

“Look Who’s Coming To Dinner”

Alana’s going meet us for dinner,” Todd said.

“What?” I asked as my head jerked up from my menu, hoping I hadn’t heard what I know Todd had just said. “Alana?” I repeated.

“Yeah, Alana.”

“But I thought we were going to have a quiet dinner, just the two of us,” I said, pleading my case.

“I know, but she called me tonight and didn’t have anything to do. I thought it would be nice to see her since it’s been a while. Besides, you guys are friends now, right?” Todd asked as he stared at me, waiting for an answer.

“Right, yes, we are friends now,” I said as I looked back down at my menu.

I felt instantly annoyed. There was still this unexplainable hold Alana had over Todd that I couldn’t put my finger on, although I couldn’t complain one freaking bit, since I was sleeping with her.

I took a deep breath. I could only wonder how it would feel to be sitting at the same table with Todd and Alana. What would we talk about? What if Todd saw right through our façade? What if I broke down?

“Are you okay?” Todd asked, pulling me out of my internal banter.

“Yes, why?”

“I don’t know, you seem a little distracted.”

“I’m fine. I’ve just got a lot on my mind with work right now,” I said, looking down at my menu again but not really reading it.

“You want to talk about it?” Todd asked.

“Actually, I’m good, it’s nothing that won’t work itself out.”

“Okay,” Todd said as he looked back down at his menu, then back up. “I wonder what’s taking Alana so long to get here?”

“Maybe she’s stuck in traffic,” I ventured, although I was really hoping that she wouldn’t show up.

I had not seen Alana since we took our friendship to the next level, although it had only been a few days. I wasn’t ready, not this soon. I was definitely avoiding her, trying to escape a situation like this one I’d gotten into.

I closed my menu and looked up to see Alana entering the restaurant.

“Finally, there she is,” Todd said, spotting Alana the moment she walked through the glass doors.

“Great,” I said, trying to mirror his enthusiasm.

Alana saw us and headed our way. I wondered why she hadn’t told me that she was meeting us for dinner. I felt like I was left in the dark, without any time to prepare, or to think of what to say or how to act – and I’ve always hated being unprepared.

“Hey, you two,” Alana said as she approached us with a huge smile on her face. Alana looked amazing and smelled equally as great.

Todd stood and they gave each other a friendly kiss and a hug. Then it was my turn – my turn to act like the normal friend I was supposed to be. Alana turned towards me and I smiled and stood and gave her a pat-pat hug, then quickly sat back down. As Alana sat, she shot me a look and a quick wink. I didn't acknowledge it, but grabbed my menu to look over it – for the third time.

“So what's up, Ms. Alana? You look good,” Todd proclaimed.

“Thanks, had a facial and a full body wrap today,” Alana said.

“Hmmm, must be nice, I wish I could get a facial and a full body wax on a Monday afternoon,” Todd joked.

“You could, you just choose not to,” Alana threw back.

“Exactly,” Todd said. “With my schedule, I'm happy if I get to eat.”

“So how is the practice, Washington and McClendon, coming along?”

“Busier than ever, but it beats working for someone else,” Todd said.

“And how long have I been on you about starting your own practice?” Alana asked.

“All right, all right, don't start. Yes, I finally took your advice, O Wise One.”

“Wise One? I kinda like that,” Alana said as she reached for the basket of bread.

I found myself silent as Alana and Todd exchanged their playful banter. I stared at both of them; they were both so beautiful to me, and I couldn't help but feel attracted to both of them in that moment. I began to wonder how it would be to have both of them at the same time, although when it came time for Todd and Alana to be intimate I'm not

sure that it would sit well with me. Then again, I thought, I guess I had a lot of nerve seeing that I'd slept with both of them.

“So how are you doing, Kai?” Alana asked, ending my trance and directing all her attention toward me.

I stared into Alana's eyes and I saw more than a general question; I saw a stare that I had never seen from her before, a stare Todd used to give me when we first met, one full of intrigue and, if I wasn't mistaken, a little lust.

“I, um, I'm good. Simone and I are working on a new campaign and, well, it's coming along, since we have to get a few, or maybe it's just a couple, of clearances to make it happen. Not to mention the project that you're working on, but all in all everything is coming together.”

I couldn't believe how long and drawn out I'd made that simple statement sound. I totally needed a drink.

“Well, that's the ad biz, right?” Alana responded with a smile.

“That it is,” I answered.

“I don't know about you two, but I am starving,” Alana said.

“Me too, so where is our waitress?” Todd added.

“Maybe you should go see what's taking our waitress so long,” Alana said as she looked at Todd.

“That's a good idea. I'll be back,” Todd said as he obediently jumped up, leaving Alana and me at the table, alone.

Alana turned to make sure Todd was out of earshot, then quickly turned back to me.

“I miss you,” Alana said.

“You do?”

“Of course, but clearly you don’t feel the same.”

“That’s not true, I do, Alana, but why didn’t you tell me you were meeting us for dinner?”

“Todd told me not to. He thought it would be his little surprise since he knows we’re such close friends now. If only he knew just how close we are!” Alana said with a chuckle.

Then, to my surprise, Alana reached under the table and touched my thigh, and a sweet sensation shot through my body.

“Alana,” I said.

“What?”

“We’re in a restaurant.”

“No one can see me,” she said as she began to caress my inner thigh. “I want to see you later, can we make that happen?” Alana asked as her hand moved up my thigh.

“I can’t,” I said, even though I wanted to. “What would I tell Todd?”

“Tell him the truth, that you’re hanging out with me. He won’t care. Besides, there’s this new lounge I want to check out in Wicker Park called Blu.” Alana gave me a seductive smile. “It’s dark and quaint and...”

Todd’s voice snuck up from behind. “You guys think you’re fooling me, don’t you?” My heart skipped a beat as Todd sat back down.

He stared at both of us for a few beats, then said, “I know what’s going on, I’m not stupid.”

“What are you talking about?” Alana said as she slowly slid her hand off my leg and casually leaned back in her chair.

I was at a loss for words. I looked at Alana and she looked at me.

Todd broke the silence. “You two are sitting over here trying to plan a surprise birthday party for me, but I told you, I’m not having it. I don’t want it to be a big deal this year.”

“See how much you don’t know, Todd?” Alana said. “Kai and I were sitting here thinking of how we could ditch you tonight and check out this new lounge. We weren’t thinking about your funky birthday.”

“Oh, damn,” said Todd. “I feel stupid.”

“Yeah, ya should, but we still love you,” Alana added.

“Well, I’m headed out to watch the Bears game after this anyway, so I was hoping you two would hang out,” Todd said as he turned to me. “Is that cool with you, baby?”

“Yeah, sure, not a problem,” I shot back. I couldn’t believe how easy it was, almost as if it was meant to be.

“Cool.” Todd said as our waitress walked up.

“Great, then let’s order,” Alana said as she gave me a look and smile.