caught sight of her she felt her palms go sweaty and her swallow reflex freeze up. The woman was dressed in a dark leather jacket, tapering and well-fitted, a knit low-cut top with a silver half-moon choker and black jeans that displayed every sinuous curve.

"Of all the gin joints, huh?" Ralph leaned in and murmured in her ear on his way to greet their leader. Kris hung back and tried not to be conspicuous in her appraisal. Her pulse fluttered as she watched Calla saunter towards the woman. She felt a curious proprietary surge that left her wondering where the hell that could possibly have come from.

Calla inclined her entire body towards Diana in open invitation. Anyone could read the body language. The blonde clasped the dark leather on her forearm and drew Diana with her to the bar. She was nervy alright. But did it get her anywhere? Kris found herself hoping not. And hadn't Calla assured her there was no chance. She was persistent though. In not keeping her own counsel. Had to give her that. Why? she suddenly asked herself. Why do you have to give her that? Setting down her drink she made the decision to cast herself on the forbidding waters.

Calla's eyes narrowed and shot little dark daggers at her for a