

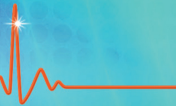


SCARLET WILSON

Christmas with the
Maverick Millionaire



**MEDICAL
ROMANCE™**



Scarlet Wilson
Christmas with the
Maverick Millionaire
Серия «Mills & Boon Medical»

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Christmas with the
Maverick Millionaire

Praise for Scarlet Wilson:

‘HER CHRISTMAS EVE DIAMOND is a fun and interesting read. If you like a sweet romance with just a touch of the holiday season you’ll like this one.’

—*harlequinjunkie.com*

‘WEST WING TO MATERNITY WING! is a tender, poignant and highly affecting romance that is sure to bring a tear to your eye. With her gift for creating wonderful characters, her ability to handle delicately and compassionately sensitive issues and her talent for writing believable, emotional and spellbinding romance, the talented Scarlet Wilson continues to prove to be a force to be reckoned with in the world of contemporary romantic fiction!’

—*cataromance.com*

They stayed like that for more than a minute.

Then his head lifted slightly and his eyelashes brushed against her forehead before he dropped a gentle kiss on her head. His other hand came up and rested at the back of her hair. ‘Thank you for coming with me today, Samantha.’

The words were stuck in her throat. Anything that came out right now would make her sound like a blundering idiot. This was crazy, but it felt special. She didn’t feel like a teenage fan girl any more. She certainly didn’t feel like his nurse. She felt something else entirely.

She stared down at their still intertwined hands. It was so much

easier than looking up—if she did they'd be nose to nose, and she didn't even want to guess as to what might happen next.

She sucked in a breath to steady her nerves and licked her oh-so-dry lips. 'Any time, Mitchell.'

Dear Reader

Christmas is one of my favourite times of year. My last two Christmas books have been based in my nearest city, Glasgow. This year I decided to go to another Christmas setting—Innsbruck in Austria.

My nurse, Samantha Lewis, is desperate—she needs to work as an agency nurse to pay her mother's nursing home fees. She's used to dealing with children, but her assignment this year is a little unusual: help Mitchell Brody come to terms with being newly diagnosed with diabetes.

Problem 1: Mitchell Brody is an adult.

Problem 2: Mitchell Brody is a rock star—think Michael Hutchence from INXS.

Problem 3: Mitchell Brody has no intention of being 'managed' by anyone.

Problem 4: Being in a house with a gorgeous rock star is more than a little distracting ...

Here's to the season of goodwill! I hope you enjoy Sam and Mitchell's story. Please feel free to tell me what you think at www.scarlet-wilson.com. I love to hear from readers!

Scarlet Wilson

SCARLET WILSON wrote her first story aged eight and

has never stopped. Her family have fond memories of *Shirley and the Magic Purse*, with its army of mice, all with names beginning with the letter 'M'. An avid reader, Scarlet started with every Enid Blyton book, moved on to the *Chalet School* series and many years later found Mills & Boon®.

She trained and worked as a nurse and health visitor, and currently works in public health. For her, finding Mills & Boon® Medical Romance™ was a match made in heaven. She is delighted to find herself among the authors she has read for many years.

Scarlet lives on the West Coast of Scotland with her fiancé and their two sons.

**Christmas with the
Maverick Millionaire
Scarlet Wilson**



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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my fellow 'mums', Fiona Bell, Hazel Inch, Wendy Imrie, Deanne McLachlan, Fiona Kennedy, Karen Wallace and, in pastures new, Jeanette Aitken.

Our children are fast on the way to adulthood and it's getting pretty scary. It's great to have friends to share this with. Christmas nights out are never dull!

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CHAPTER ONE

SAMANTHA LEWIS RAN UP the steps of the agency, pulling her bright pink scarf from her head and scattering a trail of raindrops behind her. The forecast had been clear, but she should have known better in damp London in the middle of December.

As she pushed open the door she was hit by a wave of heat and a rush of noise. No one in the agency seemed to sit down. It was constantly busy, dealing with desperate calls for specialised nursing care over the holiday season. She undid the buttons on her thick grey duffel and tried to find somewhere to perch until she could speak to someone.

It shouldn't be long. She already knew where her assignment would be, and who she'd be looking after—she just needed confirmation. Looking after Daniel Banks—a seven-year-old with cystic fibrosis—was really the perfect job for her. Three weeks' work for the equivalent of six months' worth of her current NHS salary. A match made in heaven.

It was hard work, but Daniel was a gorgeous little boy who needed round-the-clock care. His family clearly adored him, and having an extra pair of hands—expert hands—to watch their little boy over the Christmas period benefited them all.

She caught the eye of Leah, the receptionist, and gave her a smile. But Leah, who was normally so friendly, looked away

quickly and picked up the phone again. Strange.

She watched for a few minutes as a couple of familiar faces appeared, picked up their assignments and headed off back out into the throng of Oxford Street. At least she wasn't alone. Most other nurses she knew wanted to spend time with their families at Christmas.

Then there were the few who were just as desperate as she was. This was the best-paying gig of the year. The last two years she'd lucked out with Daniel's fantastic family. Some of her other colleagues hadn't been so fortunate and had spent the festive period being a cross between a housemaid, a nanny and, in one case, a cook, as well as a nurse.

There was a stiff breeze at her side as another door opened. Trish, the owner, stuck her head out. 'Sam, in here, please.'

She started fastening the buttons on her duffel again. Even though they were inside, the wind whipping around Trish's office was worse than the current gale blowing down Oxford Street. Trish Green was going through the 'change' and her staff knew all about her flushes and had warned everyone not to mention a thing.

'What's up, Trish? Aren't you just going to give me my assignment?'

She closed the office door behind her as Trish gestured to the seat in front of her desk. She couldn't help but notice the troubled look on Trish's face. The happy, shining feeling she'd had while climbing the stairs was starting to leave her.

Trish's face was flushed red as she sat down at the other side, a file clasped in her hand. 'I'm sorry, Sam. I did try to call you.' She hesitated for a second, as if she knew the impact of what she was about to say. 'Daniel Banks was hospitalised last night.'

Sam sat straight up. 'Is he okay? What's wrong with him? Is it a chest infection?'

Chest infections were pretty common for kids with CF and Sam was a specialist, she could give IV antibiotics and extensive physio if required. Trish licked her lips and took a deep breath as she shook her head. 'Nothing so simple. It's pneumonia. He's been ventilated.'

Tears sprang to the corners of her eyes. This was serious. Pneumonia could be deadly to a kid like Daniel. 'No! How is he doing? Have you spoken to his parents? Is there anything we can do?'

Trish sighed. 'Yes, I've spoken to them. They've been warned that all plans will need to be cancelled. They're in it for the long haul.'

Sam rested back in the wobbly chair. Daniel was a lovely little boy, so full of joy, so full of fun, with a body that betrayed his spirit. She couldn't imagine how the family must be feeling.

'Sam?' She looked up.

Trish had worry lines along her brow like deep furrows in the ground. 'I'm sorry, but it means your assignment will be cancelled.'

A chill swept over her body, every tiny little hair standing on

end as her breath caught in her chest. It hadn't even entered her brain. Of course, she couldn't work for Daniel's family now. And, of course, she wouldn't be paid.

It was a horrible set of circumstances. Trouble was, her mother's nursing-home fees would still need to be paid at the end of the month. This was why she was here. This was the reason she gave up her holidays every year.

Her chest tightened. She still hadn't released the breath she was holding. She was trying not to let panic consume her. Trying not to say all the words out loud that were currently circulating like a cyclone in her brain. How on earth was she going to pay the fees?

Trish shifted uncomfortably in her chair. 'I had a quick look before you got here, Sam. I don't really have anything similar. I certainly don't have anything that lasts for three weeks and pays the same fee.' She shuffled some papers on her desk. 'I've got a patient requiring terminal care but they're in Ireland, a woman with dementia who needs to be accompanied on a flight to Barbados, and a child with an infectious disease who basically needs to be babysat while the rest of the family go on their Christmas cruise.'

'They're going on holiday without their kid?' She couldn't hide the disgust in her voice. 'What happened to holiday medical insurance and cancelling for another date?'

Trish couldn't look her in the eye. 'The father can't get other holidays, so the rest of the family have to go without the child.'

‘That’s shocking. Who does something like that?’

Trish shoved the paper under the others on her desk. ‘Didn’t think that one would be for you.’

The door opened and Leah hesitated in the doorway. ‘Eh, Trish? That query earlier—it just came in. It’s a definite. Flight’s at seven from Gatwick. We need someone now.’

Trish’s eyes flickered from side to side, between Leah and Samantha. She bit her lip and took the file from Leah’s hand, opening it and sitting it on her desk. For a few moments she scanned the page in front of her.

Sam couldn’t stand the silence—it let her hear the thoughts currently circulating in her head. ‘Anything I can do?’ Was that her voice, sounding so desperate? Had she really just said that out loud?

She needed a job. She needed something that paid her for the next three weeks, otherwise she’d need to go back and plead for extra bank shifts. Would three weeks’ overtime pay in the NHS equal what she would get at the agency? Not even close.

Trish fixed her steely gaze on her. She cleared her throat. ‘How are you with diabetes, Samantha?’

Sam straightened in the chair. It wasn’t easy as every time she moved, the wobbly legs threatened to throw her to the floor. She couldn’t help but search her brain desperately. ‘I’m fine. I mean, I’m good. No, I’m better than good.’

Yip. Definitely sounding desperate.

Trish’s eyebrows had risen, a look of pure disbelief on her

face. If this was the difference between getting another job or not, it was time to put on the performance of a lifetime.

Sam took a deep breath. ‘Obviously, I know all the basics as a nurse. But my sister is diabetic, diagnosed as a child. I know about hypos, high blood sugars, adjusting insulin doses and all the risks and complications.’ It was true. She did know more than the average nurse. Living with someone with diabetes as a child was a whole different ballgame from looking after a patient for a few days in a hospital.

Trish was still studying her carefully. ‘How do you feel about working with someone who’s just been diagnosed? You’d have to do the entire education package and training with them.’

Sam licked her lips and nodded slowly. The fundamentals of diabetes hadn’t changed over the years. She’d watched her sister change monitoring systems and insulin regimes many times. The most important factor was always going to be steady blood-sugar levels. ‘I think I can manage that without any problems. What age is the patient?’

Trish was still shuffling papers on her desk. ‘Do you have a current passport? And how do you feel about signing a non-disclosure agreement?’

‘A what?’ Trish still hadn’t answered the previous question. Was the patient a baby, or maybe a toddler? Some kids could be diagnosed when they were really young.

Trish was looking a little shifty. She waved a piece of paper from the file. ‘A non-disclosure agreement. You’d need to sign it.’

Now she was getting confused. What kind of job was this? ‘Why would I need to sign a non-disclosure? That seems a little odd. All nurses are bound by confidentiality anyway.’

‘This is different. It’s not a kid. It’s an adult. And he’s a well-known adult.’

Something had just clicked into place in her brain. ‘Passport? Is the job not in the UK?’

Trish pushed the file across the desk towards Sam. ‘The job is in Innsbruck, a ski resort in the Alps. You’d need to fly there tonight. And this is all the detail I have. I can’t tell you any more. You sign the non-disclosure and leave tonight. You don’t find out who you’re working for until you get there.’

Alarm bells started ringing in her head. ‘What do you mean?’ She scanned the piece of paper in front of her. It looked as if it had come from some sort of agent. And it was only the basics. An adult male, diagnosed with diabetes less than forty-eight hours ago. Assistance required in helping him learn to manage and deal with his condition over the next three weeks.

Her gaze reached the bottom of the page. The fee. For three weeks’ work. Her eyes were nearly out on sticks. How much??

‘Is this safe?’ Her voice squeaked.

She was trying to think rational thoughts, even though her brain was moving to rapid calculations of exactly how many months’ worth of nursing-home fees that sum would cover.

It was all her own fault. When her mother had had the stroke over two years ago she’d spent the first few months trying to care

for her mum herself. When it had become clear that she couldn't care for her mum and work at the same time, she'd changed jobs, swapping from a sister in an ITU, working shifts, to a school nurse with more regular and shorter hours. But the pay cut hadn't helped, particularly when she'd had to pay two mortgages and supplementary day care for her mother. And when the day-care assistants had failed to show for the seventh time and her mum had had an accident at home, she'd finally faced up to the fact that her mother needed to be in a home.

Picking a nursing home that was up to her standards hadn't been easy—and when she'd finally found one, the fees were astronomical. But her mother was happy, and well cared for, hence the reason she needed to work for the agency to supplement her salary.

Trish stood up. 'Of course it's safe, Samantha. I wouldn't send you anywhere you need to worry about. Now, can you be on a flight out of Gatwick at seven tonight?' She held out the non-disclosure agreement again, along with a pen.

Sam hesitated for only a second. How bad could this be? It was probably some aging actor who needed some basic guidance and hand-holding for a few weeks. She'd heard of Innsbruck before—hadn't the Winter Olympics been held there? The money was just too good to turn down. She grabbed the pen and scribbled her signature before she started asking any more questions that might make her change her mind.

She stood up. 'Innsbruck—that's Austria, isn't it?' She

wrapped her scarf back around her head, trying to ignore the fact that she and skiing didn't mix. She shot Trish a beaming smile and held out her hand to shake it. 'A ski resort at Christmas? What more could a girl want? This'll be a piece of cake.'

Mitchell Brody felt terrible. He wasn't even going to look in the mirror because then he'd know that he looked terrible too.

The timing couldn't be worse. This was the last thing he needed right now. His tour kicked off in three weeks. He had to be fit and well for that. He needed to be able to perform. He had to get this under control.

The consultant was still shaking his head and frowning. 'You can't sign a discharge against medical advice. I won't allow it.'

Mitchell planted his hands on his hips. 'You can't stop me. Find me someone who can get me through this.'

'I've already put in a call to an agency in London. But it's a difficult time of year, staff are at a premium, and it will be hard to find someone with the skills you'll require.'

He sighed, frustration was building in his chest. 'Just find me someone, anyone, who can do this for me. I can pay. Money isn't a problem.'

The consultant narrowed his gaze. 'You don't understand. This isn't about someone "doing this" for you. You have to do it for yourself. You have to learn to take care of yourself with this condition. This is twenty-four hours a day, for the rest of your life. And it isn't an issue of cost. At this time of year staff come at a premium price. You have no choice but to pay it.'

Mitchell threw up his hands. ‘I get it. I just don’t have time for it. Not now. I’ll learn about it later. I’ll take the time then—in six months when this tour is over.’

‘No.’ The consultant folded his arms across his chest. ‘If you don’t do as I ask for the next three weeks, I’ll notify your tour insurers. You won’t be covered.’

For the second time in two days Mitchell was shocked. He wasn’t used to people saying no to him. He was used to snapping his fingers and everyone doing exactly as he said. That was the joy of being a world-famous rock star. Once you earned beyond a certain point, people just didn’t say no any more.

He could almost feel the blood draining from his body—as if he didn’t feel sick enough already. ‘You wouldn’t do that.’ His voice cracked as he spoke. This nightmare was just getting worse and worse. First the weeks of feeling like death warmed over. Then the ill-timed diagnosis of diabetes. Now a threat to his tour.

‘I would, you know.’ The consultant’s chin was set with a determined edge. Mitchell recognised the look because he so frequently wore it himself. ‘A sick rock star is no insurer’s dream. You need to be healthy and in control to take part in the tour. To be frank, I don’t think three weeks of specialist care is going to cut it. Even then, you’ll need additional support on your tour. If you can’t even adhere to the first set of guidelines I give you, then ...’ He let his voice tail off.

Mitchell’s stomach was churning. It wasn’t as if he wasn’t rich already. But this tour had been planned for two years.

The proceeds were going towards the funding of the children's hospital in this area. He'd supported it for years—but always on the condition that no one knew. The last thing he needed was the press invading the one part of his life that was still private. His funding had kept the children's hospital afloat for the last ten years. But things had changed. The building couldn't be repaired any more, the whole place needed to be rebuilt. And why rebuild anything half-heartedly? The plans had been drawn up and approved for a brand-new state-of-the-art facility. All they needed was the guaranteed cash. That's why he couldn't let them down—no matter how sick he was.

'Fine. I'll do it. Just find me someone.' He walked away in frustration and started stuffing his clothes into a holdall.

The consultant gave him a nod and disappeared down the corridor, coming back five minutes later. 'You're in luck. The agency called, they've found you a nurse. Her qualifications are a little unusual but she's got the experience we need.'

'What does that mean?'

'It means she'll be able to help you manage your condition. I'll send her some written instructions by email.' He glanced at his watch. 'She'll be on a flight out of Gatwick at seven tonight. She'll be here around eleven p.m.' He pointed to the packed bag. 'I'm not happy about discharging you until her plane lands.'

Mitchell shook his head and picked up the case with his injector pen. 'You've taught me how to do the injections. I take ten units tonight before I eat.' Then he pointed to another pen on

the bedside table. ‘And twenty-six units of that one before I go to bed. I get it. I do. Now, let me go. The nurse will be here in a few hours and I’ll be fine until then.’

He could see the hesitation on the guy’s face. It had only been two days and he was sick of the sight of this place already. Hospitals weren’t much fun, even if you had the money to pay for a private room.

He tried his trademark smile. ‘Come on. How much trouble can I get into in a few hours?’

The plane journey had been a nightmare. The man next to her had snored and drooled on her shoulder from the second the plane had taken off until it had landed in Innsbruck. She’d been doing her best to concentrate on the info she’d downloaded onto her tablet about the latest types of insulin and pumps. She wasn’t sure what kind of regime her patient would be on but she wanted to have some background knowledge on anything she might face.

Her phone pinged as soon as she hit the tarmac. Great. An email from the doctor with detailed instructions. She struggled to grab her case from the revolving carousel and headed to the exit. She would have time to read the email on the journey to her hotel.

She scanned the arrivals lounge. Her heart gave a little jump when she saw a card with her name: ‘Samantha Lewis’. It was almost like being a pop star.

She trundled her case over to the guy in the thick parka. It was late at night and his hat was coated with thick snowflakes. There

was something so nice about being in a place covered with snow at Christmastime. Even if it was bitterly cold.

‘Samantha Lewis?’ He grabbed the handle of her case as she nodded. ‘Is this it? Just one case?’

She grinned. ‘Why? How many should I have brought?’

His face broke into a wide smile as he shook his head. ‘Last time I picked someone up here she had ten suitcases, including one for her dog.’

‘You can’t be serious.’

He nodded. ‘No kidding.’ He had another look around. ‘No skis?’

She shook her head. ‘I’m here to work, not to ski.’

The guy’s brow wrinkled. ‘Hmm. Sorry.’ He held out his hand. ‘I’m Dave, Mitchell’s sidekick. You name it, I do it.’ He started to walk towards the exit. ‘I’ve got a jacket and hat for you in the car.’ His eyes skimmed up and down her body. ‘It might be a little big but it’s definitely your colour. I know you were called at short notice and we were worried you wouldn’t have any gear with you.’

She tilted her head to the side. ‘Who is Mitchell? I’ve not been told who I’m working for yet. And gear for what?’

An icy blast hit them as soon as they walked through the airport doors. Her grey duffel coat was no match for the winter Alpine temperatures. How nice. They’d bought her a coat and hat. She wasn’t quite sure whether to be pleased or insulted.

He raised the boot on a huge black four-by-four and pushed

her case inside. It was the biggest one she owned but it looked tiny in there. She blinked as she noticed the winter tyres and snow chains. Just how deep was the snow around here? He opened the door for her and she climbed inside. On the seat behind her was a bright blue ski jacket, slightly longer in style so it would cover her bum, along-side a matching pair of salopettes, hat, gloves and flat fur-lined black boots.

Her fingers brushed the skin of the jacket. It felt expensive. Thickly padded but light to touch.

Dave climbed into the driver's seat and nodded at the gear. 'Told you it was your colour. It matches your eyes.'

She blushed. Her eyes were the one thing that most people commented on. She wasn't sure whether being blonde-haired and blue-eyed was a blessing or a curse.

Dave started the car and pulled out of the parking lot, heading towards the main road. It felt like being in another world. They were surrounded by snow-covered Alps. The lights were glowing in the town in front of them. It looked warm and inviting against the black fir trees and high mountains.

'So, you haven't told me. Who do you work for?'

Dave's eyes flitted sideways for a second to look at her then focused back on the road ahead. 'No one's told you?' There was a knowing smile on his face.

She shrugged. 'Not yet. But I thought I was going to have to sign the non-disclosure in blood.'

'You're lucky you didn't.' She was joking, but he made it sound

as if he heard that every other day.

‘What’s the big secret?’ Curiosity was beginning to kill her. She hadn’t given it much thought on the plane flight over, she’d been too busy focusing on the diabetes aspects and developing plans for a newly diagnosed adult patient. Plus, she still had that email to read. She glanced at her phone. Her 3G signal had left her. She had no idea what phone signals would be like in the Alps. She would have to ask for wifi access when they reached the hotel.

‘Mitchell Brody. He’s the big secret. He’s just been diagnosed and he starts a world tour in three weeks. The timing couldn’t be worse.’

Her mouth fell open and her heart did a little stop-start. So not what she was expecting to hear. ‘Mitchell Brody? *The Mitchell Brody?*’ Now she understood the need for a non-disclosure agreement. Mitchell Brody, rock star, was pure media fodder. Every time the man blinked it practically made the news. Roguishly handsome, fit body and gorgeous smile. But he was the original bad boy. The papers were full of stories about him waking other guests in hotels by rehearsing at four in the morning. Huge headlines about bust-ups between band members and managers. Wrecked rooms and punch-ups with other stars were everyday news. Whoever was the model of the moment, was usually the woman photographed on his arm. He was worth millions, no, *billions*.

Dave shrugged. ‘Is there any other?’

She gulped. The neat plan she'd imagined in her head instantly scrambled. Mitchell Brody wasn't the kind of guy who'd take kindly to planning all his meals and insulin doses. He lived by the seat of his pants. The guy had never played by the rules in his life—chances were, he wasn't about to start now.

She sagged back against her seat as she realised just what she was taking on. 'Wow. I didn't expect it to be him.'

Dave seemed amused. 'Who did you think it would be?'

'Honestly? I had no idea. Maybe some kind of TV soap actor or rich businessman. Mitchell Brody, well, he's just huge.' She looked out of the window at the passing streetlights. The shops were full of Christmas decorations and the buildings lined above were vintage façades of eighteenth-century houses in multicoloured pastel shades of pink, blue, yellow and peach. It was like summer, in the middle of winter. Gorgeous.

The car turned up a mountain. 'What hotel are we staying in? Do you think I'll be able to speak to the chef?'

Dave frowned. 'What makes you think we're staying in a hotel?'

She watched as they started up the mountain range, passing Tirol-styled hotel after hotel. 'Isn't that where everyone stays?'

'Maybe everyone who isn't Mitchell Brody. He's owned a house up here for the last five years.'

'He has?' The snow was glistening around them. The hotels were gorgeous—so picturesque. All set perfectly on the mountainside for easy access to the Innsbruck snow slopes. She

shifted a little uncomfortably in her seat. Snow slopes. The signs were everywhere. Why else would anyone buy a house up here? She wrinkled her nose, she couldn't remember any of the press stories being about Mitchell's antics on the snow slopes. Nope, those stories were all about Caribbean retreats and private yachts. She cleared her throat. 'Does Mitchell like to ski, then?'

Dave laughed. 'Does Mitchell like to ski? Do bees flock around honey? Does some seventeen-year-old try and sweet-talk her way past me at every venue we go to?' He shook his head and gestured towards the back seat. 'Why do you think I brought you the ski gear?'

'To stop me from getting cold?' Her voice squeaked as she spoke, as the true horror of the situation started to unload. Her one and only skiing trip as a teenager had resulted in her spending most of her time flat on her back—or face down in the snow. Water had seeped through her jeans and down the sleeves and neck of her jacket. She'd finally hidden back down at the ski centre in front of a roaring fire with a hot chocolate in front of her. When the ski instructor had eventually come looking for her to persuade her back onto the slopes, her answer had been a resounding no.

Even the thought of skiing sent a shiver down her spine, which Dave misinterpreted. 'Better put your jacket on, we'll be there in a minute and it's freezing out there.'

She nodded and wiggled her arms out of her grey duffel and pulled the blue jacket over from the back seat. It was pure and

utter luxury, evident from the second she pushed her arms inside. Even though they were still inside the car, the heat enfolded her instantly. She tucked her blonde curls under the matching woolly hat and pulled up the zip. 'It's lovely, Dave. Thanks very much.'

She eyed the salopettes still lying across the back seat. It was a stand-off. No way was she putting those on.

Dave turned the wheel down a long private road. The warm glow at the end gradually came into focus. A beautiful, traditionally styled Tirol chalet. Okay, maybe it was four times the size of all the others she'd seen. But it was gorgeous, right down to the colourful window boxes, upper balcony and black and red paintwork on the outside.

She opened the car door and almost didn't notice the blast of icy air all around her. She was too busy staring at the mountain house. She climbed out and automatically stuck her hands in her pockets. The wind started whistling around her jeans. Maybe salopettes weren't such a bad idea after all.

'This place is huge,' she murmured. 'How many people stay here?'

Dave was pulling her case from the trunk as if it was as light as a feather. 'Just you and Mitchell.'

She sucked in a deep breath. The air was so cold it almost smarted against her throat. So not what she'd expected to hear. 'You don't stay here too?'

Dave laughed. 'Me? No.'

'And he doesn't have any staff?' She was trying not to think the

thoughts that were currently circulating in her brain. Alone. In a mountain retreat. With a gorgeous rock star. She could almost hear her friend Carly's voice in her ear, along with the matching action punch in the air. 'Kerching!'

This was really happening.

Wow. Her feet were stuck to the ground. Snow seeped instantly through her flat-heeled leather boots, which had distinctly slippery soles. She should really move, but the whole place looked like a complete ice rink. She wobbled as she turned around and grabbed the fur-lined boots from the car. They had thick treads—obviously designed for places like this. It only took a minute to swap them over.

'Don't believe everything you read in the papers.' Dave strode over towards the entranceway of the house. 'Mitch is really private. He doesn't like people hanging around him. There's no cook. No PA.' He gave a little laugh as if he'd just realised what she'd be up against. 'Yeah, good luck with all this, Samantha.'

She blinked. She was going to be staying in a house *alone* with Mitchell Brody. The hottest guy on the planet. She might even have had a tiny crush on him at some point.

She might have lingered over some picture of him on the internet, showing off a naked torso with a fabulous set of abs, slim-fitting leather trousers and his shaggy, slightly too-long dark hair. The guy made grunge sexy.

She gulped. Her throat had never felt so dry. When was the last time she'd had something to drink? It must have been on the

plane a few hours ago. Dave pushed open the door to the house and she stepped inside.

Wow. It was like stepping inside a shoot for a house magazine. The biggest sitting room she'd ever been in, white walls, light wooden floors, with a huge television practically taking up one wall. Sprawling, comfortable sofas and a large wooden dining-room table surrounded by twelve chairs. It screamed space. It yelled money. This place must have cost a fortune.

There was a tinkle of glass breaking off to her right, followed by some colourful language. Dave's brow wrinkled. 'Mitch?'

The headlines started to shoot through her brain. *Please don't let her first meeting be with a drunken rock star.*

She followed Dave as he strode through to the equally large kitchen. It should have been show home material too, but it was in complete disarray. Every door was hanging open, with food scattered everywhere. The door of the biggest refrigerator she'd ever seen was also open and Mitchell Brody was rummaging around inside—a glass of orange juice smashed around his feet. He didn't even seem to have noticed.

She glanced at Dave, whose face showed utter confusion at the scene around him. Every part of her body started to react. She moved quickly. 'Is this normal, Dave?'

'No, not at all.' He hadn't budged. His feet seemed welded to the floor.

Her instincts kicked into gear. She had no idea what to expect. She knew next to nothing about Mitchell Brody—only what

she'd read in the press. But right now he wasn't Mitchell Brody, rock star. He was Mitchell Brody, patient. One who was newly diagnosed with diabetes. 'Is anyone else here?'

Dave shook his head. There was no one she could ask for some background information. Dave had been with her for the last hour, so Mitchell must have been alone. She hadn't even had a chance to read the email from the consultant yet. She strongly suspected his actions were to do with his diabetes but, then again, she might just be about to witness a legendary Mitchell Brody tantrum. No matter what, it was time to act.

She moved over next to him, kicking the glass away from around his feet and touching his back. 'Mitchell, can I help you with something?'

He spun around and she drew in a deep breath in shock. His shirt was hanging open and the top button of his jeans was undone. His face was gaunt, the frame under his shirt thin and the six-pack that adorned teenage walls had vanished, all clinical signs of ketoacidosis. Just how long had it taken them to diagnose him?

'Who are you?' he growled, before ignoring her completely and turning back to the refrigerator and scattering some more food around. An apple flew past her ear, closely followed by a banana, and then a jar of jam, which shattered on the grey tile floor.

The look in his eyes told her everything she needed to know. Mitchell Brody was having a hypoglycaemic attack, his blood

sugar so low he would probably pass out in the next few minutes if she didn't get some food into him.

'Move,' he hissed, as he nudged her with his hip. She looked around. She had no idea where anything was in this place. She recognised the belligerent edge to his voice. Her sister had had it frequently as she'd hypoed as a child. That fine line where she hadn't been able to focus or steady her thoughts and had moved into auto-protect mode. It was almost as if the adrenaline fight-or-flight reaction had kicked in and it had been survival of the fittest.

'What does he like to eat?' she asked Dave, as she started searching through the cupboards for something suitable. She needed something to give him a quick blast of sugar in his system.

Dave hesitated. 'Strawberries and apples—he has a smoothie every morning. Or he did, until this happened.'

She reached past Mitchell, who was still fumbling in the refrigerator. 'Get him over to the sofa.' Her words were brisk. She had to act quickly. She grabbed a punnet of strawberries from the fridge and some apples. The blender was sitting on the countertop and she threw the whole lot in and held down the lid while pressing the button. She pulled a carton of yoghurt from the fridge too. It was peach, totally random, but it would have to do. She dumped it in the blender as well and kept pressing. Dave appeared at her side, putting his hands on Mitchell's shoulders and guiding him over to sit down. 'What's going on?'

'His blood sugar is too low. If I can get something into him

quickly, he should be fine,' she said over the noise of the blender.

She grabbed a glass from one of the open cupboards and dumped the contents of the blender into it. There were some straws scattered across the countertop and she pushed a couple into the drink. Seconds later she sat down on the sofa next to him.

'Hi, Mitchell, I'm Samantha, your nurse. Can you take a little drink of this for me, please?'

She held the straw up towards his lips and he immediately batted it away with his hands. 'No, leave me alone.' Her stomach was doing flip-flops. Every person was different, but from past experience her sister could also be slightly aggressive while hypoing. Not an ideal scenario. Particularly with a man who had more muscle than she did. Thank goodness Dave was here. Maybe he would respond better to a familiar face?

She held tightly on to the glass and persisted, 'It's your favourite. Just take a sip.'

His eyes had that slightly wild look in them, definitely unfocused as if the world around him wasn't making sense. He hesitated for a second, before finally taking a reluctant sip. After a few moments he sucked a little harder, as if he'd recognised the taste of what he was drinking. He grabbed the glass from her hand and held it close to his chest while he sucked.

It was a slow process, but one that Samantha was familiar with. She was patient, she could wait. Five minutes later the glass was nearly drained. Her hands were itching to find a blood-glucose monitor and check his levels—there had to be one around here

somewhere. But she didn't want to leave his side.

Dave was looking pretty uncomfortable. He clearly wasn't used to anything like this and it was obvious she was going to have to give him a few lessons in dealing with diabetes too.

'What do we do now?' he asked.

'Now?' She sat back against the sofa. It was every bit as comfortable as it looked. 'Now, Dave, we wait.'

CHAPTER TWO

THERE WAS AN angel floating around in his vision. An angel with blonde curls, bright blue eyes and a matching jacket. She also had a weird matching hat on her head that made the curls look as if they were suspended in mid-air. Strange. His dreams didn't normally look like this.

The angel kept patting his hand and talking to him quietly. Those weren't the normal actions of a woman this hot in his dreams either. Maybe he was turning over a new leaf?

He smiled to himself. Maybe he could take his dream in another more Mitch-like direction?

There was another voice in the background. It was annoying him. Eating into the little space in his head that was cloudy and comfortable. But something else wasn't comfortable. His back ached. And for some odd reason he felt cold.

His hands touched his bare chest. Why was he half-dressed?

He sat up, trying to unload the fuzzy feeling around him. Ahh. He recognised that voice. The background noise was Dave. He was talking the way he did when he was nervous, too fast, his words all joined up and practically rolling into one.

The blue angel was still misting around. She was talking to him again. 'Hi, there, Mitchell. Are you back with us?' She didn't wait for a reply—just as well really, as his mouth felt a bit thick—as if someone had just punched him and given him a split

lip. He stuck his tongue out and licked. No, no blood. But there was definitely something else, something familiar. Strawberries. When had he eaten those?

His brain was starting to function again. Tiny little jigsaw pieces slotting into place to give a bigger picture.

But one thing was still standing out a mile. The unfamiliar.

She touched him again. Only on his arm, but it was enough to make his senses spark. Contrary to public belief, Mitchell Brody didn't like people touching him, pawing at him. It made him feel as if he were for sale. Like a cashmere scarf or leather shoe being stroked in a women's department store. Yuck.

He shrugged her off and sat up. 'Who are you?' He shook his head, it felt like jelly was in his brain.

She smiled. A beaming white, perfect-teeth kind of smile. Who was her dentist?

She held her hand out towards him. 'You've been expecting me. I'm Samantha Lewis, your nurse. The agency sent me to help you manage your diabetes.' The smile disappeared from her face. 'And not a moment too soon. Why did they discharge you from hospital before I got here?'

A frown creased her forehead, ruining the smooth skin and showing little creases around her eyes. He'd liked her better before.

He moved in the chair, turning around to see the mumbling Dave.

'Dave, what's going on here?' His voice sounded a little funny.

A little slow. His eyes took in the chaos in the kitchen, which looked as if food had exploded all around it. He stood up and pointed. ‘And what on earth happened in my kitchen?’

The last thing he could remember was looking at the clock and wondering when his nurse would arrive. He hadn’t even decided what room to put her in.

His shirt was flapping around and he did up a few of the buttons haphazardly. Not that he was embarrassed by his body. The amount of calendars he sold every year put paid to that idea. But it was hardly an ideal meeting with his new nurse. When had she got here?

New nurse. Now his brain was kicking back into gear he was more than a little surprised. He had kind of expected some older matron-type who’d bark orders at him for the next three weeks.

He certainly hadn’t expected some cute, slim, blonde-haired, blue-eyed chocolate-box-type cheerleader. In lots of ways he should be pleased.

But he wasn’t. Not really. Something wasn’t right. Was this what the doctor had warned him about? How sometimes with diabetes you could be unwell?

After tonight’s display he needed someone to get his condition under control so he could start on his tour. People were counting on him. Kids were counting on him—not to mention their families. The last thing he needed was some bright-eyed, bushy-tailed young girl hanging around him, distracting him.

She tapped him on the arm. The expression on her face had

changed. She wasn't all smiles now. She was deadly serious. 'Mitchell, can you tell me where your blood-glucose meter is? You need to check your levels then we'll have a chat about what just happened.'

She spoke to him as if he was a child. Her tone and stance had changed completely.

So Mitchell did what he always did. He completely ignored her and walked over to the kitchen, crunching on some broken glass on the tiled floor. 'Who broke a glass?' he yelled, spinning around to accuse Dave and the strange new nurse.

He held his hands out. 'What happened, Dave? Who did it? Who's been in my kitchen?' He didn't like disorder. That's why it was so much easier staying by himself—there was no one else around to make a mess.

Dave was pushing things back into cupboards. He turned around and rested his hands behind him on the countertop, hesitating before he spoke.

'Well, actually, I wasn't here. I went to pick up Samantha at the airport. And when we got back ... His voice tailed off as if he didn't want to finish.

Mitchell could feel his exasperation reach breaking point. He had no idea what was going on in his own home. 'When you got back, what?' He glanced at the clock and blinked, then looked again. The last two hours of his life seemed to have vanished without him knowing where they'd gone.

Dave laid a hand on his shoulder. 'You were raking about the

cupboards and the fridge. We weren't quite sure what you were doing.'

It was as if the final piece of the jigsaw puzzle fell into place. Except it didn't slot in quietly, it slammed in, as if banged by a hammer. Realisation dawned on his face and he looked around again. 'I did this?'

Samantha appeared at his side. 'Mitchell, it's time you and I had a talk.'

This time he erupted. 'I don't want to talk! I want to know what the hell happened here!'

But his nurse didn't jump at his outburst. She didn't seem at all surprised. She just folded her arms across her chest as if she were some kind of immovable force. 'From this point onwards you do exactly what I tell you. If I tell you we're going to talk then ...' she paused '... we're *going to talk*.' She pointed over towards the sofa. 'So get your butt over there, Mr Brody, and sit down!'

The heat in the kitchen was stifling. Samantha yanked off her goose-down jacket and flung it over a chair. If she kept this on much longer she would be roasted like a chicken. Her face must be scarlet by now.

This was definitely a baptism of fire. She looked at the clock—it was almost midnight and Dave had already told her he didn't stay in the house. 'Dave, why don't you go on home to bed? I'll be fine. I'll need to talk to you in the morning though, it's important you understand how to deal with things.'

Dave gave a grateful nod and disappeared out of the door as

if he were being chased by a herd of zombies. All of this was definitely new to him.

Mitchell hadn't moved—probably from the shock of someone talking to him like that. What was she thinking? But she was his nurse. It was her job to take charge. 'Mitchell, your blood-glucose meter, where is it?' He was in shock, she could tell. It looked like he'd just experienced his first full-blown hypoglycaemic attack and was totally confused.

After a few seconds he turned to face her.

Wow. He was just inches from her, and Samantha had just experienced the full Brody effect—those dark brown eyes and perfect teeth. It didn't matter that his face was gaunter than normal and his body leaner. Teenagers all over the world would give their eye-teeth to be in this position. She was trying not to focus on the bare skin on his chest and scattered dark hair beneath the loosely fastened shirt. Trying not to lower her gaze to get another look at his abs.

She was beginning to feel a little hot and bothered again. He hadn't moved. His brown eyes were fixed on hers. Sucking her in and making her forget what she was supposed to be doing. What on earth was he thinking?

Then he blinked.

He pointed over to a blue plastic box nestled behind the sofa. 'It's there.'

The moment was completely lost and Sam mentally kicked herself.

It snapped her back into focus. She was here to do a job. Here to get this man well again. She couldn't stand around, mooning like some teenager. It was embarrassing.

She walked over, picked up the box and gestured to him to sit down again, but he shook his head and moved over towards the huge dining table instead.

As the minutes progressed he was getting more and more back to normal—whatever Mitchell Brody's normal might be. The dining table was more formal than lounging on the sofa. She was kind of annoyed she hadn't thought of it herself. She had to keep this on a professional level.

He slumped down into one of the chairs, his handsome face skewed by a puzzled frown. It wasn't familiar. She'd never seen a picture of him looking so dejected. It made things crystal clear for her. She had to take rock star Mitchell Brody, and what she knew of him, out of this equation.

This was a twenty-nine-year-old guy who'd just been diagnosed with a life-changing disease—and by the look of his body the diagnosis had taken a long time.

She reached out and touched his hand before she spoke. He flinched a little at her touch. 'Mitchell, I'm going to help you with this. Everything will be fine. It's still early days. We've got three weeks to try and help you get a handle on your condition.'

He groaned and shook his head. 'I don't have time for this right now. I've got a tour starting soon. I need to focus all my energy and attention on that.'

She squeezed his hand but he pulled it away again. He clearly didn't like being touched—she'd have to remember that. It was plain he had a lot on his mind, but she had to bring him back to the immediate future. 'No, Mitchell. You have to focus on *this*. If you don't, there won't be any tour, because you won't be able to perform.'

'I won't?' It was almost as if his stronghold tower was wobbling all around him and about to come crashing down. There was real confusion on his face and it was the first time she'd seen him look a bit vulnerable. Maybe Dave was right, maybe she shouldn't believe what was in the press.

She flipped open the box and pulled out the blood-glucose meter. Although there were numerous kinds on the market, they were all very similar. She handed it to him. 'Let's start at the very beginning.' She gave a little smile. 'A very good place to start. I take it someone at the hospital showed you how to do this?'

He smiled, and opened his meter. 'Yeah, Dragon Lady was very bossy.' His head tilted to the side. 'Shouldn't you be doing this for me? Isn't that why you're here?'

The words were said more curiously than accusingly but it made her realise it was time to be very clear about what her role was.

'This is your condition, Mitchell, not mine. You need to learn how to manage it.' She held out her hands towards the still messy kitchen. 'We can't let things like this happen all the time. You need to learn how to control things. No one else can do it for you.'

She bit her lip. She was praying he wasn't about to have a monster-style, rock-star temper tantrum on her and start ordering her around. It would be so easy to tell him what to eat, check his blood-sugar levels and tell him what insulin to take, but it wasn't safe. He had to learn how to do all that by himself.

Children as young as five were taught how to manage their diabetes. And for all Mitchell was a millionaire rock star, he was still an adult with a condition that needed to be controlled.

She gave a little smile. She had the strangest feeling that Mitchell Brody wouldn't take kindly to being told what to do anyway. She was probably going to have to tiptoe around him.

He zipped open the fabric case and pulled out the meter, slotting a testing strip into place. The meter turned on automatically and she watched as he hesitated just for a second before placing the automatic finger-pricking device over the pad of one of his fingers. Seconds later he put a tiny drop of blood on the testing strip and the machine started its ten-second countdown.

Samantha said nothing. She just watched. He'd obviously paid attention when Dragon Lady had shown him how to use this and he seemed to manage it with no problems. One less thing to worry about.

The machine beeped and she looked at the reading. Four point two. She pointed at the screen. 'Do you know what a normal blood-sugar reading is?'

He nodded and sighed. 'It's supposed to be between four and

seven, but mine was much higher than that in hospital.’ She wanted to smile. He could obviously remember what he’d been told. Things were beginning to look up.

‘It would have been. You’d just been diagnosed with diabetes. It takes a bit of time to regulate things.’

He leaned back in the chair. She could see the release of pent-up muscles, the fatigue that was common after a hypoglycaemic attack, practically hitting him like a wrecking ball. ‘So what now, genius?’ One eyebrow was raised.

It was too late to do anything but the basics right now and she had to prioritise because it was clear he needed to rest. She stood up and walked over to the kitchen, rummaging around to find some bread and pop it in the toaster that had probably cost more than her car.

‘Right now we’re going to give you something else to eat. Although your blood sugar is in the normal range, you’ve probably been running a bit higher than normal for the last few days. It makes you more prone to hypo attacks. The smoothie will have given you a burst of sugar—the last thing we want is for that to fall rapidly in the middle of the night. I’m making you something a bit more substantial to eat.’ She glanced in the fridge. ‘Cheese or ham on your toast?’

Both eyebrows went up this time. ‘You’re making me something to eat?’

She wagged her finger at him as the toast popped. ‘This is a one-off. My priority is to get you safely through the night. I take

it you've still to take your long-acting insulin?"

He scrunched up his face. 'Yeah.'

'Then you can do it after this. We'll talk in the morning about how best to handle things going forward.' She leaned back into the fridge and came back out with cheese in one hand and ham in the other. 'You didn't say which you prefer.'

'Ham, with a little mustard on the side.' She nodded and quickly made up the sandwich. 'We need to talk about food choices tomorrow,' she said, as she sat the plate down in front of him.

He groaned. 'Colour me happy.'

A smile broke across her face. 'Wow. I haven't heard that in years. My grandpa used to say that all the time.'

For a second something changed. The barrier that had been between them from the second she'd got there seemed to disappear. This time his smile reached right up into his weary eyes.

He wasn't the sexy guy whose calendar had adorned the staffroom wall at work. He wasn't the heartthrob who'd played sold-out venues around the world.

He was just Mitchell Brody, the guy she was alone with in a million-pound chalet in the snowy Alps. Right now she was living every girl's dream. Honestly? What nurse did she know who wouldn't kill for this job?

Which was why it made her feel so uncomfortable.

Up close and personal he had the kind of warm brown eyes

that could just pull you in and keep you there. The kind that could make you forget everything else around you. And that was pretty much what was happening now.

The meter gave a little beep—reminding them to switch it off—and it jerked her from her daydreams. ‘Cup of tea?’

She started boiling the kettle and searched through the cupboards for cups. He was still watching her with those eyes and it was unnerving. His gaze seemed to linger on her behind as she bent down to look in a few cupboards before he finally said, ‘Top right for tea, bottom left for cups,’ and took another bite of his sandwich. ‘To be honest, though, I’d prefer a beer.’

Her brain switched straight into professional mode. ‘It’s too soon for a beer.’ The words came out automatically before she could stop them and she cringed. He was a rock star—of course he’d want a beer. She had to try and push her bossy instincts aside and be realistic and put the patient first.

It was no use telling people who were newly diagnosed what they couldn’t or shouldn’t do. For most people, it just gave them the urge to rebel or to think their life would never be the same. And that could be disastrous. She’d seen exactly how her sister had reacted to things like that.

No. She knew better. This was all about making this work for the patient. This was his life, not hers. She was beginning to question her suitability for this job. It would always be tricky to teach an adult about something they might consider a new way of life. But to teach someone like Mitchell Brody? It seemed like

an almost impossible task.

She watched as he ran his fingers through his just-too-long, messy hair. The man didn't know how damn sexy he was. Then again, with the press and media attention he got, he probably did. Working with this guy was going to be more than distracting. Living in the same house as him? She would have to bolt her door at night and only hope that she didn't sleepwalk.

As there was no evidence of a teapot she poured the boiling water into the mugs, squeezing the tea bags out and adding milk. She put them on the table and took a deep breath, 'Don't worry. I'll talk you through what to do with your insulin and testing if you want to have a few beers.' She paused, choosing her words carefully. 'When the time is right.'

His hand moved slowly, lifting the mug and taking a sip. He cringed. 'I like two sugars in my tea.'

She smiled and grabbed her handbag, which had been abandoned on the table, rummaging around for a few seconds before pulling out a saccharin dispenser and clicking two into his cup.

He tried again. This time the grimace was even worse. 'That's disgusting!'

She shrugged. 'You'll adjust. In a few weeks you won't even notice the difference.'

'Is that a promise?' He held his cup up towards her.

She nodded and clinked her cup on his. This was about to get interesting.

He was still trying to come to terms with the events of the last hour. If anyone had told him a few weeks ago that he'd be sitting in Innsbruck, drinking tea with a hot chick around midnight, he would have laughed in their face.

Drinking tea was not what Mitchell Brody was known for. But the truth was it was actually about all he could face right now.

For the last few weeks leading up to his diagnosis he'd known something had been very wrong. He'd never felt so tired, both physically and mentally. He'd been beginning to question if he was feeling stressed about the tour. Which was why he'd ended up here, his favourite haunt in the world—and the one place the press hadn't figured out he owned yet.

His house in Mauritius was regularly buzzed by helicopters. The townhouse he owned in London practically had the press camped outside the front door, and as for the house in LA. Well, it was a stop on one of the 'houses of the stars' coach tours. Privacy was virtually impossible.

Which was why he loved Innsbruck so much. He'd bought the house ten years ago under his brother's name. Tucked up in the snowy Alps, with direct access to some of the best ski slopes in the world. Who could want to stay anywhere else?

He loved the area. He loved the people. Most of all he loved the staff at the nearby children's hospital. His family had stayed here for just over a year when he'd been six. His father had worked for one of the big pharmaceutical companies that had had business in Austria and the whole family had had to up sticks

for a year.

It had been great for two young boys. They'd learned to ski within a few weeks and had never been off the slopes until his brother Shaun's diagnosis. Then they'd spent the rest of the time in and out of St Jude's Children's Hospital.

From the balcony at the front of the chalet he could even see the roof of St Jude's. It was part of the reason he'd jumped at the chance to build here. Although his house was chalet-style, the expansive size almost made a mockery of that description.

He loved it here. He really did. This was his hideaway. There were people here that knew him as Mitch, the boy whose brother had had leukaemia, and had known him for the last twenty or more years. Shaun's recovery had been a long process, and even after they'd moved from Austria his family had continued to holiday here twice a year.

Here, he wasn't Mitchell Brody, rock star. He wasn't the guy with four homes around the world and a dozen fast cars. He wasn't the guy who'd fallen out of one nightclub too many, or had needed to be bailed out of jail the next morning. He was just Mitch, who had to queue in the local bakery for his favourite pastry, like everyone else. And he liked it that way.

He liked somewhere to be normal. He liked to be around people who had no expectation of him—where he was just another guy. Somewhere along the line all that had been lost.

With girls too. He'd been the spotty teenager who'd just wanted his first kiss. The young guy who everyone had laughed at

for locking himself in his room all the time to practise his guitar.

But practice made perfect. He was testament to that. His last album had achieved platinum status in a matter of hours, with women queuing round the block of the hotel he'd been staying in, hoping for a glimpse of him.

It was amazing what a few years of going to the gym, some filling out and a careless approach to haircuts could do.

But that didn't help with the girl sitting across the table from him right now, looking at him with those amazing blue eyes. He'd been so desperate to be discharged from hospital he couldn't have cared less what his nurse looked like. As long as she could get him through the next three weeks, that had been fine by him.

But he hadn't banked on this. He hadn't banked on her.

He squinted at her. 'What did you say your name was?'

She gave her head a little shake and laughed. 'Samantha. Samantha Lewis. I'm your nurse.'

He leaned back in his chair appreciatively. 'Oh, yes, you are.'

Her eyebrows arched and she wagged her finger at him. 'Don't start with me, sunshine. Don't you be giving me that kind of look. I'm here to do a job. That's all. I'm only staying up with you and making you tea so we can check your blood sugar before you go to bed.'

He leaned forward, planting his chin on his hand. 'Let's talk about this job. What *exactly* will you be doing for me?'

He watched her cheeks flush at the way he'd emphasised the word and the way she squirmed in her chair. He liked it.

Samantha Lewis was different from the last lot of women he'd been involved with.

Right now, it felt like this diabetes diagnosis was a weight around his neck. Samantha Lewis might lighten the load a little.

'I'll be doing exactly what I should be doing. I'll be helping you monitor your blood-glucose levels, teaching you how to adjust your insulin and how to recognise the early signs of a hypoglycaemic attack. It's important you have good blood-glucose control. It'll help you stay independent and reduce the risk of any complications.'

He groaned. She might not look like Dragon Lady, but she was certainly beginning to sound like her.

'Let's talk about something else.' He leaned across the table towards her. 'Is there a Mr Lewis I should know about?'

Her body gave the slightest backward jerk, as if she was deciding how to answer the question. Then she took another sip of her tea and rolled her eyes at him. Her muscles relaxed a little, as if she was shaking off a little of her tension. 'Not that it's any of your business, but there's no Mr Lewis at present. I'm still interviewing possible contenders.'

Oh. He liked that. But she wasn't finished.

'So, Mitchell Brody—and is that your real name?—should I expect to find the latest female movie star or model hiding in the one of the cupboards in here?'

He grinned. A sparring partner. Samantha Lewis might even be fun. 'Yes, Mitchell Brody is my real name. And, no, there's

no females hiding in cupboards, but I reserve the right for that to change.'

Something flitted across her eyes and the soft smile vanished in an instant. 'Are you expecting someone to join you soon?'

What was that? The tiniest spark of jealousy? He pushed the thought from his head in an instant. Ridiculous. She was his nurse. Nothing else. No matter how cute she looked.

'No.' He shook his head and held his hands out. 'To be honest, this place is my sanctuary. I've never brought a female ...' he lifted his fingers in the air and made invisible quote marks '... *friend* back here. Dave's the only person you'll find sloping about. Oh, and the local maid service that comes in every day for a tidy up. That reminds me.' He stood up and walked over to the other side of the table where his phone lay.

'What are you doing?'

He scrolled through his messages. 'I got a text earlier and with everything that's happened I forgot to reply.' He looked around the room. 'What do you think? Red and gold? Blues and silver, or purples and pinks? No.' He gave a shudder at that last one.

'Red and gold for what?' She wrinkled her nose up again, it really did define the cute factor in her.

'The colour of the tree and Christmas decorations. The tree will come tomorrow, I just need to tell them what colours I want.' He looked around the sitting room. It really was looking kind of sparse. The tree and other decorations would give it a little warmth to match the fireplace that he'd forgotten to turn on.

‘You get someone to bring you a tree and decorate it?’

He nodded. ‘Yeah, every year. I just need to tell them what colours I want. What do you think?’

She shifted in her chair. ‘Why are you asking me? It’s your house, not mine.’

She was being a little frosty with him. He’d liked the version from a few minutes earlier. A sparring partner with some twinkle in her eye.

‘Well, you’re going to be here over Christmas too. I’d hate to pick something that made you shudder every time you walked in the door. I usually do this at the beginning of December, but with being ill and all I just kind of forgot about it.’ He walked over to a big empty space next to the far wall. ‘This is where the tree normally goes. They usually put some décor around the fireplace too.’

Her eyes narrowed as she looked around. ‘It depends what you want. Red and gold would give some warmth to the place, but blue and silver would probably fit more with your white walls and pale floors.’

He sat down in the chair next to her and gave her a nudge in the ribs. ‘Yeah, but which one would you *like*?’

He was teasing her again. Trying to goad that spark back into her eyes.

She gave a little sigh and took the last gulp of her tea. ‘I think I’d probably like the red and gold best.’ She hesitated. ‘But you’re missing out. Putting up the Christmas decorations is one of the

best parts of Christmas. Getting someone else to do it for you?' She shook her head and glanced at her watch. 'Right, it's time to check your blood sugar again. If it's okay, you can do your night-time injection and go to bed. We'll have a chat about things in the morning.'

Something had just flickered past her eyes. A feeling of regret perhaps? It didn't matter how much he was paying Sam Lewis, she was still missing Christmas with her family to do this job. Maybe he should give that a little more thought?

He raised his eyebrows. 'You're giving me permission to go to bed?' He let out a little laugh. 'Well, that'll be a first.'

Her cheeks flushed again. She was easily embarrassed. It might even be fun having her around for a few weeks. She might make having diabetes seem not so much like a drag.

He sat down and took a minute to retest himself, turning the monitor around to show her the result of eight. She nodded. 'It'll probably go up a little more as you digest your food. That's fine.' She stood up and walked over to the door where her suitcase was. 'Where will I be sleeping?'

Yikes. He hadn't even told her where her room was. Hospitality wasn't his forte. His mother would be furious with him. He moved quickly, grabbing the handle of her case and gesturing for her to follow him. 'Sorry, Samantha. You'll be down here.' He swung open the door to the room. It was at the front of the house and had views all the way down the valley. He heard her intake of breath as she looked out over the snowy landscape

and bright orange lights from the streets a mile beneath them.

It gave him a little surge of pleasure that she was obviously impressed. He loved this place and wanted others to love it too. She'd walked over to the large glass doors that led out onto the balcony and pressed her hands against the glass. 'This is gorgeous.' She spun around. 'And the room is huge.'

He pointed to one side of her. 'Your bathroom is in here, and the walk-in closet behind you.'

He pulled open the door to the closet and she automatically walked inside. After a second she threw out her hands and spun around, laughing. 'Mitchell, this closet is bigger than my bedroom back home!'

The sparkle was definitely back in her eyes. And he liked it. 'I'm glad you like it.' He pointed to the wooden sleigh-style bed with the giant mattress. 'Sleep well, because we'll be up early in the morning.'

She looked a little surprised. Did she think he liked to lie in till midday? 'Okay. What time do you want to have breakfast?'

'Six.'

Her eyebrows shot up. 'Six? Why so early?'

This was probably her first time here. He hadn't even asked her if she'd been before. He winked at her. 'Because six is the best time to ski.'

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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