



"Best in me"
By: Victoria Liu-Pearson

Prologue

Sydney, @ the Sheraton hotel...

"Nicole, hurry up! Otherwise we're leaving without you," yelled Tony standing next to the waiting car.

"Ok! Geeze stop being so impatient! I'm coming now!" she yelled back fuming angrily. Half the time they're running from place to place with absolutely no time to themselves. Vickie, one of Nic's closets friends since they were young; jumped out of the car and approached her to help with the bags.

"Don't worry about Tony. He's being a donkey's ass like usual. I think he's also looking forward to a nice break. He's going to the States so Angela will join us in NZ in one weeks' time," Vickie replied.

"Thank goodness. He's driving all of us crazy," Nicole answered and the two girls laughed, and stored the bags away and got into the car joining the remaining three girls and their tour manager.

"Queenstown, New Zealand here we come!" shouted Natalie shouted excitedly and they cracked up laughing.

London's Heathrow Airport...

"Finally, a holiday!" Kian exclaimed.

"And for two glorious months. You know, we should do something apart from the usual while in New Zealand," said Shane.

"What, apart from sleeping?" Mark chipped in playfully.

"Shut up Mark," Kian & Shane replied in unison.

"Kerry and I are going off to the Bahamas," Bryan said grinning.

"Oh, you lucky bastard. Nix, how about you? Anything special planned with Georgina?" Shane questioned.

"I think we're going to her parents place over the weekend but..."

"Yes?" Mark asked becoming interested as did the rest of the group.

"Don't get me wrong. They are nice people and everything. But there comes a time when a couple needs time alone, know what I mean?" Nicky asked.

"Ooh! I think some one wants to have some action with his lady!" cooed Bryan smiling.

"Shut up McFadden," Nix snapped and they laughed.

Chapter 1

Queenstown, NZ...

"Isn't this wonderful? Two weeks into this long break and we haven't had any interruptions. Even Angela leaves us alone," said Casey stretching out on the bed in Nicole's room with Vickie and Nicole.

"It's brilliant. I haven't felt so good in ages," agreed Vic.

"Oh please Vic. It hadn't been so long ago when you said those exact same words when you were going out with that guy...what's his name? Oh yes I remember....

Dan Miller from Otown," Nicole replied grinning. She knew all too well that Vickie disliked any mention of her former boyfriend. Without a response Vickie chucked the pillow at her.

"Be quiet Nic. Until you know what it feels like to be broken hearted don't make fun it," Vickie said.

"Still Vic, I think you should cheer up. One day you may just meet the right guy," Casey added.

"Maybe just maybe,"
"Girls?" Angela called walking into the room.
"Something wrong Ange?" asked Nicole.
"Not at all, by the way where are Natalie and Jenny?" Angela inquired.
"They went shopping probably won't be back for a while," Casey said.
"I see. Well I was hoping the three of you would do me a favor," Angela said.
"Depends on what's involved," Vickie replied but received a smack across the head from Nicole.
"I just got off the phone with Jeff and he said there's an interview he arranged with you and three members of Westlife."
"What? An interview with them on our holiday? You have to be kidding," Casey remarked wrinkling her nose. This time it was her turn to be smacked across the head, and from Vickie.
"I suppose Vic and I will go. Its rude if we don't show up," Nicole answered.
"Great. It starts in fifteen minutes just down the hall in room 218. The interviewer is from Smash hits," Angela said and with that she left them alone.
"I wonder which three it is," Nicole said dreamily. Vickie and Casey swapped looks and grinning. They were all fans of the five Irish lads, but only Nicole had a particular interest in Shane.
"We'll only find out at the interview. Anyway, I'm going downstairs for a while. Nic, I'll see you afterwards," Vickie replied heading for the door.
"Sure thing. Just don't be late," added Nicole.
"I'll try not too," Vickie smiled and left.

Chapter 2

Mark sat at the hotel bar having a quiet drink. He needed to get away from Shane & Kian after having listened to them for the past hour as they tried to decide what the three of them would do for the next two months. And also what they'd plan when Kian's cousin Gillian came to visit them. He also wanted to clear his head before the interview started.

"Excuse me. Could I have a glass of sparkling wine please?" a voice asked.
"Certainly madam," answered the bar tender and turned around to prepare the drink. Mark looked over his shoulder to see a young girl about 20yrs of age and dressed rather sporty with her black hair tied up.
"A little early isn't it?" he asked half jokingly. Vickie looked at him and smiled.
"Probably but it may just be the only thing to keep me sane. Especially when anybody brings up the subject of my ex-boyfriend," she replied. Both Mark & Vickie knew exactly where they had seen each other from, but neither wanted to say it.

Casey had returned to her room for an afternoon nap, she wanted to get enough sleep so she'd be able to stay up late when she headed out to party. Nicole was left alone with her thoughts. Although she quite liked the idea of falling in love for the first time, she also wondered if that would be possible. It's just far too difficult to maintain any relationship. One good example was what had endured between Dan & Vickie when they met over a year ago. *Thud, thud, thud, thud*. Nicole was brought out of her thoughts when she heard running footsteps outside.

"What is going on out there?" she muttered. She walked to the door and stepped out into the corridor, but all of a sudden she heard more thumping from behind. Just as she turned around, the person running came crashing into her; the two of them landed on the floor.

"Oh my gosh I'm sorry! Really am," the person answered.

"It's ok I'm quite all right," Nicole replied and looked up to see a concerned Shane

staring at her. In an instant her cheeks glowed red.

"Um...I..." Shane also wanted to say something but he was taken by her beauty.

"Are you sure you aren't hurt?" he asked finally. Nicole opened her mouth but no words came out. Shane smiled and held out his hand and helped her to her feet.

"Thanks," she said quietly.

"You're welcome. So you'd be-"

"I'm going to get you!" Kian's voice yelled from around the corner.

"Oh shit. Here he comes. Erm...I guess I will see you later. Bye," and he took off.

Nicole stared after him; there was her dream man.

"Hi! Bye!" Kian said running by.

"Yeah," she answered dreamily, and returned to the room in a daze.

Chapter 3

"How do I look?" Nicole asked. Casey rolled her eyes and smiled. Nicole had dressed in a plain white skirt that reached just the tip of her knees and a peach long-sleeved v-neck top.

"For the 100th time, you look great. I don't know why you and Vickie are fussing. It's only three of the Lifers." She replied.

"There's plenty of reason," Vickie remarked as she stepped from the bathroom, her two-friends and band mates turned around. She had chosen to wear her favorite black jeans, and a v-neck navy blue short-sleeved top and before either of them had the chance to say a word; Vickie spoke first.

"I know what you're thinking. It's pretty rare for me to get all dressed up-"

"And also you're leaving your hair down," Casey broke in.

"Yeah and that too," Vic agreed.

"Out to impress huh?" teased Nicole.

"Speak for yourself Nicole Since when does such a skirt like that enter your dress code?" Vickie inquired.

"Oh shut up," said Nicole.

"Guys, stop squabbling, otherwise you'll be late," said Casey reminding them of the interview.

"Oh dear, we'd better leave," Nic added. She went into the bathroom and Vic put her sneakers on.

Two minutes later they were ready and made their way down the hall to room 218.

Knock! Knock!

"Come in!" some called. Vickie turned the knob and opened the door, and both girls entered. They found the three 'Lifers sitting on the bed while a blonde haired girl had pulled up a chair, at the same time holding a stack of papers, notebook and tape recorder.

"Sorry we're late," apologized Vickie as she noticed Nicole's eyes looking somewhere else.

"That's all right. My name's Amanda. Now, I'm not sure if the lads know you-" Kian butted in.

"No we don't, so introductions would be nice. Especially for you two gorgeous ladies," he answered cheekily. Nicole looked down at her feet, and Vickie smiled softly at the lads.

"Hi, it is nice to meet you I'm Vickie and this is my friend Nicole, and along with three of our other friends; Casey, Jenny & Natalie whom aren't here, we're better known as 'Star Blazers,'" she said.

"Definitely a pleasure to meet you," Shane agreed just looking at Nicole, causing her to blush and he smiled.

"Alright. Please take a seat, girls and make yourselves comfortable. Here's what I've

planned for the interview. We'll begin with general stuff then onto personal ones. And finally we'll do reader's questions, is that ok?" asked Amanda looking at them. "Let's dive in," Kian said rubbing his hands together. Everything went smoothly with different view points expressed, but as it came to the personal stuff, they got tentative.

Q: Have you ever fallen in love?

Kian: Not yet, but I look forward to it

Shane: Once, but it was a couple of years ago

Nicole: Nope. Guess I'm a bit afraid to. Shane cast a look in her direction. He could feel himself attracted to her, but it was so strange since they barely know each other.

Mark: It was also while ago. They waited for Vickie's answer.

Vickie: Yep and it was a hard lesson learnt.

Q: What would be your ideal partner?

Kian: Just some one whom sees me for being me.

Nicole: I guess...some one whom can appreciate the small things in life and love me for being me.

Vickie: They'd have to accept me for being me, because I don't want to change for anybody.

Mark: As long as they don't want to know me because of Westlife

Shane: I would have to say; the others have described my ideal partner bringing laughter from the group.

Half on hour later, Shane, Kian, Mark, Nicole & Vickie were glad the interview was done. Amada promised to be in touch at some stage so a photoshoot would be arranged. After she'd gone the five were alone in the room. Eventually Nicole spoke.

"I'll see you guys later. Think I need to go and lie down," she remarked getting to her feet.

"Time for another drink I reckon," Vickie answered as she stood up as well. Nicole turned around to her friend.

"Vic. You can't continue to drown the sorrows like this," she replied, but Vickie waved her away.

"Not to worry. This isn't about sorrow now," she said.

"But... maybe I'll go and tell Casey to stay with you?" suggested Nicole.

"That won't necessary. I'll keep an eye on her," said Mark. Nicole, Vickie, Shane & Kian looked at him.

"Are you sure?" Nic asked not really convinced.

"I'm not complaining, besides I could probably use the company," Vickie replied and Mark nodded in agreement. He got off the bed, stretched then along with Vickie; they left the room to head downstairs to the hotel bar.

"I'd better go now. Been great meeting you guys as well as doing the interview," Nicole replied giving Shane & Kian a smile.

"Same here," Kian returned and she left too.

"You like her Shane?" he poked his mate in the ribs.

"I don't know...she's nice and all...but not sure if she's really my type," Shane answered not wanting to admit it. Kian thought this to be odd, because during most of the interview, Shane had been unable to keep his eyes off Nicole. Kian; too had to admit she is quite the looker.

"Mind if I ask her out?" he quizzed.

"If you want," remarked Shane, he shrugged his shoulders his eyes fell onto a dark shape on the floor next to the bed. Curiously he leaned over to pick it up, a mobile

phone and it belonged to Nicole. Shane faced Kian and handed the phone over. "It belongs to her," he said, then got up and walked out.

Chapter 4

While lying in bed and staring aimlessly at the ceiling; Nicole thought about Shane. He seemed so much like the sort of guy she'd consider seriously about dating. He had a great personality making others always feel comfortable. But as she thought about this, her mind suddenly switched to Shane's blonde friend; the gorgeous Kian. Nicole wasn't sure, but there was something about him. So appealing, god she wouldn't mind getting her hands on him! The cheekiness in those baby blue eyes... Knock! Knock!

Nicole sat up abruptly; she didn't know anyone would come looking for her. She off the bed and went to the door. Opening it slightly Nicole was confronted by Kian standing out there, a silly smile on his face.

"Hi Kian. Er...what brings you here?" she asked.

"You left this in the room," he answered handing the phone to her.

"Oh my gosh thank you so much," Nicole said taking it.

"Would you like to come in?" she offered, and a dazzling smile appeared on Kian's face.

"I better not. But listen, do you have any plans for dinner?" he asked trying to hide the over eagerness in his voice. Nicole's mind raced as she thought of an answer, as well as tried to figure out why he's asking.

"No I haven't got anything planned. But I do know the other girls are planning to go clubbing later," she replied.

"Oh ok. Well...in that case.... how about we go for dinner?" Kian suggested rather timidly. Nicole smiled and dropped her eyes to the floor momentarily.

"Sure, that'd be great," she said and looked up again seeing Kian's blue eyes sparkle in delight.

"Great! So...I'll come by here at around 7pm?"

"Ok. See you then," and giving her playfully smile; Kian turned and went off to his room. She watched him leave, resting her head against the door as a sigh escaped her lips.

Down at the hotel bar Mark & Vickie were getting along quite well. They hadn't been drinking a lot since they got to the car; in fact a lot of the time they've just chatted. For Vickie, she did find it utterly strange that she was able to tell Mark about the things she and Dan had gone through and not feel sadden or uncomfortable. While Mark could tell she wasn't used to talking about it too much.

"So...do you still miss him?" he asked.

"For the past month I did. Probably because I was on my own even though my parents and my friends have been around. I really didn't think he'd do that to me...but sometimes it's expected," she said.

"That's true. But not a great excuse for him," Mark replied. Vickie looked up at him, and almost immediately those familiar feelings ran through her body. ** Oh no, don't let it happen again! Not now please ** She thought. Just as Mark was about to say something, a voice vaguely familiar to Vickie had interrupted.

"Vic, just what do you think you're doing?" demanded Natalie as she and Jenny marched over.

"Piss off Nat it's none of your business," Vickie shot back obviously annoyed.

"Don't need to be so touchy. Just because you and Dan had a difficult time-" before Natalie was able to complete her sentence Vickie had already made a hurried rush out. Mark was on his feet and after her in no time. Jenny smacked Natalie across the

head.

"Good one Nat. Real smooth. You always do the wrong thing," she replied.

Chapter 5

As Nicole put the final additions of light make up, she paused to think what had prompted her to accept Kian's suggestion. She only hoped she wasn't coming across as being eager to get a boyfriend.

"I'll have to think about it later," she said and put everything away, then picked up her cardigan when suddenly...

Knock! Knock!

"Be there in a moment!" she hurriedly put her cardigan on, checked her reflection, then waltzed up to the door, and opened it. Kian's eyes almost bulged out of his head and she grinned shyly in reply.

"Wow, you look great," he said.

"Thank you, and you look fantastic too,"

"Why thank you. Anyway let's get going huh? I've booked a spot for us at an Italian restaurant not far from here," Kian, answered offering his arm. Nicole accepted, made sure she had everything; shut the door and they headed off down the hallway. Kian and Nicole were completely un-aware that Shane had opened his room door to watch them. He felt a tug at his heart and envy flowed through his veins.

"So...do you girls enjoy being together creating music, touring and stuff like that?" asked Kian.

"Yeah it's been great. But this is our third year and already it looks rocky. Vickie and Natalie don't get along these days...and the rest of us do feel tired. So it's only a matter of time before we'll call it a day," Nicole replied.

"Hopefully not before your up 'n' coming tour right?" he questioned, a smile appearing on his lips. She stared at him with curiosity.

"Is there something you know about our tour?" she raised her eyebrows but Kian shock his head keeping his lips sealed.

"It's possible but I'm not permitted to say anything," he answered. The lift stopped off at the lobby and they walked through, catching the attention of many people.

One of the guy's working behind the receptionist desk got out of his chair and walked up to them quickly.

"Your car is waiting right outside sir," he answered.

"Thank you," Kian said; and so he and Nicole made their way outside, descended the steps to the car. * *Oh gosh what am I going to do? Already Kian is so sweet.* * She just tried to calm herself and got into the car, Kian followed and once in the driver hoped in, they were on their way.

Mark and found Vickie sitting on a bench in among beautiful blooming roses. After he'd sat down she told him the story of why she & Natalie haven't been getting along. Now they just sat on the bench saying nothing, Mark battled with the thoughts going on in his head. He felt like he should say something, this girl hasn't had the best of runs in life.

"Mark?" said Vickie, her voice just barely above a whisper.

"Yeah?" he faced her and once again, their gazes met. Just before she said a word, Mark wrapped his arms around her, and Vic shut her eyes. Suddenly she felt lost. Unable to understand what it is about this guy that had made her feel different. She sighed and slowly leaned back against Mark; and he held her close knowing how fragile she was.

"Do you want to go back inside maybe?" Mark asked. She lifted her head at him but

shook her head.

"No. I'll be all right," she said.

Nicole was quite amazed, she also felt overwhelmed. The waiter had taken their orders and left them alone.

"Being here is something special isn't it?" smiled Nicole after taking in the wonderful view outside.

"I can't agree more. When we first came to New Zealand, it was a great adventure. Everyone calls this the forgotten land, but it's really advanced if you think about it," Kian replied.

"I'd say so," they grew quiet and just fought with some battles inside. Kian some how knew he shouldn't try to make any moves because Shane was already interested in Nicole even though he isn't openly admitting anything.

"So...you said you were afraid to fall in love. What is that all about?" he asked curiously.

"Oh, that. Well it's a little hard to explain. Some people think I'm being picky about the kind of guy I want. They even feel certain I'm waiting for the right person but in fact that assumption isn't correct. As you guys know it's far too difficult to find some one truly genuine," Nicole answered and Kian most definitely couldn't agree more. They changed the subject once again and swapped ideas on songs, tour details and other relevant things. Undoubtedly, they were having the best time and Kian was even surer Shane would just love this girl. She isn't a big talker and knows how to have fun also. ** He'll like her instantly. I just need to get him to ask her out. ** He thought.

"How about you?" she asked returning to the same topic they had begun with.

"I'd like to take my time. There's no point in trying to force love upon yourself and another person," he replied.

"Sorry to interrupt. Here's your orders," the waiter said approaching their table. The food looked absolutely delicious, and they dug in.

Being the ultimate gentleman Kian had escorted Nicole back to her room and that is where they stood now.

"Thank you for the dinner Kian. I had a great time this evening," she said.

"I did too. We should do it again sometime." He replied and the smile on her face agreed with him.

"Good nigh Nicole. I'll see you later," Kian added.

"Same to you Kian bye now," But just before he walked away he took her hand in his and softly pressed his lips there. Nicole was a little embarrassed but smiled graciously. Kian drew away still smiling like a clown.

"See you," he answered and she nodded watching him walk away. As he neared his own room Kian suddenly broke out into a little dance. He stood there giggling; Nicole couldn't help herself laughing too. He waved then opened the door and disappeared inside.

Chapter 6

"Nicole! Nic open up!" shouted Natalie thumping on the door.

"I'm coming! Hold your horses!" Nicole screamed back. She put her dressing gown on and went to the door opening it ajar.

"God damn it Natalie. It's only 7am! Why the hell are you waking me up now?" she questioned.

"Angela is really upset because Vickie isn't in her room. I swear, if she hooked up with that guy... I'll break her neck," scolded Natalie. By now Nicole had quite enough

of this.

"That isn't any of your business Nat. Vic's allowed to live her life and do what she wants." Said Nicole.

"Not if she is going to throw this band into turmoil,"

"Excuse me but Vic and I were the founders of this group, and if we are in any turmoil it would be your doing now get out of my way," Nicole pushed past and headed off down the corridor to Kian's room.

Knock! Knock!

"Kian? Ki, are you awake?" she called. She heard some shuffling inside and then the door opened.

"Nicole? What's wrong?" he asked.

"Have you seen Mark? Angela's been looking for Vickie and as far as I know she's definitely not in her room," said Nicole a little panicked.

"Whoa, whoa. It's going to be all right. Don't stress out just yet. Go to your room and chill ok? I'll go and get Shane and we can find Mark. I can't promise Vic will be there but it's worth a shot,"

"God I really hope she's all right," she answered worried about her friend. Kian wanted to say something but the thought he had in mind probably wasn't a good idea to be said aloud.

"Go on we'll be there soon," Ki suggested, Nicole agreed and trudged back to her room, and as she thought it through the sudden idea of Mark and Vickie together came to mind she laughed.

Vickie squinted one eye open. Where was she and what happened? She glanced back over her shoulder and noticed Mark still asleep. Vic cast her mind back to the late afternoon yesterday straight after the interview. They spent about fifteen-twenty minutes at the bar talking about anything and everything until Natalie showed up and said things she really didn't need to. Vickie also remembered the brief moment at the hotel's back courtyard, and then since she didn't want to return to her room; Mark thought it best they should just stay away from the hotel. In the end they went out, did a bit of shopping, plenty of sightseeing, dinner and went clubbing for a couple of hours before coming back here. * *And then what?* * She recalled trying to teach Mark the proper moves for one of the girls' songs, and at the same time they drank a bottle of red wine and champagne. Next thing Vickie knew Mark was trying to dance on the bed. Eventually she joined him, they were having fun and just enjoying it when he slipped over and pulled her down too. By that stage Vickie knew she could no longer keep it in and didn't stop herself and kissed him.

"Good going Vic, just what you didn't need to do," she said aloud.

"What?" mumbled Mark as he stirred awake.

"Sorry. Hope I didn't disturb," she answered smiling at him; he smiled too.

"What did you say?" he asked, she turned away from Mark before speaking again.

"Um... 'bout last night. I'm usually not as forward as I was, with any of the guys I meet-" he interrupted her.

"Don't worry about it now. It was fine...honestly. I didn't have a problem about your forwardness. Besides Miss Pearson I quite like you," added Mark. Vickie turned back to him with surprise.

"Really? Not just 'cos you needed to feel sorry for me?" she asked. He didn't need to respond because the smile on his face and the glint in his eyes said it all. Vickie was indeed surprised, as she hadn't expected it at all. Before she could utter a word, he leant over to kiss her.

After suggesting to Nicole to return to her own room, Kian then sought out a game

plan. He wanted to get her and Shane together as soon as possible; preferably before his cousin Gillian arrived to join them. Shane and Gill had previously been out a couple of years ago before she ended up hurting him. Kian was fuming at his cousin for a little while but it has all calmed down since then. Ki pushed those thoughts out of the way, picked up the phone to dial Shane's room. Several rings later a sleepy Shane answered.

"Llo?" he said.

"Morning Shane. Sorry to wake you but there's a tiny problem. Nicole came to my room and informed me that Vickie has gone missing. No one's seen her since yesterday afternoon. Anyway, I'm going to pop by Mark's room to check, so can you do me a nice favor? Take Nicole downstairs for breakfast or something like that just to keep her company," replied Kian.

"Ok, ok consider it done," Shane said.

"Great. I'll meet you here later," and Kian hung up making a loud "whoop!"

"The first step to making a happy couple," he replied then hurriedly got dressed.

Shane threw a shirt on and a pair of pants then grabbed his phone, wallet and room keys. He looked in the mirror and saw the state of his hair.

"Shit!" he wailed. Quickly he grabbed the hair accessories, styled it in place, scooped up the important items, and fled the room. At the exact same time Nicole too emerged from her room, when Shane saw her, his heart picked up pace making it a little hard to breath. Worried he wouldn't be able to call out Shane swallowed his nerves and proceeded to walk up.

"Hi," he remarked. Nicole turned around caught off guard.

"Hi Shane, how are you?" she asked as the bubbly excited feeling stirred within her stomach.

"I'm all right thanks and you?" he smiled and it made her own heart flutter even more.

"Not too bad. Just concerned about Vickie that's all. It's really un-like her to just go off and not let us know," she answered. Hopping to put her at some ease, Shane placed both his hands on her shoulders.

"It'll be fine I'm sure. If our mate Mark has anything to do with it; then I can safely say Vickie would be all right," he remarked.

"Anyway, how about breakfast?" he added. She raised her eyebrows; Shane felt his face flush red.

"Erm... only if you want of course, no pressure there," he said.

"I'd love to," Nicole agreed, when he looked at her he found Nic smiling shyly.

"Great lets go then," he replied offering his arm. Obliging she put her arm through his; and together they headed off towards the lifts.

"Did you enjoy your date with Kian last night?" inquired Shane as they waited.

"It wasn't really a date. Just a dinner really, went well thank you." Nicole answered.

Kian stepped out of his room; straightened his shirt collar and strolled off towards Mark's room, but as he took a sidelong look over to his right he noticed Shane and Nicole, a smile came across his face.

"Good things will come in small packages," he mumbled. The lift arrived, they stepped in; Kian still had the grin on his face but remembered what he's supposed to be doing. Shane and Nicole made their way to the restaurant. A few of the customers, and there weren't many turned around to have a look. Some of them had quiet words to each other too.

"Can I help you?" asked a polite young waiter.

"Yup. We'd like a table for two. My friends should be on their on way too," Shane said.

"We'll get you to your table first shall we? Follow me please," the waiter answered

and scooped up two breakfast menus and led them to a table well suited for two. "Here you go," the waiter replied and stepped aside, as he stepped back Shane moved up behind Nicole; she caught this action and turned around with a questioning look.

"Do allow me," he grinned. Struggling with any sort of a response and feeling a bit flattered, she let him pull the chair out and back as she sat. Shane quickly scooted to his seat not looking anywhere but down. Their waiter had a vague idea of what is going on even though he didn't do everything possible to block it out.

"There you go. Let me know once you're set to order," he replied handing the menus to them.

"Thank you," Shane and Nicole said barely above a whisper, the waiter disappeared leaving them alone.

"Ok," Shane said looking up and putting the menu down.

"Hmm?" Nicole answered keeping her eyes on the menu and scanning the list but absolutely none of it registered.

"Here," he replied putting his hand out and removed the menu from her hands while purposely letting his hand brush against hers, at the slight touch they felt an electrifying jolt.

"I..." began Shane but he was caught in two minds; unsure if he should go ahead or hold back.

"Hey, hey! What's going on here? Getting all cozy I presume," a voice broke in. Blushing furiously Nicole looked away; Shane sighed inwardly but never the less they both looked up to see Kian standing next to them. Out the corner of her eye Nicole spotted Vickie and Mark as they wandered in.

"Vic!" she called, getting to her feet and marched straight over; taking her friend by the arm and pulling her to the side so they could have a private conversation.

"Tell me Shay, what was going on between you two?" Kian asked sitting at the table, Shane frowned in annoyance at his mate.

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm not stupid. Even from a mile away any fool could see the obvious connection between you and Nicole," Kian replied; Mark walked over to their table to join them, Kian shot him a look.

"All right Mark, you can wipe the grin off your face," he said.

"What? I'm not grinning," answered Mark defending himself.

"Yes you are," re-enforced Kian.

"Ki, would you quit that? Let him be for once," Shane interjected.

"Yeah man-wait...what?" Mark looked confused as did Kian they swapped looks.

"Shane..." neither of them knew where to start. Very rarely does Shane back up his mates if he does at all. Usually he'll give them an even harder time all in the name of fun. Kian noticed a sly smile of his friend's face, he pointed it out to Mark and he nodded.

Chapter 7

"Stop freaking out Nic. I already spoke with Angela before we came down so it's all sorted." Vic replied.

"Good. Now, aren't you going to enlighten me?" asked Nicole with a bubbling smirk; Vickie just laughed waving it away.

"There is absolutely nothing to tell. Besides, you won't believe what Ange informed Mark and me about reservations she booked in advance for us to spend three weeks at the snow lodges of the Remarkables." She said.

"Great! We had been planning it for months," Nicole answered. She and Vickie loved to go skiing in the winter, and even though they weren't too good at it; they're always having a great time.

"I know, still something tells me this time there's going to be even more fun installed," Vickie, replied.

"Like you haven't enjoyed it so far," Nicole said laughing then ducking out of the way as soon as she saw her friend move to take a swipe at her.

"Let's go and get breakfast I'm starving. Also, we should mention the snow lodge to Shane and Kian. I highly doubt Mark will since he's got a major hangover, and speaking of those I have one too," Vickie answered. She and Nicole went to re-join Shane, Kian & Mark at their table.

"What were you discussing?" asked an intrigued Kian.

"Leave it to your imagination." Nicole answered cheerfully; Vickie slapped the back of her hand against her forehead. Shane had an amused look on his face, Kian holding back laughter and Mark a little stumped. Nicole avoided looking at any of them, Vickie taking it all in her stride.

"I do apologize for Nic's remark just then." She began.

"Not a problem," Shane remarked finally speaking up; he'd been rather quiet for a while.

"Say, what do you lads, not including Mark; think of coming with us to the snow lodge tonight?" she asked.

"Oh...I'm not so sure about that. Thought you girls wanted to have your own holiday," Shane said, but he regretted letting it slip out when he saw a shadow of disappointment flicker over Nicole's face, all of a sudden he felt as though he needed to have should've given her a hug.

"Well...all thanks to Mark at doing what he has there has been an obvious change in plans. Anyway I reckon it'll be good fun," Kian said pointedly aiming the last half of the sentence particularly at Shane and he picked up on hint.

"You're right as always Kian. So I guess it is all settled," he replied smiling at all of them but only wanted to direct his full attention towards Nicole. For the moment she wasn't aware of how much interest he has in her; however she's keen enough to find ways to get to know him a lot better.

"Hello earth to Nic. You there?" probed Vickie sharply poking her friend in the ribs. Nicole hadn't realized she spaced out; quickly brought back to reality she noticed the three Westlife lads were gone.

"Wh-what's going on?" she asked totally confused.

"Nothing extravagant so no need to panic. The lads went back to their rooms to pack, something we should be doing too," Vickie explained getting up from the table.

"Yeah," Nicole replied casually. Vickie sensed there is something going on, yet she didn't know what it is exactly. Only time will reveal all she summed up.

Chapter 8

"Kian maybe you should let this progress on its own. Forcing the situation might ruin everything," Mark said after he had thought through Kian's idea while they'd be at the snow lodge.

"I thought about that too. But it just didn't suit and what's more, Shane is at times even more stubborn. I know he wants Nicole yet his head is probably telling him otherwise," Kian replied. Mark raised his eyebrows at his mate skeptically.

"You know what he's thinking? Why am I not surprised?" he said with a for-filling smirk.

"Shut up. Now just listen to me. I really think Nicole would be good for Shay and vice versa. The trick is to push it further," Kian answered.

"How do you suppose we do it then?" quizzed Mark.

"Do what?" echoed Shane stepping out from his room's bathroom all freshened up.

"Uh...figure out how to ski." Kian filled in lamely in a state of panic, Shane burrowed his crease in a concerning manner; Mark shock his head chuckling quietly to himself.

"Alright that's it. Will either of you tell me what is going on in here?" he demanded hands on hips facing his two band mates.

"Nothing!" they exclaimed in unison.

"I severely doubt it," Shane replied. He turned away and bent down to look through his suitcase.

"So...Shane. Would you care to share anything with us?" Kian queried. The rummaging halted and a long silence endured; Kian looked across to Mark whom in turn returned it.

"We probably know you a lot better than you know yourself mate," answered Mark. Shane was still hunched over his suitcase. He bit on his lip thinking what might be the best way to avoid a full-on confrontation, luckily at least for the moment Vickie came around.

"Hi. I'm not intruding am I?" she asked picking up on the somber mood.

"No of course not." Kian piped up, she gave him a grateful smile.

"Um...Mark could I speak with you for a moment outside?" she asked.

"Yeah." He agreed getting to his feet. They left the room and the dumb-folded silence continued.

"Well? I'm still waiting," Kian said. Shane threw his pair of shorts back into the case and rose to his feet.

"Why are you doing this Kian? What has gotten into you suddenly?" he demanded.

"Whoa, whoa. Shane slow down. Look I'm sorry if you feel obliged to take major offense. All I'm trying to do is to let you know Mark and I are always here if you want to discuss anything. You've been behaving odd since we met Nicole and Vickie yesterday," Ki said.

"Just leave me alone." Grumbled Shane. Ki sighed with a shake of his head but gave in.

"Fine have it your way," he added spitefully, and walked out of the room.

Chapter 9

Angela had driven the five girls to their snow lodge about an hour ago and she was just about to do the same for Kian, Shane and Mark. Kian and Shane subsequently weren't on speaking terms; Mark knew all wasn't too good between them after he'd left.

"Think I'll get a drink." Shane said aloud to nobody in particular as he left his two mates standing next to the waiting car. He strolled back to the main lodge where a vending machine was located.

"What's wrong with the both of you?" Mark asked.

"Ask Shane. He's the one being absolutely impossible. All I did is let him know we're concerned, what does he do? Gets all up 'n' tight and snaps at me." He grunted folding his arms.

"Ready to go?" asked Angela walking over to them.

"Yup. Just..." Mark trailed off then spotted Shane returning to them.

"Hurry up Shane!" he yelled. They gathered their bags quickly storing them into the boot then climbed in.

"Why in the world are you all jittery at the idea of being at the snow lodge?" Shane

asked full of intrigue.

"I'm not to be honest," replied Mark shrugging.

"Yeah right. It's all got to do with Vickie don't it Mark? Have to say this would be a first." Kian taunted.

"What are you talking about?" Mark shot him a funny glare.

"The whole 'next day' scenario after 'the previous night,'" added Shane.

"Like you wouldn't do it yourself Filan?" Mark questioned, Kian had just about laughed out loud because he knew what Mark truly intended in that brief statement.

"For your information no I wouldn't." Shane answered in defense of himself. Mark was prepared to leave it at that however Kian had other ideas, but before he had a chance Angela interjected.

"I don't mean to intrude but the girls' manager Jeff has firmly told them not to get into any position of getting involved in a relationship. That whole deal with Vickie and Dan was a bit of a let off," said Angela.

"Too much distraction I 'pos." Ki guessed as the look from Angela confirmed it. Nobody said anything else and just enjoyed watching the snow-filled scenery cross by.

Shortly they arrived outside the reception lodge a few minutes later and while the lads un-loaded their bags, Angela went inside to speak with the woman. A second later she re-emerged and took her mobile to call up one of the girls'.

"I've made sure you nor the girls will be disturbed by anyone while you stay here. If any media people turn up they're being warned to stay well away from your lodge." She replied.

"Cheers. We're going to enjoy these three weeks eh lads?" Ki added swapping high fives.

"Jenny where are you and the others? Oh all right, you go and get them back to the lodge. I'm bringing your three Westlife friends up there now." Angela remarked then hung up.

"Ok then lets go it's not to far," she added leading the way through the reception, trudging through several inches of snow was a bit of work for these lads but at the same time quite an experience. Angela brought them to the lodge's front porch; it over looked a sloped hill towards the main ski field already tons of people were out there. She opened the door stepping inside; Kian, Mark and Shane followed and were confronted by a spacious family lounge with an open fireplace, comfy sofa, a rug, coffee table, a book-shelf and a TV. Just over to the right is the staircase leading up to the second landing and also on the main floor is a swinging door leading the way to a small kitchen and laundry area.

"The bedrooms and bathroom are up there. I take it you'll all be in your own rooms separate from the girls," Angela said pointedly. Kian and Shane swapped looks with Mark.

"What?" he glared right back.

"Anyway, just enjoy your time here. I'll call in occasionally to make sure everything is all right. I told Jenny to ask the girls to come so they should be back soon." She replied, and then left the three lads alone.

"Come on," Ki said picking up his bags and heading for the stairs; Shane and Mark were right behind as they reached the second floor finding their own rooms.

"This is pointless!" somebody wailed as the lodge's front door thrust wide open and the first girls trooped inside.

"Nat, show some respect please," Jenny scolded.

"Humph," Natalie retorted folding her arms and shooting irritated looks in Nicole and Vickie's direction.

"Hi!," Kian remarked making an appearance on the landing.

"Hi Kian. I'd introduce you to the rest of the girls but some of them aren't in a very

co-operative mood," Vickie said; Nicole, Jenny and Casey giggled and even Kian was smiling

"Don't worry about that now. We're just doing a little un-packing, say why don't we all head back to the ski field?" he suggested.

"Good idea," Jenny answered, he grinned cheekily at her then returned to his own room. Nat, Jenny and Casey headed to the small kitchen.

"I'm going to get me jacket, Nic didn't you want yours too?" asked Vickie as she made for the stairs.

"What? Oh, yeah... do you mind getting it for me? Nicole said. Vickie glanced back over her shoulder at Nicole to find a rather disgruntled expression on her face. **I wonder if it has anything to do with what is developing between her and Shane!*

* Grinned Vickie thoughtfully; Nicole took immediate notice of this.

"The smile means something obviously," she remarked with her eyebrows arched.

"You read far too much into it," Vickie answered shrugging loosely. She went upstairs to her room; Nicole went to sit on the couch propping her feet onto the coffee table. She became engrossed deep within her own thoughts. Shane emerged from his room, dressed fairly warm but trendy looking as well.

"There's no way you're going to beat me!" exclaimed Vickie.

"Care to make a wager then?" challenged Mark. Shane looked over his to his right as Mark and Vickie made an appearance from Mark's room.

"You're definitely on," she replied smugly, Mark shook his head grinning.

"What are you doing?" interrupted Shane. Nicole snapped from her thoughts craning her head in the direction of the second floor.

"Measuring out who the better skier is," Vickie informed him and without another word she went down gave Nicole her jacket and then headed out.

"No need to get forceful!" shouted Mark, and just as he finished saying those words; he raced down the stairs and straight out.

"What's happening?" Are we missing out on something?" asked Casey making an appearance along with Jenny and Natalie.

"I wouldn't say you're missing out on a lot," Nicole said. She cast a quick look towards Shane and noticed him leaning on the banister, hands clasped together.

"Hey, what's with all this standing around? Let's go and hit the slopes," Kian remarked. He headed down but halted when he realized Shane hadn't moved, in the mean time Nicole, Natalie, Casey and Jenny left to the ski field.

"Shane what's the matter?" asked Kian.

"What makes you think anything is the matter?" Shane demanded clearly irritated, he glared fiercely at Kian before going down leaving his mate there by himself. Kian was a little stunned for several passing minutes.

"There was no need to be angry unless..." he trailed off as a thoughtful reason came to him.

"It's possible. Shay's still feeling a bit hurt and Nicole just timed. Man I really got my work cut out." He said. Shrugging it off for a moment he quickly left the lodge and jogged on through the snow. Each step he took caused him to sink deeper and he had to slow down.

Outside the ski's rental shop Shane, Kian, Mark, Nicole, Vickie, Jenny, Casey and Natalie sat on the bench sorting out their skiing equipment.

"This doesn't feel right." Shane remarked looking really confused; when the five girls looked in his direction they quickly looked away giggled quietly.

"What?" he asked in dismay.

"Here," Nicole replied getting to her feet, and in her own skis she plodded the short distance over and sat down beside him. Vickie raised her eyebrows; she found this to

be an intriguing move by Nicole and one Vickie hadn't expected her best friend to do. "Alright I'm ready," announced Mark as he stood up cautiously keeping his balance. "Me too," agreed Vickie and she was on her feet. They glanced sideways at each other, without a word the two of them went off. Natalie wasn't too stable on her skis, but managed to push off; not going very far before falling forwards. Jenny and Casey headed off too leaving Kian, Shane and Nicole by themselves.

"There now how does that feel?" asked Nicole. Shane moved his feet and it fitted exactly, and didn't look awkward.

"A lot better thank you," he replied finally lifting his eyes to look at her; they went quiet just as soon as their gazes met. Kian did everything within his power to face his attention elsewhere, when what he so badly wanted was to intervene. He couldn't recall a single time when Shane suddenly seemed so unsure of himself. The silent exchange going on between Shane and Nicole was semi-uncomfortable; Nicole removed herself from this.

"I'd better go. You'll enjoy skiing I'm sure." She replied.

"No!" blurted Shane aloud, she furrowed her brow; even Kian was startled.

"Uh...I...maybe...can we just talk?" Shane asked panicking and deeply struggling to think of the right words to say.

"Have fun I'm going," Kian added and took off but his absence was lost on Shane and Nicole; she didn't know what to do. He's just asked her to stay behind so they could talk, *was she going to accept or make an excuse to leave?*

"OK," she relented sitting down smiling at him; Shane smiled too visibly relaxing.

"Oh, do you happen to know anything about whom will be with you guys on tour? Kian seemed to know about ours but he wouldn't tell me," she said.

"All I'm aware is that Louis was going to arrange for a couple of local acts to be on our tour. Kian's the one regularly up to date with those issues." He replied.

"Do you ski much?"

"Unfortunately not as much as I like. I didn't grow up in the snow or anything of the sort. But it's a very different sport and a great challenge," Nicole answered. ** Now is my chance! * Thought Shane.*

"What do you say you and I give it a go then?" he suggested.

"Oh for sure but lets move quickly otherwise it'll start to get even busier and there won't be a lot of room left," she added after getting to her feet she turned to assist Shane to stand but once he was up they stood exceedingly close together, holding hands while their faces weren't too far apart. Shane and Nicole could feel an obvious growing tension and a gradual attraction too. ** Oh god please help me! * If she didn't do something now they'll probably be standing here all day!*

"Er...Shane. We can't stand around forever," Nicole said.

"What? Oh! Yes we shouldn't. Ok then I'm all ready for adventure," he announced stepping back and crouching in the skiing motion position, despite herself Nicole burst out laughing. Shane looked partially offended. But shrugged it off as soon as he broke into a smile.

"Right. First things first you need a good push off to gain speed so you'll keep moving-" before she finished her sentence Shane was away! Moving steadily across the flat snow until a small bump confronted him nearly causing Shane to lose balance.

"Wait up! Yelled Nicole pushing off to chase after him.

Chapter 10

"Aww man, I'm going to have plenty of bruises before this holiday is over," said Shane resting his elbow on a soft cushion with Nicole all cuddled up beside him, there they sat on the soft and hugely comfortable sofa in front of the open fire place

that was already roaring.

"You're just too delicate;" she replied smugly and playfully pinched his cheek.

"Stop that!" he exclaimed trying to look serious. Just then the lodge's main door swung wide open, Mark and Vickie walked inside laughing hysterically. Shane and Nicole looked at one another with eyebrows raised and only half amused.

"What's gotten into you?" Shane piped up; through their hysterics Mark and Vickie somehow gained a bit of control.

"Oh...god...you had to be there. I'm...telling you...Natalie made an absolute fool of herself. You see she...she..." that's as far as Vickie got with her explanation as she cracked up laughing and sure enough Mark did too.

"It's no use. We won't get anything out of them," answered Nicole shaking her head. Mark & Vickie made their way to the sofa and sat down also but when she saw the scene of Shane and Nicole, Vickie knew something was up.

"My, my what have we got here?" she inquired.

"Shut it Vic. I know exactly what it is you're thinking." Said Nicole shooting her a stern look.

"I'm doing none of the sorts," Vickie replied with a bright smirk.

"I'm going to get a drink you all like one?" offered Shane getting to his feet.

"That'd be great thank you." Nicole agreed smiling in his direction. Mark got up too and accompanied his friend into the small kitchen leaving both young girls alone.

"You scared him Vic. I bet he's gone in there just to tell Mark to tell you to quiet down and stop being mean...to me especially," Nicole grinned she got hit by a pillow.

"No way. You know what I think? He's probably spilling all the beans on his feelings for you. Or maybe what he'd 'like' to do eventually." Vickie answered taunting her.

Instantly Nicole's face changed color, she did have a tendency to be a tad shy on certain subjects. In the mean time:

"It really isn't what you or Kian think I'm totally positive about it." Replied Shane. He stood with his back to Mark as he waited for the kettle to finish boiling.

"We aren't thinking too much. Just that we both would like you to be happy. Come on Shane, I know you like Nicole and so does Kian," Mark said.

"There's no proof-"

"Like hell there isn't. Vickie and I bumped into Kian earlier in the day and he filled us in," Mark argued. The kettle whistled indicating it was finished so Shane poured the hot water into four mugs already filled with hot chocolate and three-quarters of milk as well as a pinch of sugar.

"Fine. You caught me red handed I am attracted to Nicole." He answered at last; Mark nodded his head grinning impishly.

"So, what's with the slow approach you got going?"

"Hey, at least I ain't the one to go straight ahead and jump into the sack," Shane retorted in total defense of himself. Mark shrugged his shoulders picking up two of the mugs before heading back into the living area. ** Maybe Mark is right. This isn't usually how I tackle situations with a girl. ** Thought Shane. He quickly shook his head clear of the thought, picked up the remaining mugs and went out.

"Here you go, a nice hot chocolate," he smiled hanging one mug to Nicole.

"Thank you," she answered accepting the drink although her eyes only remained on his face.

"You know what? Think I'm going to go to bed early tonight so I can rest up since it's already been quite a day," announced Mark; he received a really suspicious glare from Shane.

"I'm with you," added Vickie as she got up. Even though Shane and Nicole were clearly aware of what is going on, that Mark and Vickie were about to leave; this wasn't a distraction.

"Let's go outside for a moment," suggested Shane.

"Yeah all right. Plus there is something I'd like you to see," agreed Nicole standing and linking her arm through his the two of them went out onto the porch.

"Hmm. That situation right there is getting more and more intriguing by the second," observed Vickie, she thought deeply about the prospects blooming un-noticeably.

"I wouldn't be concerned about it but I do have a certain feeling something is bound to happen," Mark said.

"I think you're right. Anyway, shall we?" she asked smiling radiantly, there was menacing look about her and Mark knew it too.

"Of course," he smiled back and so they went on their way upstairs. ** So much for Angela's warnings!* * He thought. As per norm it's a chilly evening here at the Remarkables, but this didn't have much of an effect on a beautiful scenery before them. The snow covered mountain peak was silhouetted against a black backdrop; one so dark it was impossible to distinguish between land and heaven. From their vantage point nothing was clearly recognizable but it still provided a fairly natural peace.

"You can always feel totally at peace with nature. We've been to many ski resorts around the world and only a select few are able to boast a magnificent naturalistic view," remarked Nicole. ** What is with the wording?* * She thought. Shane was in full admiration towards her and the manner in which she is handling everything. He so badly wanted to say something in hopes of getting a reasonable conversation going but for one particular reason or another it just wouldn't work out. With Nicole sitting on the railing banister Shane leant against it, they gazed out across the open snowfield painted in nothing but black. Just then a shimmering of light squeezed through the dark clouds, shining its pure white magic onto the land below.

"I love this just watch." Nicole replied. She glanced sideways at Shane for a split second before returning her eyes to the scene. As they watched the moon lightened up the landscape below, illuminating the snow, trees, rocks and hills with its presence.

"Absolutely beautiful," commented Shane.

"Mmm." He glanced at her to see Nicole wrapping her arms around herself after the slight wind had picked up. Wordlessly he moved up next to her, Nicole looked at him a little confused. He didn't say a word putting his arms over her shoulders and drew her closer into his body. Immediately she had stiffened up unsure of what is going on, whether she could believe it was happening especially to her. But slowly and surely she began to feel reasonably relaxed allowing her own arms to glide around his waist. Shane closed his eyes inhaling only lightly, yet just enough for the wind to tickle his nostrils as well as smelling the sweet scent in her hair. Several long silences had passed and with each moment Shane always wanted to say something but once again he just kept holding back. Eventually thou he managed to muscle up the courage to speak.

"Nicole?" he asked.

"Yes Shane?" she moved her head away so she could look at him; their eyes locked together and holding gaze for a while.

"Um...could I...uh...would you so much as mind if I kissed you?" he asked finally glad the words had left his mouth although he wasn't too sure what sort of a reaction he'd get from Nicole. She was totally speechless, almost as thou it was taking every inch of her own courage not to scream or look too stunned. He wanted to kiss her? She must be dreaming right? But no, every single part of this told her she was indeed in reality.

"I...well...Shane I..." Nicole didn't have a clue!

"Never mind then," Shane answered; there was a hint of disappointment in his voice and that oh so lovely face. But not wanting to show ay of that he smiled lightly.

"Oh please Shane I wouldn't want you to be sad. It's not that I don't want you to...to...kiss me. I just had no idea you did," she replied quickly hoping to repair part of the damage. Shane studied Nicole's face so carefully, wondering if some how she, in a small way felt anything about him.

"In that case..." he trailed off into one of those smiles to melt any girls' heart including Nic's. With his fingers cautiously drawing strands of hair away from her face Nicole felt an electrifying pulse shot from his fingertips to the tips of her own. "Your just beautiful." He whispered. With the last few strands gone Shane was able to place the palm of his hand onto her cheek and caressing it ever so softly. Nicole closed her eyes as a warm sensation flowed through her entire body. This sweet sensation feeling he was suddenly causing from within her was absolutely breath taking. Then, very slowly literally too slowly Shane leaned in, his eyes shut firmly then feeling his lips meet hers. Oh, just how soft it all felt. Nicole's trembling came to a grinding halt as she felt herself being washed over with such passion. They kissed softly yet firmly as though there had been a sudden discovery about something deep inside and it was finally released. It was as though her head is reeling in pure heaven at this point, she couldn't think of anything else...the only thing in her head is the thought of Shane; this man right here in her arms. Eventually Shane broke away he was speechless, and Nicole only slightly confused.

"Wow," he answered at last.

"What is it?" she smiled in-conveniently.

"No, it's nothing to worry about." He replied touching her cheek again. She really is a picture of beauty and he hadn't seen anything like it.

"Let's go inside now eh?" he smiled once again offering his arm.

"Of course," Nicole agreed happily her heart beating wildly in her chest. Something inside her head that was telling her something else was going on. Taking his arm they continued to stare into each other's eyes as they left the front porch and heading back into the lodge, up the stairs and instead of going to Nicole's room, they continued onto Shane's. With the door shut firmly, they were truly alone together in a confined space there nothing left to say.

"Nic..." he started.

"Shh. Lets not spoil this right now." She whispered pressing her finger to his lips.

"Let us just enjoy this right here and now," she remarked and Shane could only nod. Once again he leaned forwards to kiss her, this time around there was a sense of driving passion and deep desire, they wanted each other to such a degree they could never imagine. His hands moved all around her body, down her back and even for a brief moment landed her bum. Nicole her own hands all around his own body gently running her fingers lightly onto his chest. Everything seemed to move so slowly but it was hugely enjoyable for them. This is a first for Nicole while for Shane he's been there ad done that but maybe none as much more significant then this one right here. Suddenly out of the blue they moved themselves towards the bed, clothes just beginning to be removed and then Shane swept Nicole off her feet straight into his arms and carried her onto the bed.

"Oh...oh Shane please I don't think-" but he simply cut her off with a deep heart warming kiss.

Chapter 11

Vickie woke up still feeling very tired but she wasn't really thinking of anything else except about what Shane & Nicole just might have gotten up to. She turned over to Mark, seeing him asleep, and a fairly little smile crossed onto her face. After one pretty bad heartache and disappointment it really was amazing to think that she would ever have the confidence to take a second chance, especially with some one

like Mark.

"Ok then. Better go and check on Nic now," she said getting out of bed to grab her dressing gown. Vickie headed out of the bedroom and went a little down the hall to Nicole's room but discovered the door still wide open.

"I see!" she mused aloud with a bright grin. She decided against disturbing the others at this stage and probably to keep quiet about it as well; so she then returned to the room and Mark. In the mean time over in Shane's room Nicole had woken first. She stared at the ceiling as she digested the events from last night. It was hard to really recall everything since it felt like it had all gone so fast when in actual fact it was all fairly slow. ** Oh my god, just what am I going to tell the others? ** She thought, knowing full well what her four band mates will be thinking at this time. She glanced sideways back over her shoulder at the gorgeous young man still fast asleep soundlessly. Just looking at him lying there brought a smile to her face.

"Oh this...I just can't believe it," she said.

"Hmmm?" mumbled Shane sleepily as he was coming to.

"What? Oh, no...no I didn't say anything," Nicole replied shaking her head.

"Are you sure about that? I'm pretty certain I heard something." He said breaking into a big grin.

"Nope definitely not." She answered.

"I think we should just keep this to ourselves," he remarked.

"I don't know about that Shane. There are some things that are hard to keep a secret. As well as the fact Vickie and Mark would've figured it all out," Nicole answered pointedly.

"Hmm. You do have a point." Shane answered.

"Of course I do. In case you aren't at all certain I'm one of the best at stating the obvious," she replied grinning helplessly. Shane laughed leaning over to kiss her.

"I doubt it one bit. Now come on lets get up." He added throwing the duvet covered away and swung his legs off the bed, but right at that moment...

Knock! Knock!

"Shane open up!" shouted Kian. He had Mark and Vickie with him standing out there. Shane & Nicole swapped concerned looks.

"Just a minute!" he returned as they scrambled to put their clothes back on. Too late as the bedroom door thrust wide open and the three walked through.

"HEY!" Shane and Nicole yelled in unison. Nicole had quickly nabbed a nearby towel to cover up her top half and Shane had done the same with his bottom half.

"O...okay. I see what's going on." Kian remarked. Mark didn't have to say anything; wordlessly he and Kian turned away to leave the room but not without identical smiles on their faces.

"Shane, I'd like to speak with you outside now," Vickie replied sternly. She picked up his shirt and tossed it to him and stalked out, he quickly followed, Nicole wanted to stop and demand from Vickie what she was going to do but didn't have the energy for it.

"Just don't hurt her all right?" Vickie asked.

"Of course I wouldn't do such a thing," Shane said. Vickie nodded her head now letting the smile come across.

"Good. Nicole is one of my best friends, and I, for one don't want to see her miserable," she remarked.

"I promise it won't ever happen," Shane agreed so Vickie felt better about it and headed away to her own room. Shane stared after her for a moment then dismissed any further thoughts walking into his room and Nicole. She looked around from the mirror she was facing to see him.

"So, is everything all right?" she asked.

"It's fine believe me." He answered moving up directly behind her and placing his

arms around her waist.

"I hope it'll be like this all the time," she whispered into his ear, Shane smiled cheekily.

"Me too," he kissed her.

Chapter 12

"I can't believe it." Commented Nicole, she sat cross-legged on the sofa in Shane's dressing room.

"What can't you believe?" he asked as he continued searching through his kit bag.

"Tonight is the last time our group is ever going to put a performance. Everything the other girls and I have done in the past two years has gone by so fast. It's been such an amazing time we've had too," she said. Shane stood up dusting the dirt off his clothes and went to sit beside Nicole on the sofa.

"Just don't think of it as your last. The best part is being able to go out there and really enjoying it. For Westlife, we won't be anywhere near considering retiring from this but no matter what the circumstances we know it's the best time to put in a great one every single person that turns up," he replied.

"So you saving the best for last?" she asked with a smile referring to something he had talked to Nicky and Kian about. Shane scrunched his face up in frown.

"You overheard what we were discussing?" he asked. Nicole laughed patting his leg.

"Shane my dear there is still a lot you got to learn about our Nicole," replied Vickie making an appearance at the door along with Mark, Kian, Nicky, Casey and Georgina.

"What do you guys think you're doing? This is a private conversation," Shane remarked in mock outrage.

"Oh he's mad! We'd better look out guys!" teased Nicky and that got everyone including Shane laughing.

"You're absolutely right Nix so I suggest that you keep a sharp eye out." He said.

"All right. Guys, do you mind leaving us alone?" asked Nicole giving the others a meaningful look.

"Ok your point has been taken with a fair degree of seriousness Angel. Come on guys we got to get ready," said Kian motioning to the others and they moved off.

"Those rascals," Shane said shaking his head.

"Don't be so up tight about it honey." Nic soothed.

"I know, I know but sometime they push the limit a tad too far," he replied still huffed but with Nicole gently stroking the back of his neck to place calming effects on him.

"Sweetheart, I really don't want to be rude in trying to get rid of you but shouldn't you also be getting ready?" Shane asked.

"Theoretically yes I should, reality...no," she smirked laughed and Shane did, he kissed the top of her nose.

"Ok hint taken. I'll see you later." Nicole replied standing up. She left his dressing room and went off to get changed.

Two and a half hours later...

"Thank you!" Cass, Natalie, Jenny, Vickie and Nicole said to the Sydney crowd whom went wild with their cheering.

"They did extremely well tonight." Remarked Anto as he and the lads had watched the group's entire performance from the side of the stage.

"Especially since it's their last ever too. Amazingly none of them look over emotional," observed Nicky.

"Are you kidding? Just wait until they're off stage and everything will change." Bryan answered.

"Some of them won't be." Kian replied he nudged Shane and Mark playfully; they shot him an annoyed glance.

"Here they come," Kerry said and the five girls of Star Blazin' scurried off stage just about running into Westlife, Georgina, Kerry and Bianca (Ki's girlfriend). As Bryan had mentioned the girls did look teary, at least Cass and Jenny did.

"See? I'm right," he smiled.

"Yeah, yeah we get your point," Mark said.

"How as it?" Kian asked the girls.

"Just brilliant. You really couldn't ask for better. And to do it in Sydney is something very special for me," Nicole replied smiling broadly. She wasn't downcast one bit and neither was Vickie. While Natalie was having mixed emotions.

"You see? I told you everything will go along and be just fine," Shane said to Nic, she looked at him her eyes shining and nodded in agreement.

"You were so right and thank you," she added putting her arms 'round his neck to hug him.

"Lads, you got twenty more minutes before you start. I suggest you use the time wisely," Anto advised them. He wandered away from the stage to make some more phone calls.

"Ok then. So, what's there to do now?" Bianca asked.

"Party time that's what. There's no point in remaining sad for the rest of the evening," Natalie said. So then it was agreed that her, Jen, Cass, Georgina, Kerry and Bianca would head out on the town to enjoy the night while Vickie and Nicole would remain behind with Westlife until they'd finish.

"Come on Angel," remarked Shane.

"Where are we going?" she asked with anticipation.

"Don't make him spill it!" Kian and Bryan exclaimed laughing.

"Shut up lads," Shane scolded them. Taking Nic's hand he led her back to his dressing room and shut the door.

"What is it Shane?" she asked worried there was something he wanted to talk about in private.

"I have a present for you." He said walking over to his kit bag. A quick search and he found what he's looking for.

"Oh no. Shane don't be silly," Nicole said as he walked back to her holding a book.

"I'm not, but I do know you deserve this." He replied grinning, a gleam of pride in his sentimental eyes. She took the book from him and opened it to find an inscription on the inside:

My Angel,

You've been such a revelation to me.

There can be no one else for me now.

I love you so dearly and deeply

Lets keep things going forever.

Love Shane.

She lifted her eyes to meet his; a smile appeared on her lips.

"Thank you." She said in a voice barely above a whisper.

"You're welcome," he smiled back taking her into his arms holding her close. Nicole's eyes clouded with tears but they weren't tears of sadness, for the first time in her

life everything has fallen into place.

Epilogue

"You've been a wonderful audience!" said Bryan to the high-energy crowd. They burst immediately into another large scream probably even more so that it was Bryan.

"We've really enjoyed being here in Australia and New Zealand and have had the best time ever. To all our fans in both countries-" he didn't get a chance to finish because the crowd went nuts again but nevertheless it was a good vibe. Bryan glanced at Shane whom nodded, he did indeed have a surprise so Nicole was correct in that respect but she had no idea the surprise was for her.

"Now, just before we officially finish tonight, Shane wants to set aside a few minutes to do a brief solo effort. We'll see you all soon!" he cried and then he, Nix, Kian and Mark disappeared off stage leaving Shane alone.

"Ok, this is a little out of the ordinary from all the others show," replied Nicole.

"Yeah I know," agreed Vickie.

"Well. I know everybody is surprised by this move and it's something I only planned yesterday. This song is by one of your very good friends, none other than the lads of Blue; and it's their song 'Best in me' that I'll be performing," scream erupted so he had to pause.

"I want to begin by bringing out a very special person onto the stage for the performance. Nicole, come on out here please," he said. Her jaw hung open and it took some considerable effort to get it back up. Vickie, Mark, Kian, Bryan and Nicky did anything possible to keep themselves from laughing out loud.

"He must be joking," Nicole replied as he called for her again.

"I can assure you Shane is NOT kidding now get out there," Kian gave her a helping shove onto the stage, she almost stumbled out there and when Shane turned around to see her, his whole face lit up.

"There she is," he told the massive audience whom broke into polite applaud. He walked over to Nicole taking her hand and brought her forwards.

"I know many of you have recently read about the story when Kian, Mark and I were in Queenstown for two months and all sorts went on there. I just want to remind everybody not to believe every single word you've read about because not all of it is true. What is truthful about Nicole and I thou are correct indeed, we are a couple now," he said.

"Shane..." He gave her a reassuring smile and squeezed her hand.

"Sit down honey," he added nodding to the spare stool that had remained there along with four other chairs the rest of Westlife sat on previously. Wordlessly she sat on it, Shane looked back over his shoulder at Peter Sharp, the guy whom played the piano for the band. He started the tune and right on cue Shane started singing the song.

From the moment I met you I just knew you'd be mine.

You touched my hand and I knew that this

Was gonna be our time.

I don't ever wanna lose this feeling.

I don't wanna spend a moment apart.

'Cos you bring out the best in me, like no one else can do

That's why I'm by your side, and that's why I love you.

Everyday that I'm here with you, I know that it feels right.

And I've just got to be near you every day and every night.
And you know that we belong together
It just had to be you and me.
'Cos you bring out the best in me, like no one else can do
That's why I'm by your side, and that's why I love you.
And you know what we belong together
It just had to be you and me.
'Cos you bring out the best in me, like no one else can do
That's why I'm by your side.
'Cos you bring out the best in me, like no one else can do
That's why I'm by your side, and that's why I love you.

With each passing second a fresh string of tears came to Nic's eyes she was full of emotion now. Then came the ending of the song; before getting to the last sentence Shane; whom had been facing Nicole the whole time whilst holding her hand dropped down to one knee, he looked back up at her as the words left his mouth:
"That's why I'm by your side, that's why I love you."

Song- 'Best in Me' by Blue