

Follow That Dream

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Chapter Five

Unsettled by the morning's events, Rose scrubbed her kitchen until every surface sparkled, and the scent of fresh pine made her head ache. A cup of coffee, she decided. Five minutes later, she stared moodily into the murky depths of her cup, knowing she should spend time looking through her course notes. The books lay open on the table, but she found concentration, or the lack of, a huge problem.

Sean.

Everything came back to Sean. How did that song go? It started with a kiss... In this case, if she were strictly honest, her *thing* with Sean had started the day he walked into the bistro. The man had slipped past her guard and skipped into her thoughts before she'd recognized the danger. The kiss this morning had merely emphasized the strength of the attraction she fought.

God, a forty-year-old fool.

The ringing of the telephone provided a welcome intrusion, and she hurried to answer.

"Hi, Susan. The pictures and dinner? Sounds great!" *Anything to get out of the house,* Rose thought. *Anything to help outrun my stupid, sad, pitiful thoughts.*

"Are you there, Rose?"

"Hmmm?" *Oops. Yeah, definitely pitiful.* "Sorry, Susan. Mark and Tanya? I'll check. Where should we meet you? The complex at the top of Queen Street. Thanks. I'll see you at four-thirty."

They caught the Link bus to Queen Street, and after a short, hurried walk arrived in the food court where Susan and Chef waited. And Sean.

Rose cast an uneasy glance at Sean before turning her attention on Susan. Susan hadn't said Sean was included in the outing. Of all the... Her gaze settled on Susan's arm and where it rested. Eyes narrowed in suspicion when she noticed how close the two stood. Fists clenched at her sides. Hadn't she warned Sean about romantic involvement between staff?

Good grief! He'd told her he had a girlfriend. How had she forgotten that? She'd kissed... Her breath hissed out in horror.

"Hi!" Susan waved. "I had to get out of the house and away from my studying and textbooks before I did something nasty." Her grin encompassed them all. "Which movie do you want to see?"

Rose pasted a smile on her face. She needed to talk to Sean about that girlfriend. *And Susan.* Fear that she would say the wrong thing and spoil the outing for the others kept her quiet. Tomorrow would have to do.

After much good-natured debate, the others agreed on one movie. Rose trailed Mark and Tanya and sat beside her son. She turned to find Sean seated on her other side. Go figure! She focused on the empty screen. A movie--she could live through one lousy movie without doing anything stupid. The lights dimmed, the previews played, and Rose settled back to concentrate on the plot.

An adventure movie. Lots of action, car chases and steamy-hot, erotic sex scenes...

She breathed deep, her gaze glued to the big screen. Every square inch of her skin glowed, and her cotton shirt clung to her breasts. She squirmed on her seat, unwilling to look away from the screen because Sean might notice her discomfort.

The action on the big screen hotted up. Even more if that was possible. She risked a quick glance along the row of seats. The others didn't appear fazed by the grunting, the groaning and sweet talk of the actors.

The camera angle changed. Rose tilted her head to the side and clapped her hand over her mouth. Her eyes goggled. "It's not possible," she muttered. "No way!" She glanced to the right and met Sean's amused gaze. Her head snapped back, and she stared straight ahead in edgy awareness. Way, way out of her depth, she admitted. This movie was way too raunchy for a staid forty-year-old.

"Popcorn?" Sean breathed near her ear.

She jolted, startled by the sensation of warm breath. "Ah... thanks," she mumbled and took a handful.

A loud explosion sounded, and Rose leapt in fright. Her popcorn flew in all directions--over the floor, in her lap, all over Sean.

"Sorry," she squeaked.

The chorus of indignant shushes made her cringe. Mortified color heated her cheeks, and she slumped low in her seat. She gulped and brushed off the popcorn that clung to her clothes then turned to do the same for Sean. She brushed his arm in a business-like fashion then started on his leg.

"Careful," he muttered in a strangled tone.

"What's--Oh, my God!" Rose sprang away from him, more flustered than ever. She heard him chuckle, then he reached for her hand. He slumped in his own seat, leaning close to whisper in her ear.

"It's okay, Rose. No harm done. Watch the movie."

Warmth from his hand raced up her arm. *He's just being nice*, she thought. Friendly. *This doesn't mean a thing. He has a girlfriend.* And she didn't want to encourage him. She tried to wrench her hand away.

He held fast. "Rose?"

"Mmmm?"

"I assure you it most definitely is possible."

Her gasp sounded loud in the darkened room, and she froze, waiting for another series of commands for quiet. She turned her head in his direction, and even in the faint light, she noted the wicked grin.

His hand tightened on hers then let go. "I would offer to explain further or even show you," he whispered the outrageous suggestion, "but since we're only friends."

Her mouth dropped, she snapped her gaze toward the screen and stared, not even trying to keep pace with the plot. How could she think of him as a friend when he dropped comments like that? When he looked as though he belonged on the big screen himself and kissed like a dream? And could he really do that? Heat pooled low in her belly. She squirmed as she wondered what it would feel like if he touched her. What he'd taste like.

The soft murmur of voices drifted, and she turned her head to see Sean and Susan, their heads close, whispering. Rose scowled. There was something between the two of them when she had warned... She frowned and sucked in a deep breath when Susan laughed then cuddled up to Chef.

Rose leaned back hard in her seat and noticed Chef's arm curved around Susan. Her breath hissed out, and she recognized a sensation of relief, which confused her for a brief moment. Then she sighed. *Heck, face it, Rose. You want Sean. You're jealous.*

The rest of the movie passed in a blur. After the mental revelation, Rose couldn't have described the plot if she tried. Her thoughts stuck with Sean while her guardian angel lectured sternly on the dangers the man presented to her dream.

Rose's features contorted with irritation. Ever since her divorce, she'd managed to focus on her dream and make it happen. Why did this one man have the power to wreck everything? It wasn't fair. One damn kiss had broken her concentration. Just one lousy kiss.

The closing credits ran, the lights came on and all around them people stood and left the theatre.

"Great movie," Mark said.

Tanya giggled, pulling Rose from her troubled reflections. The younger girl looked much better now. Her color seemed more normal.

"I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm starving," Sean said as they all stood and joined the exodus.

"Any suggestions for dinner?" Mark asked

"All sorted," Chef said, winking at Susan. "I've booked a table at Thai Friends."

"Thai food is my favorite." Susan reached for Chef's hand, and Rose noticed he didn't object.

"Mum's favorite, too," Mark added.

"Sounds good to me," Sean said.

Rose remained silent and confused. What was going on here with Susan? Had she missed something?

They walked to the bus stop, and the Link bus appeared minutes later. They piled on the bus to find standing room only. Somehow, Rose ended up squashed against Sean.

The bus continued to the next stop and four people climbed aboard. Everyone moved farther back in the aisle to make more standing room. Rose groped for a handhold but they were all out of her reach. Each time the driver braked, her breasts flirted with Sean's arm. She gritted her teeth and stiffened as the bus lurched around a corner. Her body jolted against Sean, and she almost fell.

"Sorry." Rose jerked away in an effort to stop the tingling sensation. "There's nothing to hang on to."

Sean looked down, noted her problem and dragged her against his chest. "Hold on to me."

Not a good idea, she thought, standing to stiff attention. The tingles converged to a steady throb, low in her belly. The bus swung around another corner, and despite all her misgivings, she clutched his shirt to avoid taking a nose-dive for the floor.

Her forehead bumped his chest. She froze. The desperate need for air forced her to inhale but rather than the supply of oxygen needed to clear a dizzy head, her system overloaded on Sean. The spicy aftershave. The perfume of laundry powder. The intoxicating scent of the man.

"Idiot motorists!" the driver complained, loud enough for all to hear. He braked, and Sean's hands gripped Rose's shoulders.

"Personally, I think the drivers are doing a great job." Humor laced Sean's voice, and Rose gave up trying to pretend.

Sean *was* interested and she, curse her foolish forty-year-old hide, returned his interest ten-fold.

* * * * *

"Morning, Mum."

Rose hugged her son. "How's Tanya this morning?"

"Green." He sighed. "You know, we appreciate you letting us move back here."

Mark handed her two mugs, and Rose filled them both with coffee. "I enjoy having you home again. Sara and I rattle around in this house by ourselves."

Mark plonked himself at the breakfast bar. "Your support is a big deal, Mum. We're lucky you didn't behave like Tanya's parents and refuse to talk to us."

Pleasure surged through Rose, but the satisfaction was tinged with shame. Honesty made her confess. "You know there are times when I want to bang your heads together. This isn't what I would have wanted for you, not after going through the experience myself. An unplanned pregnancy is not easy on a relationship." She grinned to soften her words.

"Yeah, but you didn't disown us. Instead, you talked with us, not at us, and you helped us to make the decisions we needed to make."

"I don't know if I would have been quite as charitable if I'd had to stay at home instead of going to Paris," Rose admitted. "I thought about canceling."

"You what?" A determined glint appeared in Mark's eyes. "You're going," he stated. "You've seen our budgets, heard our plans. We'll manage."

"I won't be here when the baby's born." To Rose's surprise she felt a pang of disappointment.

"Mum, you'll be at the end of a phone. Don't worry. Knowing Sara, you'll get a blow-by-blow account. Believe me, it will be just like being there. And we'll send you photos."

They sipped their coffee in a companionable silence.

"Sean's a good guy," Mark said, breaking into her thoughts of babies.

She bit back a gasp as her gaze snapped to her son. "Sean? Ah... yes, he is."

"Tanya thinks he's serious about you."

Rose gaped. Her children discussed her personal life? “No. *I don't think so.*” Aware of her abruptness, she softened her tone. “I think you're wrong. Sean is here for a working holiday. For a few months, that's all. Besides, he's not much older than you. In case you've forgotten, I'm an old woman of forty.”

“You don't look that old, Mum. If you're interested in Sean, you should go for it because Tanya's right. You shouldn't let Dad put you off men.”

“Tony?” Rose colored and looked away, unable to meet her son's direct gaze. Oh, boy. It didn't seem so long ago when he was an active toddler into all sorts of mischief. Her jaw worked, and turning back, she fixed her son with a hard glare. “Mark, when I want my love life organized for me, I'll let you know. Besides, I'm going to Paris in a few months. I don't have time for a man.”

“But, Mum--”

“He's too young for me.”

Mark grinned. “To quote Sara's magazines--”

“Don't you dare!”

“Look who I found when I went out to collect the paper,” Sara announced as she bounded into the kitchen.

Great! Her grandfather's old saying, speak of the devil and in he walks, sounded apt right about now. A blast of Sean MacNamara this time of the morning. Exactly what her willpower needed.

“Morning,” Sean said. He held aloft two brown paper bags Rose identified as purchases from her favorite bakery. “A fair exchange for a cup of coffee, I thought. The choices are Danish or croissant.”

“Danish, please,” said Sara.

Mark set down his coffee. “I'll have a croissant, thanks, Sean.”

Before Rose knew it, Sean sat at the breakfast bar, a cup of steaming black coffee in front of him. He looked as though he belonged.

“Would you like a Danish, Rose?” Sean closed one whiskey-brown eye in a wink. “Or would an American do?”

Rose caught Mark's meaningful nod in her direction and bit back a snarl with difficulty. She allowed herself a glare.

“Mum and I were just talking about you,” Mark said.

The glare hadn't worked. Rose gave a feeble groan, feeling the situation escalating from her control. Kids, who'd have them? Disowning her two sounded like a good idea, or better yet, she could set them on their father. “*Mark.*” The slight emphasis of his name sounded a clear warning. She hoped.

Mark smirked, and stopped talking. But not Sean. His brows rose and he grinned. “Were you now?”

Another groan escaped Rose. “Give me a Danish,” she snapped.

“Manners, Mum,” Sara reminded, waving one finger in a tut-tutting motion.

Rose rolled her eyes. “*Please.*”

Sean shunted a Danish in her direction and turned his attention to Mark. “I hope you touched on my good points.” He flicked a teasing look at Rose.

"We were discussing your age," Mark answered.

Rose glowered, but both her children and Sean ignored her moodiness. Sulking, she tore a chunk off her Danish.

"I'm thirty," Sean said.

"Thirty. That's good," Sara said, her frown one of absolute concentration. "Cleo magazine says younger men--"

"Sara," Mark butted in.

Rose gasped and dropped her Danish. "Stop right there, young lady. None of us want to hear," she snapped, goaded from silence. She eyed her daughter. Change the subject, she thought frantically. Before Sara opens her mouth again.

"We enjoyed the movie and dinner last night." The second the words left her mouth she wanted a recall. A change for the better? She didn't think so. A reminder of yesterday was the last thing she needed.

Sean grinned, a slow conspiratorial grin that made Rose's face burn. "I enjoyed myself as well," he said. "Actually, I've come to see if you would like to go sightseeing for the rest of the day. Aunt Victoria recommended a trip to Rangitoto Island. Anyone interested? Susan and Chef are coming along."

"Sounds like fun," Sara said.

"Nice day for a trip to Rangitoto," Mark added.

Rose thought of all the reasons she shouldn't accept his invitation. The course notes that required study for example. She considered the extremely valid reasons for all of ten seconds. If the kids were going as well, there would be no problem. It should be safe. The lure of a ferry ride across the harbor to visit the perfect cone-shaped Rangitoto stacked up well against her top three excuses.

"I'd love to visit Rangitoto." Rose told herself she accepted the invitation because a walk in the fresh sea air was good for her health. Not because she wanted to spend time with Sean. With the kids along on the trip, it would be fine.

"Great!" Sean smiled. "A ferry leaves in two hours. You're the locals. Will I need to take anything special?"

"Sunscreen, a hat, and comfortable shoes," Sara said, leaping to her feet. "Ah, Sean, thanks for the invitation, but I've arranged to go shopping with my friend."

Shopping? First, she'd heard of it, Rose thought with suspicion.

"There's a sale on," Sara added, quick as a flash.

"You'll need food," Mark stated.

"I can take care of that," Rose said. "We can take my car to the ferry terminal."

"Mum, Tanya and I have a doctor's appointment. If it's okay with you, can we borrow the car? We can drop you off and pick you up later."

Sean gave a satisfied nod. "Great. Everything's settled."

The smug look on his face suggested she'd been set up. The way her kids were deserting, just like rats off a sinking ship, confirmed it.

"Sandwiches," she muttered, concentrating on food for the unexpected outing instead of her burgeoning fears. Rose leapt to her feet and checked the contents of her fridge.

"I'll meet you back here," Sean said. "I need to check my e-mail at the cyber cafe and send a few quick messages home."

"Mum's computer at work has a modem. You could hook up there when you go to work tomorrow," Mark suggested.

"Is that all right with you, Rose?"

"Mum," Mark said with clear exasperation. "We love talking to your rear end. That's all we can see."

Rose gasped and backed hurriedly out of the fridge. Judging by the hot sensation on her face she must look as red as a boiled lobster. She'd blushed. Again. She grit her teeth and wished she could kick the annoying habit.

"Mum? Is it all right for Sean to use your computer at work to check his e-mail?"

"Ah, yes. Yes, that's fine."

One look at Sean's face told Rose he'd seized the opportunity to check out her rear end. And enjoyed the experience. She felt the color building in her face again instead of receding.

"Sean, do you prefer chicken or beef on your sandwiches?" she asked, a dangerous edge to her tone.

"Can I have both?"

Rose gave a clipped nod and turned her attention to sandwich making. She yanked the bread from the fridge, slapped it on the counter then stuck her head in the pantry. Maybe some extra hot mustard? she thought. Or some of that hot chili sauce the kids refused to eat because they complained it blew the skin off the roof of their mouths. Her hand settled on the bottle. Ah, yes. *Just the thing.*

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Rose stared out the car window during the short ride to the ferry terminal. Stupid. She shouldn't have agreed to go to Rangitoto but it was too late to back out now without looking stupid.

"Susan and Chef are over there," Mark said, pointing. He slowed the car and pulled up along side.

"Hi!" Susan called.

Rose climbed from the car and couldn't hold back her start of surprise. The voice was familiar; the appearance was not. Both Chef and Susan were decked out in casual clothes but they bore extra appendages in the form of binoculars. Chef clasped a field guide on native New Zealand birds under one arm and carried a camera that screamed *serious*. Susan carried a camera lens on one shoulder and balanced a tripod across the other. Birdwatchers or ammunition to lull a suspicious boss? Rose couldn't decide.

"Good timing," Susan said. "The ferry departs in ten minutes."

"Told you we wouldn't be late," Sean said. "Do you need a hand to carry any of your gear?"

"We're fine." Chef noted Rose's curiosity and grinned. "What can I say, boss? When I have the time, I'm an avid birdwatcher."

"Oh." The best Rose could manage. She turned to Susan. "Are you a keen birdwatcher as well?"

"Ah, not exactly." Susan shrugged then laughed. "I'm the fetch and carry person."

Chef and Susan were an item. She hadn't been mistaken last night. How on earth had she missed that? Was it a recent development? Good grief. She had laid down the law with Sean about work romances, but if Chef and Susan were a couple... What did she do now? She couldn't cite working relationships as an excuse to avoid Sean. Before she could marshal her confusion, Sean hurried them to the ticket booth and on to the waiting Fullers ferry.

They filed aboard with all the other tourists and day-trippers. Excitement and expectation flowed through the crowds of laughing people. Rose watched passengers of all ages rush for seats and favored vantage points as the ferry backed from the pier. Despite the sun, the temperature seemed cooler outside and most passengers sat inside or stood at the windows to view the passing scenery. She trailed after the others and shrugged her backpack off her shoulders, placing the bulging bag on the deck at her feet.

"This trip was a good idea." Susan swayed against Sean to keep balance. "I love going out on the harbor."

Rose eavesdropped unashamedly, still not believing the evidence of her own eyes.

"My family are all keen sailors, but I don't have the opportunity to go out much these days." Sean shrugged. "Too busy."

A frown marched across Rose's face. The two looked so chummy. She wished Sean would remove his glasses so she could read his expression. Susan and Chef? Or Sean and Susan? A love triangle. The thought popped into her head, and she groaned softly. How many months to go before she left for Paris?

At a signal from Chef, Susan darted to his side. They both looked down at the water then Susan turned. "Dolphins," she shouted, vibrant and sexy in her plain jeans and tight fitting pink sweatshirt.

Rose subdued the streak of envy and looked out to sea. Nothing could turn back the clock and help her lose ten years or her ample padding. "Where?" She scanned the water in the immediate area, pushing back her wind-blown curls with a trace of impatience. "I don't see them. Where?"

Sean seized her hand, and she felt his touch clear up to her shoulder. Her pulse thundered in her ears.

"This way." He dragged her to the bow of the boat, farther forward than Susan and Chef. "Look down. There they are." He placed his arm around her shoulders and pointed to the wake kicked up as the ferry ploughed through the water. His larger body rested against hers as they both leaned forward and looked down. "See them?"

Rose watched, entranced. Two sleek gray bodies surfed the bow wave, while three or four more dolphins chased along side the ferry. Feeling privileged to witness the sight, she laughed at their antics as they jockeyed for position. "Sean." She turned in his arms, beaming up at him. "They're beautiful. So graceful."

"Beautiful," Sean agreed, but he looked at her. He reached out and tucked a lock of brown hair behind her ear. The merriment on her face died as his gaze meshed with

hers then slid to her lips. Sean lowered his head slowly, signaling intentions, giving Rose plenty of time to protest.

She felt his lips touch her like a whisper and quivered. Pleasure radiated outward from the gentle caress that lasted scarcely longer than a few seconds.

Sean sighed and pushed away. She looked up at him, eyes out of focus, confusion clouding her thinking. "Friends only, remember."

Rose blinked, her brain responding sluggishly. "Oh!" She sprang away, leaving a two-foot gap between them. "I'm sorry," she said, voice stiff, her posture equally rigid.

"No problem," he drawled. "What's a hug and kiss between friends?" He smiled and looked out over the blue-green colored waves with the small white caps created by the breeze.

"There they go," shouted Susan.

Glad to have an excuse to turn her back on Sean, Rose concentrated fiercely on the graceful dolphins, watching them swim away to entertain the occupants of the small pleasure boats moored in the distance. She watched the dolphins until they were small dots on the horizon before turning to face Sean.

"Victoria said Rangitoto is a volcano," he said.

Sean's topic sounded safe, and she grasped it eagerly. "Yes, a dormant volcano. Most of Auckland is built on and around dormant volcanoes. The experts say it's possible a new one could erupt at any time." She came to a confused halt, aware she burbled. She peeked at Sean, and found him watching her closely. Temptation for the forbidden roared through her body, and Rose stepped toward him, her heart pounding at her daring. The knowing glint in his eyes and the jolt of the ferry when it berthed restored rational thought with a nasty bump. Trembling, she stooped to pick up her pack.

"Hurry up. The gangplank's down." Susan urged them to speed. They, along with the rest of the passengers, disgorged in a swarming mass, eager to start an exploration of the island.

At the end of the wharf, an elderly man in a dazzling white uniform waited by a 4WD safari train. Most of the ferry passengers strolled towards the Volcanic Explorer, and piled aboard for the ride to the summit cone.

A young toddler darted between the adults, screeching with excitement. His short legs stumbled on the uneven path and he landed in a howling heap in front of Sean.

Most men ran at the sight of tears. Make the combination children and tears, and they turned to helpless wrecks. Not Sean. He squatted beside the toddler, lifting him to his feet, murmuring quietly before returning him to anxious parents.

"Are we riding to the top?" he asked, after accepting the parents' thanks.

"Let's walk," Susan said, staring at the 4WD train in disdain.

Chef nodded agreement. "I'd prefer to walk. We'll see more birds that way."

Walking suited Rose. The idea of being crammed next to Sean in the small train compartment, on the narrow wooden seats, made her nerves jump. She slapped her cap on her head, her look at Sean one of belligerent challenge. "You ready for a little exercise?"

"Always," he said.

"In that case," Rose returned, giving a sweet smile, "you carry our lunch."

Sean accepted the pack but let it lurch dangerously close to the ground. His theatrical groan echoed in the small bay. "Woman, what have you crammed in here?"

"Mum always said my hand was heavy when it came to pastry," Rose retorted. "You know I never believed her." She stalked toward the path for the summit leaving the others to follow. At the sign for the restrooms, she halted. "I'll seize the opportunity while I can," she said. "Won't be long."

"I'll come, too," Susan said.

Rose finished before Susan and wandered back to join the men. Neither man sat where they had left them, but she soon sighted Chef with his binoculars trained on a flock of birds. *He really does watch birds*, Rose thought, as she studied the air of intense concentration.

Sean stood farther up the track, talking to two teenagers. The kids appeared happy and excited, but when she walked closer, she noticed the closed expression on Sean's face. He looked as if he wanted to tell the kids to shove off. Finally, he glared at them and cast a furtive look in the direction of the toilets. He froze for an instant on seeing her then grabbed the paper and pen the teenagers handed him.

"Rose," Chef called. "Come and look at the harrier. You don't see many of these."

Rose changed direction and joined Chef. When she glanced back over her shoulder, she saw Sean thrust a paper in his jeans pocket. He said something to the kids. They nodded and raced off to catch their parents. Rose watched him tug a cap from his back pocket and cram it on his head.

"There's Susan," Chef said.

Rose kept thinking about the two teenagers and Sean's weird behavior. She nailed him with an intent expression. "Who were they?"

The look that flashed over his face could have been guilt, but she wasn't one hundred percent sure.

He repositioned the pack on his back. "A couple of kids from back home," he replied.

"You didn't seem too happy to see them," Rose persisted. Instinct told her he lied but she had no idea why.

"Are we all ready now?" Sean changed the subject.

Rose bit back frustration. After years of living with Tony, she knew a lie when she heard one.

"Of course we're ready, old man." Susan wrapped an arm around Sean's middle. "Let's get this show on the road. Now, do you need help to climb the hill?"

"Not so much of the old man, thank you. I'm only thirty."

Rose laughed along with Susan and Chef but the laughter was forced. If Susan thought thirty old, then forty must rate as positively ancient. The nagging worry regarding Sean's motives surfaced once more. Why did Sean persist in flirting with her? No matter how many times she asked herself the question, she came no closer to an answer.

She gazed moodily at the scenery as she fell into step with the others. They followed the scoria and gravel track that led to the summit. Small scrubby plants perched on piles of gray-colored rock while sea birds squawked overhead.

Rose and Sean paused to wait while Chef and Susan set up the tripod for a photo.

The silence stretched and Rose rushed to fill the gap. "The small trees over there are pohutukawa. By Christmas, they'll be covered with bright red flowers, the size of pom-poms. Some people call it New Zealand's native Christmas tree."

To her horror, Rose realized she'd started to babble. She bit her lip but the lengthening gap gave her time to think. Too much time.

"The gray rocks you can see everywhere are lava flows from when Rangitoto was a live volcano. There's no soil on the island. All the plants perch on the rocks."

"Interesting," Sean drawled.

Rose searched for traces of sarcasm, but his expression remained bland and she looked away first. She sucked in several deep breaths to help steady her pulse rate.

"Do I make you nervous?"

"Yes." My God--what was she saying? "No! No, of course not."

The man had the gall to laugh. Rose shot him a scowl and stormed toward Chef and Susan.

"I'm going to keep on walking." Rose realized her tone sounded harsh. Too harsh--her raw feelings showed. Pins and needles shimmered in her arms and looking down she noted in astonishment her clenched fists. She exhaled and loosened the balled fists, trying desperately to relax, but her mind seemed stuck on Sean. The man haunted her thoughts and nothing she did made the slightest difference.

Did he make her nervous? Of course he did! One, no, make that two, casual kisses and her hormones ran wild. Friends, he said. Well, she for one knew that friends wouldn't work. When she was with him she forgot about the pain and hurt of the past, the lessons dealt to her by Tony.

And even worse, he made her lose sight of her plans for the future.

Please come back to download chapter six next month.

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