

JANUARY THAW

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CHAPTER SIX

CHASING AMBROSIA

As Rejeanne drove down tree-lined Stone Hills Drive eyeing the exclusive mansions that lined the majestic cobblestone road, she gasped at the sheer size and beauty of the homes. The directions that Lindsay gave her over the phone indicated that the road dead-ended where the Alasdair estate began. Before her at that dead-end was a vaulted gate and archway with the words “Stone Hills” scrolled across the top. Pulling up to an intercom, she rolled down her window and identified herself on the speakerphone. Seconds later, the gate slowly opened, allowing her to drive past a deeply wooded area to a clearing that revealed the Alasdair Estate.

“Ho-ly shit,” Rejeanne whispered as her eyes fell upon the dwelling before her. She continued driving until she was in front of the home’s main entrance. Turning off her engine, she looked around wondering if a valet or someone would pop out to take her car keys. She chuckled at the thought before exiting her Subaru and walking up to the front door.

“Here goes,” she whispered as she pressed the doorbell. A tall, heavysset woman answered. “Hi,” Rejeanne said. “Um, I’m Rejeanne Piscard here to see Ms. MacMahon.”

“Step in,” the woman responded, as Rejeanne noticed that she was not wearing stereotypical maid attire. “I’m Betty Shively, the estate staff manager. Let me take your coat.”

As the woman took Rejeanne’s coat, she blocked her from passing from the large vestibule into the main foyer. “Remove your boots here,” she said as she turned to grab a pair of suede moccasins for Rejeanne to wear. “Put these on,” she said, adding, “I’m guessing that you’re a size six-and-a-half.”

“Seven, actually,” Rejeanne responded.

“Good,” Betty said. “These are a size eight.” Stepping aside, she finally allowed Rejeanne to leave the vestibule and enter the foyer. “Wait here,” she added. “Ms. Alasdair will be down shortly.”

“Sure,” Rejeanne said, as she gave a friendly nod to Betty before the older woman departed. Immediately looking in the direction of the double spiral staircase before her, her eyes fell first upon a larger than life chandelier above her, then upon the sleek figure walking down the staircase to her left.

“Hi, Jeannie,” Lindsay said.

“Hey there,” Rejeanne replied.

When Lindsay reached the bottom of the staircase, Rejeanne walked over to greet her. She extended her hand for a shake, but was met instead with the long arms of Lindsay wrapping around her shoulder blades. She returned the embrace in kind. As they held each other, Rejeanne took in a deep breath of Lindsay’s scent, lightly heightened with perfume. Lindsay ran her hand down Rejeanne’s back and planted a light kiss in her hair before reluctantly releasing her.

“You found it okay,” Lindsay remarked as she awkwardly put her hands in the pockets of her slacks realizing the forwardness of what she had just done.

“I’ve never been to this part of town before,” Rejeanne said. “Beautiful area. I should ride my bike over here this spring.”

“You should,” Lindsay agreed. “There are some hilly hiking and riding trails about a quarter-mile west of here. It’s very scenic, especially in spring and autumn.”

“I’ll bet,” Rejeanne said as she gave her friend a thorough look. “You look lovely, as usual.”

“As do you,” Lindsay said, “but I’m afraid those moccasins don’t really go with the rest of your attire.”

“Well, ha ha funny,” Rejeanne quipped. “Blame your ‘estate staff manager’ for that.”

“I will.”

“What the hell is an estate staff manager anyway?” Rejeanne asked. “Is it a P.C. way of saying butler or is she your personal house frau?”

Lindsay chuckled. “She’s in charge of the estate staff,” she said. “She manages the personnel who work here.”

“I see.”

The women eyed each other uneasily, contemplating what to say next. “So,” Rejeanne started, breaking the silence, “just how many rooms are in this crib?”

Lindsay had to think for a moment. “Thirty.”

“Well, it’s huge... and very beautiful,” Rejeanne commented.

“Thank you,” Lindsay said. “It’s a Georgian style home, built about eighty years ago by the grandson of a southern plantation owner. It has almost ten thousand square feet of living space and it’s solid, Jeannie. The entire house has a brick exterior, and was made of poured concrete and steel re-rods. The estate also sits on over forty acres of land. I simply love it.”

“When did you acquire it?”

“My parents purchased it when we moved here in ’76, so I grew up here,” Lindsay said. “When my folks divorced, they occupied separate sides of the house. Mom lived on the north side, Dad the south... when he was here. Most times he stayed in his Manhattan penthouse or at the family beach-house on Martha’s Vineyard.”

“Is it yours now?” Rejeanne asked.

“It was Mom’s wedding gift to me.”

“Sweet!” Rejeanne exclaimed. “Where is she now, your mom?”

“At her estate just outside of Fort Myers, Florida,” Lindsay answered. “She hates winter.”

At that moment, Betty approached the two women. She was carrying a silver tray with an assortment of beverages. “I have coffee, tea and juices for you ladies,” she announced.

“Take it into the study, please,” Lindsay told Betty before returning her attention to Rejeanne. “Would you join me?”

“Sure.” Much to Rejeanne’s surprise and surreptitious delight, Lindsay took her hand and actually laced their fingers as she escorted Rejeanne into the study. Rejeanne didn’t know what to make of the rather affectionate gesture, but she wasn’t about to complain.

The two women sat, drank tea and made small talk about the house and Lindsay’s history of living there. Rejeanne learned that the estate, Stone Hills, included a four-car heated garage, an indoor swimming pool with an accompanying steam room, sauna and hot tub,

a tennis court, a formal garden with a small pool and fountain, riding stables, separate servants' quarters and a creek that flowed near the rear of the property line. Lindsay also filled Rejeanne's ears with tales of her experience growing up in such a large home as an only child. As she listened, Rejeanne reflected on the woman before her. In a way, Lindsay was still that lonely little rich girl, eager for companionship without restrictions. Her father had denied her the opportunity for true friendship when she was a child, and she denied herself close friendships as an adult. Thus, Rejeanne observed that, as Lindsay spoke, surrounded by the comforts and familiarity of her home, her eyes were as animated and inquisitive as a child's.

"I bet if we played hide-and-go-seek here, it'd be weeks before I'd find you," Rejeanne joked.

"Oh, you'd find me," Lindsay replied.

"You think?"

"Yes," Lindsay said. "Because I'd want you to find me."

"Are you flirting with me, Lindsay Alasdair-MacMahon?" Rejeanne queried with a grin.

"Only if you want me to," came Lindsay's clever reply.

Rejeanne leaned further back and relaxed on the couch where both women sat. She gazed into Lindsay's sky-blue eyes. "So, have you given any thought about what you'd like to do today?" she asked.

Lindsay wasn't about to reveal what she had been fantasizing about doing with Rejeanne. "Well, do you know how long it would take for us to drive to Chicago?" Lindsay responded, curbing those infernal thoughts.

"You've never driven there from here?" Rejeanne asked, astounded.

"Actually, no, I haven't," Lindsay responded. "I've only ever gone there on business, so I head over to the Dell Valley Airstrip and fly into the private plane terminal at Midway."

"Oh my God, you keep a pilot on staff too?"

Lindsay grimaced. "No," she said. "I don't need a pilot. I fly the plane myself."

Rejeanne's mouth dropped. "You can pilot a plane!?!"

"Sure," Lindsay boasted with a wicked grin. "I have many skills."

Rejeanne let out a deep breath. "Why do I feel like I've heard you say that before?"

“I dunno,” Lindsay said. “Maybe because I have.”

“Maybe,” Rejeanne reflected before returning to the issue at hand. “So, why do you want to know how long the drive would be?”

“I wasn’t planning on flying there to sightsee or barhop,” Lindsay remarked. “I’d much rather do the drive with you. It’ll give us time to, uh, get to know one another better.”

“Ah,” Rejeanne said dramatically. “Hit the cruise control, get comfy in those slick Hummer leather seats, put on some tunes and do the road trip thang, huh?”

“Something like that.”

“Well, Chicago’s about 185 miles from here, so three to three-and-a-half hours, depending on how fast you drive.”

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The two women headed over to the attached garage. Rejeanne got a partial tour of the mansion on the way. As they entered the garage, her mouth dropped open again. Spacious and heated, it had a full-service mechanic’s workstation and a spiral staircase in a corner that led up to an upstairs living space. There was an area reserved for two-wheeled vehicles and Rejeanne noticed a covered motorcycle. Three of the four spaces for cars were occupied. “Are all three of these yours?”

“Technically,” Lindsay responded. “The H2 and the Lexus are mine. Dad still has title to the ’66 Mustang, although he’s never here to drive it.”

“Do you?”

“In the summer, sometimes.”

Rejeanne wandered over to the sleek copper-colored Mustang, “This is nice,” she said.

“Thanks,” Lindsay replied.

“What does dear sweet hubby drive?” Rejeanne asked sarcastically.

“He has two Mercedes-Benz SLK 320 Roadster coupes,” Lindsay replied. “One here and one in Boston.”

“Dude has two of the same car?”

“Different colors, but yes, two of the same model vehicle.”

Rejeanne rolled her eyes and shook her head. “Where is dear sweet hubby this morning?” she asked.

“He left for Green Bay with his buddy Fred Keller this morning,” Lindsay responded.

“But the Packers are done for the season,” Rejeanne stated.

“Oh, his trip has nothing to do with the Packers,” Lindsay commented. “They’re up there attending a boat show.”

“Lovely,” Rejeanne oozed before approaching Lindsay’s deep indigo Lexus. “This is nice too,” she said.

“It’s the new ‘03 RX 330,” Lindsay announced. “It has lots of bells and whistles, but I won’t drive it in the winter. I much prefer the H2.”

Rejeanne cocked her head as she read aloud the customized license plates on Lindsay’s vehicles. “C-O-N-Q-R-R and C-O-N-Q-R-R-2. Con-Q...Conq... Conq-r... Conqueror. Conqueror? What’s that supposed to mean?”

“My crazy-assed father,” Lindsay said. “Dad’s a real ancient Greco-Roman history buff, so when I started generating tons of money for this family, he started swearing up and down to everyone that I was the reincarnation of Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar or Xena the Conqueror or Emperor Augustus or some such shit. He’s a loon, but I kinda saw the humor in it, so when I got my plates renewed last time, well there you have it.”

“Eww...” Rejeanne frowned. “I hope that you aren’t the reincarnation of one of those monsters. They were all genocidal maniacs.”

“Don’t worry,” Lindsay assured. “Personally, I’m convinced that I’m the reincarnation of Amelia Earhart. How about you?”

“Janis Joplin AND Jimi Hendrix.”

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Lindsay offered to do the drive to Chicago. While Rejeanne accompanied Lindsay to her master bedroom, an estate staff employee pulled the H2 out of the garage and parked Rejeanne’s vehicle in the emptied spot to spare it from the winter elements. In the bedroom, Lindsay gathered up belongings for their overnight trip. As Lindsay packed, Rejeanne took in the atmosphere of the room. She particularly liked the large fireplace but forced herself not to look too closely at the bed. *She sleeps with **him** there*, Rejeanne thought, battling her envy. Somewhere from within, Lindsay could sense Rejeanne’s jealousy. “Martin rarely sleeps in here,” she announced.

Rejeanne's face went beet-red. *How could she possibly know what I was thinking?* she thought.

After packing, Lindsay spoke with Betty for a few minutes before leaving with Rejeanne. They then stopped at Rejeanne's house so that she could also prepare an overnight bag. Before hitting the highway, Lindsay stopped at a gas station to fill up and load up on road trip snacks. Set to task, Rejeanne selected a large bag of Chex Mix, four candy bars and two Diet colas. After getting back in the vehicle, Rejeanne noticed that Lindsay had placed her cell phone on a holder attached to her console.

"I'm surprised that that thing doesn't ring off the hook," Rejeanne stated. "Being that you're very important and all."

"Only four people call me on my cell phone," Lindsay said. "When I'm not at the office or at home, Betty, whom you've just met today, and my administrative assistant Leigh, handle all of my calls and only call me on the cell if it's a dire emergency."

"Who are the other two?"

"Martin and Keith."

"Oh, of course," Rejeanne said.

Lindsay looked at her cell phone. "Do you have a cell phone?" she asked.

"Yeah," Rejeanne responded.

"I'd like to give you my number and get yours," Lindsay requested. "If that's okay?"

"Sure."

Once they were on the road, Rejeanne began curiously thumbing through Lindsay's CD collection case. "Let's see," she began. "The Eagles, Volumes One and Two; Steely Dan's Greatest Hits, Earth Wind and Fire, Volumes One and Two; Fleetwood Mac's Rumors, Aerosmith, Boston, Pink Floyd. You're a real product of the '70s, Lin."

"And that's a bad thing?" Lindsay asked.

"No."

"Keep looking," Lindsay said. "I've got some newer stuff in there."

"I see," Rejeanne noticed. "Coldplay, Verve Pipe, Vertical Horizon, Norah Jones, Alicia Keys... Mary J. Blige's 'What's the 411'... damn, girlfriend, you can be hip."

“So, what’s your favorite type of music?” Lindsay asked.

“I’m not particular,” Rejeanne replied. “I can tolerate almost anything as long as it’s not polka. I even dig some country.”

“Interesting,” Lindsay said. “Given your unique growing-up situation, I would have pegged you for a hip-hop and rap music fan.”

“Funny you should say that,” Rejeanne remarked as she pulled out a CD from her purse and handed it to Lindsay.

Lindsay looked at the CD with a cute black baby on the cover.

“Notorious B.I.G.’s ‘Ready to Die,’” Rejeanne announced. “Best gangsta rap CD of all time.”

Lindsay looked at Rejeanne and gasped. “What, you wanna listen to this?”

“No,” Rejeanne said. “I want you to listen to it.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s a long drive and you could use the education,” Rejeanne remarked.

“Education in what?” Lindsay said. “Violent lyrics?”

“Sure,” Rejeanne replied.

“An abundance of profanity.”

“Absolutely.”

“Liberal use of the ‘n’ word.”

“Of course.”

“Frequent references to ‘bitches-n-hos.’”

“That too.”

“Where’s the education part, Jeannie?” Lindsay asked.

“You have to go past the obscenity and listen to the pain, struggle and sacrifice of this young man, Lin,” Rejeanne said. “This isn’t Will Smith’s G-rated rap or Eminem’s

whiney white boy drivel. It's raw street poetry... sad, bitter, angry and at times, hopeful. There are also a couple of funny tracks about fucking."

"I dunno," Lindsay said.

"Oh, come on, Lin," Rejeanne pleaded. "Listen to this, and you'll never have to listen to another rap CD ever again. This one speaks for the entire genre."

Hesitantly, Lindsay slid the CD into her player.

After struggling through the entire CD, Lindsay was silent for several moments. As the last track was very intense, Rejeanne didn't want to break the silence until Lindsay was ready to do so.

"So, was that a baby picture of B.I.G. on the cover?" Lindsay asked, finally breaking the silence.

"I don't know," Rejeanne answered. "I think it was his daughter, actually."

"Oh."

"Well, what did you think, Lin?"

"You're right," Lindsay said. "It was an education."

"You hated it," Rejeanne concluded.

"Actually, no, I didn't," Lindsay conceded. "It was hard to absorb at times, but I can now understand why this genre is so important to the disenfranchised urban youths of our nation."

Rejeanne smiled at Lindsay.

"And I have to admit," Lindsay added with as straight a face as she could muster, "the 'Pickle-Juice-Drinkin'-Chicken-Gristle-Eatin'-Motherfucker' line during the sex track was pretty humorous."

Both women laughed hysterically.

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As the women neared the outskirts of Chicago, Lindsay began to seriously anticipate the weekend that awaited her and Rejeanne. Never before, since she had been married, had she ever done a girls-only weekend. She looked forward to sightseeing, window-shopping, and visiting a museum or two with Rejeanne. She also looked

forward to dancing with Rejeanne at a club. However, the prospect of another night in the same bedroom with Rejeanne troubled her. *Should we get two rooms? Make sure that a one-room situation has two beds?* she thought. On the one hand, she desperately wanted to snuggle with Rejeanne again. On the other hand, the raw desire that she felt toward her made that closeness almost unbearable. In her private musings, Lindsay acknowledged to herself that she wasn't merely curious about sex with another woman. What she desired was to explore a loving sexual intimacy with Rejeanne. Lindsay wanted to share her spirit and soul, as well as her body, with the beautiful young woman who sat beside her.

"So, is there anything specific that you'd like to do here?" Rejeanne asked, breaking Lindsay's thoughts.

"It's a big town, Jeannie," Lindsay remarked. "Is there anything specifically that draws you?"

"Well, I'm not a Bulls fan, so they're out," Rejeanne quipped. "But there is a part of town that I like to frequent when I'm here."

"Yeah? What part?"

"Belmont-Halsted," Rejeanne replied. "Better known as Boystown."

They made their way to the famed gay mecca of Chicago at midday. After Lindsay parked the vehicle at a garage on Clark Street, the women spent the remainder of the afternoon visiting the shops that made Boystown unique. Rejeanne got a particularly sinister thrill out of observing Lindsay's various facial expressions as they browsed the S&M and sex-toy shops. On a couple of occasions, she watched as Lindsay picked up a toy, gadget or gag gift and inspected it. However, Rejeanne most enjoyed visiting the gay-themed book and clothing stores, as well as the community and outreach centers, with Lindsay. It allowed her the opportunity to educate Lindsay about the meanings and histories behind such concepts as "pride," "equality," "pink triangle," and "rainbow." Lindsay absorbed the information with a discernible enthusiasm. It warmed Rejeanne's heart when Lindsay pulled out her checkbook and wrote donations to a lesbian-gay youth outreach program, a local theater guild and an AIDS awareness center. In one of the shops, Lindsay even purchased two items with rainbow logos: a leather jacket and a pair of pajama bottoms.

Gay-themed stores were not the only establishments that the women visited. There were jewelry and candy stores, bakeries, shoe shops, antique shops and a specialty pet supply shop that sparked their interests. While in the pet shop, Lindsay turned to Rejeanne. "Why don't you have any pets?" she asked.

"I'm allergic to cats and the condo association doesn't allow the ownership of dogs over thirty pounds," Rejeanne answered.

“So, why don’t you get yourself a pug or lhasa apso or something?”

“Look,” Rejeanne said as she dramatically pointed a chew toy at Lindsay, “if I’m going to have a dog, I’m going to have a real dog... a boxer or lab or husky. I’m not about owning some yippy little rat dog.”

Lindsay chuckled. “Yes, ma’am,” she said.

After several hours of browsing and shopping, the twosome developed vigorous appetites. Rejeanne suggested to Lindsay a restaurant with ambiance. Retrieving the SUV and taking Rejeanne’s direction, Lindsay drove closer downtown to a trendy bistro where a jazz pianist performed live music. The women ate hearty meals as they soaked up a stimulating atmosphere. After eating, as Rejeanne relaxed in her chair digesting her meal and listening to the music, Lindsay reached inside of her purse and pulled out a rectangular box. She set the box down on the dinner table in front of Rejeanne.

“For you,” Lindsay said.

“What is this?” Rejeanne asked.

“Open it and see,” Lindsay responded.

Rejeanne opened the box to reveal a sparkling gem choker. “Lin,” she exclaimed after a surprised gasp. “What are you doing?”

“I noticed you eyeing that necklace earlier,” Lindsay said. “I thought it would make you happy and I bet it’ll look great on you.”

“I can’t accept this, Lin,” Rejeanne declared.

“Why not?”

“I just can’t,” Rejeanne said. “You don’t need to spend money on me.”

“But I want you to have it, Jeannie.”

“But Lin...”

“Do you like it, Jeannie?”

“Well, yes,” Rejeanne admitted. “Of course. It’s beautiful.”

“Then I don’t see a problem,” Lindsay concluded.

“Look, I just don’t want you to feel that you have to spend money on me, Lin,” Rejeanne

said. "I really like you despite all that."

"Then accept it for what it really is," Lindsay said. "I'm not just spending money on you. I really like you too and I want you to have this and wear it... not because of me, but because you like it." She ran the backs of her fingers down Rejeanne's cheek. "Please," she added.

Rejeanne looked down at the necklace for a few moments before taking it out of the box. Looking up at Lindsay, she gestured for Lindsay to place it on her neck. Lindsay gladly obliged. "I knew that it would look spectacular on you, Jeannie," she commented as she delicately ran her fingers under the necklace as it rested on Rejeanne's neck.

"Thank you, Lin," Rejeanne softly said. "And thank you for the gift."

"You're welcome," Lindsay said, smiling. "So, are you excited about doing some dancing tonight?"

A smile streamed across Rejeanne's face. "Oh, yeah!"

CONTINUED IN CHAPTER SEVEN...