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# *Family Secrets*

by Leigh Michaels

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

The waitress must have seen her coming across the lobby, for a steaming cup of coffee was already waiting on her favorite table when Amanda Bailey pushed open the glass door of the little restaurant. “Thanks, Kathy,” she called to the gray-haired woman in the pink uniform who was refilling cups for customers at the long counter.

“You look as if you need it,” the waitress said cheerfully.

Amanda nodded. “The whole place is a madhouse today.”

“So what’s new?” Kathy’s voice was dry. “This has been building up for two weeks. If I’d known movie-making was so exciting, I’d have taken the whole month off and gone to Minnesota where it’s quiet.”

Amanda knew better. Kathy wouldn’t have missed this for the world. It wasn’t every day that a movie was filmed in a small town like Springhill, and even though this wasn’t a big production, just a made-for-television film, the whole town was at fever pitch.

Of course, Amanda thought, since most of the townspeople weren’t directly involved, they would get to have all the fun of watching, with none of the work which went with it. But Kathy was right about one thing. After the last few weeks, with advance people and crew arriving and getting ready for shooting to start, Amanda should be used to the ceaseless bustle around the inn.

Of course, it was wonderful to be so busy. The inn’s fifty guest rooms were booked solid for the next thirty days, or until the cameras stopped rolling, the final set was dismantled, and the last crew member left town.

And if we all survive the confusion, Amanda thought, then we can celebrate.

She stirred sugar into her coffee and looked through the glass wall of the coffee shop to survey the inn’s lobby. She had never seen so much commotion in the place before. A clump of people were waiting impatiently for the elevator, and nearby another small group was arguing – she couldn’t hear what the problem was, but the body language was obvious. The walnut-paneled room, usually quaint and quiet and cozy, looked like a kaleidoscope today, full of ever-shifting colors and patterns as people

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hurried through. Hollywood types, the doorman had called them, with their exotic clothes and fashionable haircuts – until Amanda pointed out that he made the label sound a bit derogatory.

A slender young woman with auburn hair came through the front door and paused by the registration desk to look around the lobby. She saw Amanda and waved, but continued to survey the room for another couple of minutes. Finally, however, she came into the coffee shop and dropped into the chair across from Amanda's with careless grace. "I'm supposed to be meeting the locations manager," she said. "He's still short one house and we're going to look at a rental I've got listed."

"He's still looking for sets? Stephanie, they start filming tomorrow."

Stephanie Kendall rolled her eyes heavenward. "I know. It's one of the great joys of being in real estate. If the rental doesn't work, we'll look until we find what he wants – or drop from exhaustion. Fortunately, this particular location isn't in the shooting schedule for a couple of weeks."

"I heard they're using your house for one of the sets."

"Yes. And you won't believe what they're doing to it. Thanks, Kathy." She took a long drink of the iced tea the waitress had set in front of her.

Amanda frowned. "You wouldn't let them hurt that gorgeous house?"

"Oh, no. They agreed not to touch the structure, and as for the wallpaper..." She shrugged. "I was going to have to replace it all anyway, after Zack got loose with the black crayon."

Amanda winced. Stephanie's son Zack was a darling three-year-old, but even his fans had to admit he had more energy than two average toddlers.

"The best thing about the whole deal," Stephanie went on, "is that the garden has never been in such beautiful shape. I hate to think what it cost the production company to manicure it like that. If only I had a full-time landscaper..."

"What are you going to do while they're shooting?"

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“Go up to the lake house, of course. I’ve locked up all the crayons I could find, but with Zack it doesn’t pay to take chances. It’ll only take a week to finish the scenes in the house, so I’ll drive in every day.”

“If you need someone to watch the kids, Steph– ”

“In the middle of this, you’d take on Zack and Katie? You need your head examined, my friend– you’ve got your hands full running the inn. Is Chase here yet?”

Amanda checked her wristwatch. “Any minute now. The limo left for the airport an hour ago, so if the plane was on time...”

Stephanie shook her head. “How can you stay calm when every other woman in town is so excited she can’t sit still?”

“Oh, I’m excited. It’s a terrific boost for the local economy to have a whole production company here for a month, and the inn’s profit-and-loss statement ought to look a whole lot better after– ”

“Come on, Mandy, I’m not talking about money and you know it. Chase Worthington is the sexiest man on American TV, and you’re going to spend the next month under the same roof with him. Now that’s *got* to make an impression on you.”

Amanda bit her lip and then said reasonably, “You might remember that the roof in question is a pretty big one. It’s hardly the same as getting stranded with him on a deserted island.”

“Oh? That sounded rather glib, Mandy. Don’t tell me you’ve been thinking about it after all.”

“Of course I haven’t. Anyway, I never have quite understood how someone can have a crush on a person she’s never met.”

Stephanie looked puzzled for an instant. “Oh, that’s right, you were still in college when he was here filming *Winter of the Heart* a few years ago. Those of us who did meet him feel terribly possessive, since he’s the only genuine celebrity we have any personal connection with. Not that he’ll remember, of course – most of us just lined up for autographs.... By the way, Jordan’s got a new production manager working for him.”

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Stephanie's careless tone didn't fool Amanda for a moment. "He seems very nice. I thought we'd go out for dinner, the four of us, sometime soon."

"After the movie's finished, perhaps. Till then I'm really too busy."

Stephanie's eyebrows rose. "And after the cast leaves town, what will the excuse be?"

Kathy called from the cash register, "Amanda, I'm running out of change." She waved a ten-dollar bill. "Could you get me a roll of quarters from the front desk?"

Relieved at the interruption, Amanda carried her empty coffee cup over to the counter and took the bill.

Stephanie followed her into the lobby. "I wonder what happened to my appointment," she muttered.

A bustle outside the main entrance drew Amanda's attention. The doorman, in his neat dark gray coat, held the door of the inn's limousine, which had pulled up under the canopy. The chauffeur and a bellboy were lifting bags from the back.

Springhill didn't get a lot of celebrities, of course, but over the years a sprinkling of the rich and famous had come to town. Chase Worthington would simply be one more on the list, Amanda reminded herself, and took a deep breath.

He got out of the car, tall and lean, dressed in jeans and sunglasses and a loose-knit cotton sweater with the sleeves pushed up to reveal strong forearms. As he stepped onto the sidewalk, the sunlight caught in his hair, momentarily turning the soft brown strands to pure spun gold. He turned toward the door and paused.

The sexiest man on American TV, Stephanie had called him, and Amanda had no difficulty in seeing why she'd said it. There was something about the man which exuded power and virility and sheer raw animal attraction.

And yet there was nothing theatrical about him. He was not posing; Amanda was certain of that. He looked almost as if he had seen something he hadn't expected.

Amanda felt as if a vise had closed on her chest. It was an effort to breathe, as if

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every molecule of oxygen had to make right-angle turns to get to her lungs.

Don't be silly, she told herself. He was merely pausing to get his bearings, or waiting for his co-star to get out of the car, or thinking about how much his life had changed since the last time he had come to Springhill to make a movie. There was certainly nothing physical for him to look at; compared to the brilliance outdoors, the lobby was dark. With the sunglasses he wore, he couldn't possibly see anything but shadows inside.

"Good heavens," Stephanie muttered. "He's even better-looking than I remember."

Amanda started to shake her head, and caught herself just in time. She had almost said that Chase Worthington's attractiveness didn't lie in his handsome face – or at least it wasn't purely that. It had to be more than looks; she'd been prepared for that, for she'd seen his face often enough on his weekly television drama and on magazine covers. What she hadn't expected was the personal impact of the man – that was what had almost rocked her off her feet.

He had a kind of aura which seemed to give off warmth – but not the comforting kind of heat that a bonfire might produce. His was the concentrated, controlled flame of a furnace which might at any moment explode out of control and consume everything in its path...

No wonder, Amanda thought, that Springhill's feminine residents had been streaming steadily through the inn's lobby all afternoon, hoping to get a glimpse.

A woman, her face shaded by a gigantic wide-brimmed hat, stepped out of the car. Jessamyn Arden, the female lead, clutched Chase's arm as if she were about to lose her balance and put the other hand up, apparently to shield her eyes from photographic flashes. Since there were no photographers, Amanda decided the gesture must be a reflex action.

Stephanie gave a genteel little sniff. "Jessamyn must think she's already on camera," she murmured.

Amanda smiled a little, but her mouth felt stiff. She stepped forward and was waiting by the door when the pair came in.

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Chase pulled his sunglasses off. His gaze raked the lobby and paused for a second to study Stephanie.

That wasn't startling, of course. The redhead was genuinely gorgeous, and Chase was known as a connoisseur. Despite what Stephanie had said, he might remember her face.

But Amanda was equally unsurprised when he didn't seem to notice her at all. Her flaxen hair and green eyes and ivory skin were attractive in a quiet way, but beside Stephanie's dramatic coloring, she seemed to fade into the walls.

She took another step toward the pair. "Welcome to Springhill, Miss Arden." Her voice was lower than usual, with a hint of huskiness. "And Mr. Worthington. I'm the manager of the inn, and if you need anything, I hope you'll –"

From the corner of her eye, she saw that another woman had gotten out of the limousine. A younger woman, she thought, though she was certain Jessamyn Arden wouldn't care for that particular comparison. She was no competition for Jessamyn in looks, however; her makeup was heavier and not as expertly applied, and her clothes looked rumpled. She was carrying a leather tote bag.

A personal assistant, perhaps? She probably should have anticipated that Chase, or Jessamyn, would have something of the sort. Where on earth was she going to find another room?

Of course, Chase Worthington had requested a suite with at least two bedrooms. Did that mean this young woman was something more?

The woman started toward the entrance, and a moment later a child clambered out of the car and followed her. Amanda's eyes widened as she watched the little boy cross the sidewalk. He had curly dark brown hair, and he was dressed in crumpled white shorts and a soft blue shirt. He would have been a handsome child, she thought, if he hadn't been crying. But his face was blotchy and tear-streaked and more than a little dirty.

"So that's the famous Nicky," Stephanie said, under her breath. "He must be what? – four years old now?"

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Chase Worthington nodded. “Just last June.” He frowned a little. “I know I ought to remember you, but –”

Stephanie smiled and introduced herself. Amanda wasn’t listening; she was still watching the child. He stumbled as he followed the young woman into the lobby, and stopped to rub his eyes. His breathy sobs – the whimper of a frustrated and exhausted child – filled the room.

Amanda’s heart gave a slow and painful twist. She hated to see a child so unhappy... but of course she knew nothing about the circumstances. Still, it took an effort to drag her gaze away from him and turn back to the adults. “As I was saying, if there is anything I can do to make your stay more comfortable – ”

The child sidled up to Chase Worthington and buried his face in the ribbed bottom of the man’s soft cotton sweater. Chase’s hand came to rest atop the child’s hair, stroking the disordered curls. “There is, as a matter of fact,” he said, and smiled at Amanda. The deep brown of his eyes seemed to light with a golden glow. “Is there a gift shop? Something which might have a teddy bear? Nicky seems to have left his favorite in the Los Angeles airport, and we’ve been hearing about it all the way.”

Jessamyn Arden gave a sniff, as if annoyed that she wasn’t the center of attention. “And how,” she said under her breath.

Chase glanced at her, one eyebrow raised.

Jessamyn fluttered her eyelashes apologetically at him and turned to the young woman. “If you’d been watching him properly, Sally, as a nanny ought...”

“He must have hidden the stupid thing on purpose,” the younger woman muttered. “And what you know about being a nanny would fit in a teaspoon, so –”

Reminded of his loss, the child started to wail again, and in seconds his face screwed up into a red mask. Amanda noticed, however, that he didn’t close his eyes completely. His face was no longer buried in his father’s sweater, and he seemed to be assessing his impact on the audience.

“That’s enough, Nicholas,” Chase Worthington said unemotionally.

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The shrieks died into whimpers once more.

Quite a professional performance, Amanda thought. “The gift shop is around that corner,” she said, and pointed.

Chase lifted the child into his arms. “Thank you, Miss –”

“Bailey,” she said, almost unwillingly. “Amanda Bailey.”

He repeated it, softly, and smiled at her again. “Come along, now, Nicky. We’ll see if we can find a replacement.”

“No wonder he doesn’t take care of his things,” the nanny said under her breath. “When there’s always another one...”

The woman might well be right, Amanda thought. As his nanny, she was obviously in a better position to judge than a hotel manager was. On the other hand, the child was only four...

She realized that the desk clerk was practically paralyzed with awe, so she reached for the guest book and spun it around for Jessamyn Arden to sign. “Take Miss Arden up to suite sixty-three,” she told the bellman, and the clerk jumped for the key and handed it over.

Jessamyn signed her name with a flourish. “A dinky place like this has sixty-three suites?” she said.

“Not quite,” Amanda said pleasantly. One problem down, she thought as Jessamyn followed the bellman across the lobby. But what was she to do with Chase Worthington’s son and his nanny? She couldn’t simply assume he’d intended them to share his suite, but since he hadn’t made other arrangements...

She wasn’t aware she was still holding the coffee shop’s ten-dollar bill until Stephanie took it out of her hand and passed it to the desk clerk. “I’ll take care of getting Kathy’s change,” she said briskly. “Obviously you’re overwhelmed by work, Mandy. Or something like that.”

Amanda bit her tongue, hard.

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Chase came back to the lobby. Behind him trailed Nicky, dragging a lop-eared stuffed rabbit. It looked brand-new, and it obviously wouldn't look that way for long. The child's face still held a trace of sullen stubbornness, as if he'd accepted the animal only grudgingly. But Chase seemed contented; he was dusting his hands together with satisfaction as he approached the desk.

"Mr. Worthington will be in suite sixty-seven," Amanda told the desk clerk, and turned to Chase. "I didn't realize you were bringing an entourage, so I'm afraid —"

Two small wrinkles appeared in his brow. "I asked for a large suite."

"That's the largest we have, two bedrooms and a sitting room. But —"

"That will do just fine. Sally and Nicky will share a room."

Amanda thought that the nanny looked less than ecstatic at that news. She beckoned to the bellman, who had returned to the lobby and was wheeling a luggage cart toward the freight elevator in the service wing.

He looked confused. "But Miss Bailey, the lady was awfully anxious to get her bags, and I promised I'd bring them right up."

The cart was piled with suitcases — at least a dozen of them, all sleek dark green leather. "Those are all Miss Arden's?" Amanda said faintly.

He nodded.

She sighed. "All right, John. Go ahead." She took a pair of big brass keys from the desk clerk. "I'll show you up myself, Mr. Worthington."

Though the old-fashioned elevator had been converted to self-service, there had been no way to make it larger or faster. The close quarters had never disturbed Amanda before, but today she felt almost stifled, and she thought the ride up to the sixth floor had never taken so long.

She stared at the grillwork in the elevator door and tried to ignore the sensual aura that seemed to radiate from the corner where Chase Worthington stood. She'd never experienced anything of the sort before; the man seemed to generate a personal force field

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that was even more intense in a confined space.

She sneaked a sidelong glance at him. He was leaning against the wood-paneled wall with his eyes closed.

It's your imagination, she told herself firmly. He's not even trying to create a sensation! But of course, that was the problem; he didn't have to try.

A soft, slightly sticky hand gently stroked her arm, and Amanda felt a twinge deep inside as she looked down into Nicky's big hazel eyes. Poor little guy, she thought. He was obviously worn out, so perhaps he really wasn't as spoiled as he'd first appeared.

Despite his dirty face, he really was a handsome child, with the longest dark eyelashes she'd ever seen on a small boy. His skin was fair, with a soft flush across his high cheekbones, and there were a few freckles sprinkled on the bridge of his nose. His eyebrows were as dark as his hair, and their aristocratic arch would have told her he could be stubborn, even if his conduct hadn't already given him away. And his mouth was soft and finely shaped –

“Don't bother the lady, Nicky,” the nanny said sharply.

Amanda started to speak, and thought better of it.

Chase opened his eyes. “Come here, Nicky.” He swung the child up into his arms. “You're tired out, aren't you, buddy?” he whispered.

Nicky shook his head defiantly, but a moment later he snuggled his face into his father's neck and by the time they reached the door of the suite, his eyelashes lay heavily against his flushed cheeks.

Amanda unlocked the door and led the way immediately to the larger of the two bedrooms. “If you need protective rails for his bed, we've got some in the storage room,” she said.

Chase glanced around the room and carefully laid the child on the double bed farthest from the door. “He'll be fine.”

Amanda tugged a blanket from the bottom drawer of a big chest and draped it gently

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across Nicky. He whimpered a little.

“I’ll just have to get him up for his bath and his dinner,” the nanny said.

Chase frowned. “It seems to me you’ll have an easier time with both if you let him sleep a while first.”

The nanny’s eyes snapped, but she said, “Yes, sir.”

Amanda handed her one of the keys to the suite. “The restaurant is open from six in the morning to midnight. We also have room service – not quite around the clock, I’m afraid, but I think you’ll find it adequate.” She led Chase back to the cozy little sitting room and pointed at a door. “The other bedroom is through there. It’s smaller, but it has a king-sized bed. I thought –”

“Thank you, Miss Bailey.” His voice was almost a drawl. “I appreciate your consideration.”

Amanda felt herself turning red. All she’d meant to say was that Nicky and his nanny would be more comfortable in the double room. She hadn’t expressed it very well, that was true, but it wasn’t necessary for Chase Worthington to turn a simple statement into a suggestive one! She said, stiffly, “The kitchenette is stocked with fruit and cheese, and if there’s anything else you’d like...” She stopped abruptly, wondering what he’d make of that opening.

But Chase said only, “I can’t think of a thing at the moment.”

Amanda gave him the other key and moved toward the door. She’d made sure everything was in place a couple of hours ago when she’d brought the fruit basket up, and she was grateful that there was no need to check the rooms now. She couldn’t quite imagine strolling through Chase Worthington’s bedroom, with him right behind her, to make sure the proper number of towels were hanging in his bath! “I hope you’ll enjoy your stay.”

He shrugged. “Well, that depends on how the work goes, of course. I don’t mean to sound ungracious, but Springhill wasn’t my choice. If this movie wasn’t a sequel to the one we shot here a few years ago, I doubt I’d have ever set foot in the place again.”

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Amanda nodded. “The natives like it, but Springhill isn’t exactly an exhilarating experience for visitors. It will be far more lively than usual with the production company around. I wasn’t here the year you did *Winter of the Heart*, so I’m looking forward to all the excitement I missed then.”

“I hope we don’t disappoint you.” His voice was dry.

“I’m sure you won’t.” He was obviously very tired, she thought, and anxious to be alone. But as she paused with one hand on the doorknob, an impulse beyond her control made her say, “I’m sorry about Mrs. Worthington.”

He nodded abruptly, but he didn’t answer.

Amanda quietly let herself out of the suite. That was dumb, she thought. What had made her say that? As if it would matter to Chase Worthington, two full years after his wife’s death, that a complete stranger felt sorry about his loss!

Stephanie was still in the lobby, sitting on the arm of a wing chair and patiently waiting for the locations manager to show up. The limousine driver was standing beside her. “I thought I was going to go deaf,” he was saying as Amanda crossed the lobby. “The kid carried on like that all the way from the airport. I got the impression he’d done it all the way from Los Angeles.”

“Considering how impossible my own offspring can be,” Stephanie murmured, “I should bite my tongue. But that is a thoroughly disagreeable child.”

“You’re right,” Amanda said.

Stephanie’s eyes went wide. “You agree with me?”

“Oh, yes – I think you *should* bite your tongue.” And I ought to shut up as well, she thought. But she went on anyway. “Nicky Worthington is four years old and he’s in a strange new place and he’s lost his favorite teddy. Maybe you should at least wait till tomorrow to decide he’s impossible.”

“Ouch.” Stephanie made a face and followed her to the registration desk. “You win. I apologize. But I still suspect I’m right, and if you’re thinking of trying to rescue that child, Mandy, give it up.”

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Amanda straightened a stack of papers. “Rescue him from what?” she asked, more to herself than to Stephanie. “And even if I thought he needed rescuing – what business would it be of mine?”

“None,” Stephanie said crisply. “And it’s going to be a very long four weeks if you don’t remember that.”

The desk clerk put the telephone down and inserted a message slip into a mailbox. “I didn’t even know Chase Worthington had a kid.”

“You didn’t? Oh, you’re new in town, aren’t you, Tricia? So of course you don’t know all the background.” Stephanie propped her elbows on the marble slab which formed the front of the registration counter. “Well, let me fill you in.”

“Are you indulging in gossip, Stephanie?” Amanda murmured.

“Of course not. I’m giving necessary information to an important member of your staff so she doesn’t slip and put her foot in her mouth. I’d have thought you’d have made sure of that much yourself.” She turned back to the clerk. “When Chase Worthington and Desiree Hunt came to Springhill a few years ago to film *Winter of the Heart*, they –”

“Desiree Hunt?” Tricia said. “Isn’t she the one who –”

“Don’t get ahead of me,” Stephanie warned. “You’ll mix me up. When they came to make the movie that spring, Desiree Hunt was also Mrs. Chase Worthington. A couple of months after the film was done, their baby boy was born, and two years later –”

“I’ve seen that movie,” Tricia objected. “She doesn’t look pregnant.”

“No, she doesn’t,” Stephanie agreed. “She was delighted with herself for keeping it hidden. She did such a good job of concealment, in fact, that there were rumors at the time that the baby wasn’t Desiree’s at all.”

Tricia looked confused.

Amanda thought it was time to take a hand. “All the tabloids made it sound as if something fishy was going on,” she explained. “You know the sort of thing they pass off as news.”

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Stephanie looked at her in surprise. “You amaze me, Mandy. Don’t tell me you’re a closet fan after all!”

“I admit I read magazine covers while I’m waiting in line at the supermarket. Doesn’t everybody? But that doesn’t make me any kind of fan – it’s just impossible to avoid the man’s name.”

“And here I thought you didn’t even watch his show.”

“Of course I do, sometimes.” Amanda smiled. “When there’s nothing else worth watching.”

Stephanie looked at her thoughtfully for a moment and then turned back to Tricia. “At any rate, the tabloids hinted that the baby was Chase’s love child, and suggested Desiree had adopted him.”

The usual scurrilous trash, in other words, Amanda thought. She reached for the pile of afternoon mail and started to sort it.

“It made a great story,” Stephanie went on, “though personally I think there was nothing to it. Desiree was playing a sixteen-year-old, and of course the producer would have had a fit if he’d discovered halfway through the filming that she was pregnant. At any rate, just about two years ago she was flying to Hawaii to do another movie when the plane crashed... Oh, here’s the locations manager, finally. I’ve got to go.” She met him halfway across the lobby and with a casual wave vanished out the front door.

“I remember that crash,” Tricia said. “There were several movie stars on the plane, weren’t there?”

“Hmm?” Amanda considered the stack of bills and sighed. “Yes, there were.”

“But why is Chase here now?”

“Because this movie’s a sequel to *Winter of the Heart*.”

“I know that. I mean – why would he do it? Won’t it bring back all kinds of bad memories?”

Amanda looked up from the last envelope and thought about what Chase had said

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upstairs, about not wanting to come back. Still, he could have turned down the job. The fact that he hadn't brought up all sorts of intriguing possibilities. "Maybe he hopes it will bring back good ones instead."

"Oh," Tricia sighed. "I hadn't thought of that. Coming back to the place they were so happy, and bringing his little boy... That's awfully romantic."

Yes, it was, Amanda thought. She wondered if that was why Chase had reacted as he had, with that curt nod, when she'd brought up the subject of Desiree. "Go ahead on your dinner break if you like. I can take care of the desk while I pay these bills."

But she didn't get much work done. Jessamyn Arden called to complain that her room was too warm, and Amanda sent the bellman up to check the air conditioner. A couple of crew members who were bunking together reported a lack of towels, and the hotel's handyman came down from the last available guest room to report that the leak in the hot water pipes was beyond his ability to fix. Amanda took one look at his water-soaked uniform and decided the matter was critical. She was on the telephone trying to reach a plumber when Chase came to the registration desk.

She cupped her hand over the phone. "I'll be with you in a minute."

"I'm in no hurry." His voice was lazy. He reached across the desk for the daily newspaper which lay beside the telephone, and his hand brushed her arm.

Amanda felt the contact like a jolt of electricity. It took all the poise she possessed not to jump or pull away. Instead, she handed him the other sections of the paper, trying to look calm. She was very grateful that the plumber came to the telephone just then so she didn't have to say anything more.

Chase leaned against the desk with his back to her, ankles crossed, apparently absorbed in the front page and completely unaware of Amanda. But she couldn't keep from looking at him. His hair seemed so soft that her fingertips itched to touch it, and the strong line of his profile begged to be traced.

She swallowed hard. This was embarrassing. She hadn't felt like this about a man since...

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I've *never* felt this way about a man, she admitted.

It wasn't that there had never been any males in her life, either, whatever Stephanie seemed to think. But none of them, no matter how attractive, had ever caused her to react the way that Chase did. And he'd managed the feat simply by appearing in the same room and breathing the same air.

And why should she be surprised about that? If Stephanie was right, half the women in Springhill had already gone nuts over Chase Worthington; it would be no wonder if he'd conquered the other half by the time he left town. There was something very unusual about the man, as if he produced some magic chemical which attracted females as surely as nectar drew bees.

Keep your distance, Amanda, she warned herself. It was none of her affair how attractive Chase Worthington was, any more than it was her business how he brought up his son. As long as she remembered to follow her own rules, she'd have no trouble.

She noticed how wide and strong his shoulders were under the cotton sweater, and how his hair swirled sleekly away from the crown of his head.

And she knew that despite her determination, Stephanie was right. With this man under the same roof, it was going to be a very long four weeks.