

# VIVA LAS VEGAS

## By Anne Boleyn

**Third part of the series that began with Meant To Be and Family Ties. Jack's sister is in trouble and everyone heads to Las Vegas to help out and have some fun.**  
**Drama/Romance/PG**

Ch. 1

Mom, you are being totally unreasonable!" Bianca was furious.

"Honey, you're seventeen years old. There's no way I'm going to allow you to rent a beach house with a group of your friends for the summer. None of you are old enough to be on your own without parental supervision."

"It's because it's a bunch of girls, isn't it? You're so afraid I'll have a girlfriend up there that you won't even consider it."

"That has nothing to do with it Bianca." Erica was as exasperated as her daughter.

"You know how long it took for me to make friends in Pine Valley. Now I finally have a chance to be a part of things and you won't let me! Are you just trying to ruin my life?" Bianca asked.

"Yes Bianca, that's it exactly. I lay awake nights trying to come up with new ways to torture you. It's the only joy I have in my life."

Bianca turned and ran up the stairs, slamming the door to her bedroom. Erica thought about throwing something but decided against it. Most of the breakable objects had been put away when Nicholas started climbing and throwing sofa cushions wasn't really satisfying. She looked down at Nicholas who was absorbed in playing with his Super Stacker, ignoring the battle between his mother and sister. "You realize that by the time she's outgrown this phase, you'll be in the terrible twos." Nicholas grinned at her and went back to his toy. "Maybe your father can talk to her when he gets home. God, would you listen to me? I sound like Carol Brady." Erica laughed and picked up her laptop to work on Enchantment's newest promotional campaign.

She worked at home more than at the office since Nicholas had come into their lives. After missing so much of Bianca's childhood she was reluctant to miss a minute of his.

"Jack, I really need your help."

"Calm down Chrissy and tell me exactly what happened." Jack had been surprised to get a phone call from his sister. He was even more shocked to find out that this was her one phone call. She was calling from Las Vegas where she had been arrested the night before.

"I've been working at Caesar's Palace for the last few months in customer relations, making sure the high rollers have all the attention they need."

"Exactly what kind of attention are we talking about?"

"Nothing like that Jack. It's more like being a personal secretary for the guests. Last week one of the in-room safes in the Palace Tower was robbed of almost a million dollars. When the police investigated they found ten thousand dollars in my desk drawer. I have no idea how it got there Jack. But I had worked with the guest who was robbed and I did help arrange a high stakes poker game for him. I knew he had the money in the safe but I didn't steal anything. Jack, you have to get me out of here. I can't stay in jail."

"Don't worry Chrissy. I'll be there as soon as I can." Jack hung up the phone. He would always feel responsible for his younger sister. He knew he had to help her.

"Of course you should go," Erica told him after he explained the situation to her. "I'll miss you terribly, but I understand why you need to be there."

"What do you mean, you'll miss me terribly? You're coming with me," Jack said. "You, Bianca and Nicholas are all coming."

"Jack, that's impossible. What about Enchantment?"

"You work at home most of the time now. You can work from Las Vegas. Come on, we'll take Coral to look after Nicholas. Bianca's out of school for the summer. Lily won't have her break for another six weeks." He put his arms around her. "I don't know how long this will take sweetheart. I can't stand the thought of being away from you."

"And I couldn't stand to be away from you either." She reached up and kissed him. "We have an Enchantment boutique in Las Vegas. Maybe I can set up some personal appearances while we're there. I don't know about Bianca though."

"What about me?" Bianca asked. She and Leo had just come in from the pool.

"We're going to Las Vegas," Jack told her. "Your Aunt Christine is in trouble and I'm going to help her. It will be a vacation for the rest of you."

"It sounds great to me," Bianca said.

"What about the beach house?" Erica asked her.

Bianca looked a little embarrassed. "All the other mothers said the same thing you did."

Erica restrained the impulse to say "I told you so". "Would you like to bring a friend along with us to Las Vegas?"

"How about me?" Leo asked. "I can make it a working vacation and establish some contacts for Incredible Dreams. Vegas is a great town Binky. Gambling, show girls ..." He looked at Erica's face. "Not that I'd take Bianca anywhere where that stuff was going on."

"Please Mom," begged Bianca. "It would be so much fun with Leo along."

"All right," Erica smiled. She enjoyed Leo's company almost as much as Bianca did.

"Jack, you said Kit was working at Caesar's Palace. I'll make reservations there. I don't think we should tell anyone about your relationship with her. No one will make the connection between Erica Kane Montgomery and Kit Fisher. Maybe I can ask a few questions and find out something that might help you."

"Erica Kane plays detective," Jack said teasingly. "Honey, I just want you to relax and have fun on this trip. Of course it you should happen to find out anything that would help Chrissy, that would be great."

## Chapter 2

This place is incredible Mom. Just listen to the slot machines," Bianca said. She and Erica were walking past the casino toward the elevators at Caesar's Palace. "I wish I could play just once."

"Bianca you know you have to be 21 to gamble in the casino. Besides honey, those people are all just throwing their money away. No one ever wins on the slot machines."

Bianca reached in her purse and pulled out a dollar. "Can't you just go put this in one of the machines for me? Please?"

Erica started to refuse but Bianca's smile was so appealing that she couldn't say no. "Oh, all right. But I might as well put it in a paper shredder." She walked toward the closest machine.

"No, not that one Mom. Put it in that machine over there. The one with the Elvis on top." Bianca pointed to a machine in the center of the casino with a giant Elvis.

"Absolutely not Bianca! What if someone recognized me playing that tacky thing!"

"Please? I have a good feeling about that one."

Erica looked around. "For the first time in my life, I hope no one notices me," she grumbled but she walked over to the Elvis machine. She put the dollar in, pushed the Play All button and turned to walk away. Lights flashed. Coins began pouring out of the machine. The giant Elvis began swaying and singing "Viva Las Vegas". Erica turned and looked at the machine in amazement.

"Oh my God! You hit a jackpot!" Bianca screamed and ran over to her mother. She started jumping up and down. "You won \$15,000. I can't believe it." She hugged Erica.

"What's going on?" Leo had just entered the casino.

""Mom hit a jackpot! Isn't this great?"

"Wow," Leo said. "We've been here 15 minutes and you've won \$15,000. Is Vegas a great town or what?"

" Can't they make the music stop?" Erica asked. "Everyone is looking."

"What took you so long?" Jack asked as the others entered the penthouse. He had gone

up earlier with Nicholas and Coral to call about Kit's bail.

"Mom won a jackpot," Bianca told him.

"Already?" Jack asked. "We just got here."

"Actually it's Bianca's jackpot. The original dollar was hers." Erica smiled at her daughter. "Of course you can't wander around Las Vegas with this much money. Why don't you keep \$2000 in cash and I'll have the rest put in the safe in the room?"

"Thanks Mom," Bianca said hugging her. "You're pretty incredible."

"I am, aren't I?" Erica laughed.

"I've always thought so," Jack leaned down and kissed her. "I've got to go see about Chrissy's bail. Do you want to come with me?"

"I don't think so darling. I'm going to stay in the suite and get Nicholas settled in for a nap. I'll call the concierge and find out about using the in-room safe too. That will give me a chance to ask a few questions ."

Later that afternoon Jack returned to the penthouse. He had arranged bail for his sister and she was staying in a friend's apartment a few miles from the strip. He found Erica relaxing on the balcony. "Where is everyone?"

"Bianca and Leo went exploring. We may never see them again," she laughed.

"I sent Coral off to enjoy herself this afternoon so she could stay with Nicholas tonight. How is Kit?"

"Scared," Jack said. "She has no idea what happened or how the money ended up in her desk. She's just an innocent party in all this."

"I found out that this wasn't the first time a safe had been robbed here at Caesar's. This was the largest amount of money taken but there have been several robberies over the past year . The combinations to the safe change with each new guest. The only people who would know the combination are the guest and the concierge. Of course anyone else could be told or could watch the guest open the safe. A lot of guests are careless about saying the combination as they open it or leaving the safe open . Some of the staff think the robberies may have committed by someone in housekeeping. They have access to the rooms at any time and people often forget they're there."

Jack looked at her in amazement. "What did you do, interrogate the whole staff?"

Erica grinned at him. "I got some of it from the concierge but most of it from the room service waiter. He thinks I love to gossip. Why are you so surprised? Didn't you bring me here to help you?"

Jack's voice was low and seductive. "I brought you here so I could have my way with you whenever I chose. And since we have the whole suite to ourselves right now..." He reached down and pulled her to her feet and into his arms.

### Chapter 3

You are so beautiful," Jack said coming up behind Erica and kissing her neck. They were dressing for dinner. "Why don't we stay in and order room service?"

"Oh no, " she said. "You owe me an evening of dinner and dancing."

"Dancing too?" Jack grinned at her. "Is this the price I have to pay every time you find out any information?"

"This is just for starters," she told him.

"You're not going to drag me to see Siegfried and Roy are you?" They both laughed and started out the door.

"What do you want to do next?" Leo asked Bianca. They had spent the afternoon walking up and down the Vegas strip, taking in the Pirate shows, erupting volcanos and roller coaster rides. They were sitting in the food court at the MGM Grand, resting.

"I want to try out some of the casinos," she answered. "I've got the \$2000 Mom gave me. Come on, let's go play."

"You can't Bianca. You're not old enough."

"I can pass for 21 Leo. You know I look older than 17. Besides, who's going to ask? I'll just play the slot machines or video poker."

" Well, I do want to gamble a little myself. I'm going to check out the craps table. I'll meet you back here in a couple of hours." Leo headed one way and Bianca sat down in front of a terminal of slot machines. "Winning should be easy," she thought. "And if I start losing, I'll stop playing."

Erica snuggled against Jack's chest, swaying softly to the music in Cleopatra's Barge. His arms held her close to him and one hand caressed her back as they danced. "Are you tired of dancing?" he asked her. "Why?" she asked him smiling seductively. "Is there something else you'd like to do?"

"Actually there is," Jack told her. "Let's play some blackjack before we go upstairs."

Erica pulled back and looked at him with raised eyebrows. "You want to play cards?" she said incredulously.

"Sweetheart, it'll be fun. Just a few hands."

"Jack, I don't know. I never can remember when you're supposed to hit and when you're supposed to stay." Erica looked sulky.

"Come on, we'll just play \$1000 each, OK? If you run out of chips I'll let you borrow some of mine."

"The things I do because I love you," Erica sighed. They left the nightclub and headed

for the blackjack tables.

It was very late when Bianca and Leo returned to the suite. Bianca sank down on the couch and buried her head in the cushions. "Come on Binks, it's not that bad."

"Leo, I lost the whole \$2000. Every penny. What am I going to tell Mom?"

"You don't have to tell her anything. Just use your credit cards to get more cash. That's no problem." Leo poured himself a drink from the bar. "Mom keeps track of my credit cards Leo. She pays the bills but she knows where the money goes."

Just then Erica and Jack entered the suite. "Hi honey, did you have fun tonight?" Erica asked hugging Bianca.

"Vegas is an amazing place," Bianca answered. "There's so much to do here."

Erica walked over to the safe and opened it. She reached into her evening bag and pulled out several stacks of money to put in the safe. Leo and Bianca watched with their mouths open. Erica saw their expressions and smiled. "I got lucky at blackjack. How many times did I hit 21 Jack?"

"I lost count, " he said glaring at her.

"Do you want to put your money in the safe too?" she asked him, grinning broadly.

"No Erica, I think I can safely keep up with \$50." Jack was not amused.

"Hey Dad, at least you won \$50," Bianca said trying not to laugh.

"Not exactly," Jack said. "I have \$50 left. Stop laughing Erica. I still think the dealer had a crush on you. No one has that kind of luck."

"I'm sorry darling. Would you like me to share my ill-gotten gains with you?"

After Erica and Jack went into their bedroom, Leo looked at Bianca. "I think I can solve your problem. When Erica opened the safe I watched her. I know the combination. We'll get some money out and I'll help you win your \$2000 back."

"That might work." Bianca looked hopeful. "Surely someone in the family besides Mom can win in this town."

#### Chapter 4

Erica, I'm glad I caught you," Leo said as Erica and Jack were leaving Terrazza's.  
"Would you do me a big favor?"

"What is it Leo?" she asked warily.

"I've been having dinner with a potential investor for Incredible Dreams but I don't think he's too impressed. He seems to think that we're just another fly by night dot com. If you'd just come by the table, meet him, let him see that I mingle with the rich and

famous, then he might be more likely to invest."

"You go ahead honey," Jack told her. "I'm going upstairs. I need to call Chrissy and go over some things for her arraignment tomorrow."

"All right Leo. Let's go," Erica told him.

"No no, let me go first. He's waiting for me in the sports book area. You just casually wander by in a few minutes and act surprised to see me." Leo walked away.

"Leo, I thought you were going to meet some friends at the Mirage tonight," Erica said a few minutes later.

"I had a meeting with an investor. You know business is always a top priority for me," Leo said. "This is Rick Andrews, Rick this is Erica Kane."

"I know who Ms. Kane is," Rick said. He looked suitably impressed. "Are you an investor in Incredible Dreams?"

"Oh, Enchantment and Incredible Dreams have been linked since the beginning," Leo told him. "It helps to be personal friends with the CEO."

"Yes, Leo is almost family," Erica smiled. "I dated his brother for a brief time and when we broke up somehow I ended up with custody of Leo."

"Ms. Kane, I was about to ask Leo to join me at the craps table. I'd be thrilled if you'd come with us," Rick said.

Erica was about to refuse when she saw Leo nodding frantically behind Rick's back. "I guess I could play for a little while. I just hope I don't lose too much money. I never really understood craps."

"What took you so long? I was getting worried," Jack said as Erica and Leo entered the suite.

"She had the most incredible run at the craps tables," Leo said. "I've never seen anything like it. It was like the dice were magic in her hand. The pit boss had to be taken away in an ambulance."

"Oh Leo, he did not," Erica said laughing. She reached into her evening bag, pulled out a cashier's check for \$100,000 and put it in the safe. "It was fun though wasn't it?"

"It would have been more fun if you could have rolled 8 the hard way just once," Leo said. He added a roll of bills to the money in the safe. "I would have won a fortune."

Jack pulled Erica onto his lap as Leo went back to the casino. "I can't get over how amazing you are."

"Because I've been lucky so far?" Erica asked.

"No, because everything about you is magic. You make every day exciting. With you,

you never know what's going to happen next but you know it won't be boring." Jack kissed her.

"You're the one who is magic," Erica told him, her voice serious. "Before we got back together I had become someone I didn't even recognize. I had gone back to being needy and insecure. I did some incredibly stupid things and I hated myself for doing them. When you came back into my life it was like you brought me back to myself. "

"I don't think either one of us was really whole when we were apart," Jack told her. "I know that I never feel more complete than when you're in my arms."

Leo met Bianca in the casino. "Here Binky, I got \$1000 out of the safe for you when I was putting in my winnings. Now I'll help you double it and Erica will never have to know that you lost any money. Forget the slot machines. Let's go to the blackjack tables."

Bianca stalked out of the penthouse elevator and went straight to her bedroom, closing the door in Leo's face. He followed her in. "Bianca, I'm sorry. I've never had such bad luck at blackjack. "

"Leo, now I've lost \$3000. I'm not even old enough to gamble. How am I going to explain this to Mom?"

"I was lucky at the craps tables earlier thanks to Erica. Why don't I lend you the money?"

"I can't let you do that Leo. I'll just have to be honest. I'll probably be grounded until I'm 35," Bianca sighed.

"Hey, I told you I know the safe combination. I'll get another \$1000 out and we'll hit the roulette wheel tomorrow night. We'll win your money back for you, don't worry."

## Chapter 5

Erica, I'd like for you and the kids to come with me this morning when I visit Chrissy," Jack said to Erica over breakfast the next morning.

"I thought we agreed that I wouldn't have any contact with Kit. We don't want anyone here at the hotel to know there is a connection between us."

"I doubt that anyone from Caesar's is watching her apartment. Chrissy is very upset that her arraignment was postponed. She feels alone right now and I want her to see that she's a part of our family."

"Bianca's still asleep but Nicholas and I can go with you." Erica grinned at Jack. "You're not expecting me to be too nice are you?"

He laughed. "I would never expect you to be too nice."

Jack went into the living room of Kit's apartment to use the phone, hoping to get a new date for her arraignment. Erica and Kit were left on the patio trying to fill up the awkward silence. Nicholas was surprisingly shy around his aunt, keeping his face hidden

on Erica's shoulder.

"Jack told me you've been talking to the hotel staff, trying to find something that might help me. I really appreciate what you've done," Kit said.

"I'd do anything for Jack," Erica replied. "I hope I'll be able to find something that he can use."

Jack came back onto the patio just then. "We have a court date in three days."

"Is that good or bad?" Kit asked.

"I think it works in our favor. In three days maybe we'll have found out something that will clear you or at least get the case thrown out of court." Jack hugged his younger sister. "Don't worry Chrissy. I won't let you be blamed for something you didn't do."

When Jack and Erica returned to the suite they found the housekeeping staff finishing up. Erica turned to Jack. "Why don't you take Nicholas down to the pool for a while? I'd like a chance to relax. Ellen, would you mind staying for a few minutes? There's something I would like to discuss with you."

"Not at all Ms. Kane."

After Jack and Nicholas left, Erica smiled at Ellen. "Please sit down."

"Is anything wrong Ms. Kane?"

"Maybe," Erica said. "I just wanted to ask you about something you said the other day. You told me I should be careful about leaving large sums of money in the room." Erica leaned forward. "Ellen, some money is missing from my safe. I'm not sure of the exact amount and I can't be positive someone in the family didn't borrow it. But I remembered your warning and I wanted to talk to you first. Do you think it's possible someone on your staff might have taken it? I'd rather let you deal with it yourself than have to involve management."

"Ms. Kane, I can promise you no one on my staff has taken anything from your safe. I'm supervising this suite personally. I'll make sure you have nothing to worry about."

"Nicholas certainly has your charisma," Jack said as he brought his son back to the suite. "Everyone loved him at the pool. He was quite a crowd pleaser."

"All the women loved him, you mean," Erica said, taking the baby, not minding that he was still wet from the pool. "You were using him as a babe magnet weren't you?" She kissed the baby. "Did you help Daddy pick up girls at the pool?" Nicholas chuckled.

"I'll take him Mrs. Montgomery," Coral said. "Come on Nicholas, let's get you out of these wet clothes and put you down for a nap." After she took the baby to the nursery, Erica told Jack about her conversation with Ellen.

"I might be wrong Jack but I think someone in housekeeping must be involved with the robberies. Ellen seems to be honest but I had the impression she knows something is

going on and is making sure it doesn't happen to us."

"It sounds that way to me too," Jack said. "I'll ask Chrissy tomorrow about who she might suspect from the housekeeping staff."

"OK Bianca, I got this out of the safe this afternoon. I'm just going to make the 50-50 bets on the wheel. We're bound to make some money this time." Leo bought \$2000 in chips and sat down at the roulette wheel.

"Bianca, you're not planning on gambling are you?" Erica and Jack had walked up unnoticed.

"No Mom, I was just going to watch."

"Would you like to play Ms. Kane?" asked the dealer.

"Why not? Come on Jack, let's see if my luck is still holding out."

"Maybe mine's improving," Jack said as he and Erica bought \$1000 each in chips.

Bianca and Leo were walking down the Strip towards New York New York. "I can't believe you lost all that money," Bianca said.

"Neither can I. For a while I was winning, then I was breaking even, and suddenly the bottom just dropped out. How much did Erica win?"

"I don't know. She had so many stacks of chips I couldn't count them. I must have inherited the Montgomery bad luck gene. Dad lost his chips faster than you did. Do we have enough cash for a cappuccino?"

Leo looked in his wallet. "Just don't order a double."

## Chapter 6

"Chrissy, I need you to think of someone in housekeeping that could be involved in the robberies. Someone who had access to the rooms and to your office." Jack and his sister were having lunch.

"Jack, I've already told you. I can't think of anyone. Don't you think if I had any idea of who could of done this I would have told you or the police?" Kit was almost in tears.

"All right, I'm sorry," Jack said soothingly. "I didn't mean to upset you. Erica is still trying to find out something. I'll tell her to talk with Ellen again."

"Ellen?" Kit looked startled. "The head of housekeeping? Is that who Erica's been talking too? Ellen can't be trusted Jack. You shouldn't take her word for anything."

"Here's your lunch Ms. Kane," said the room service waiter. "I hope everything is satisfactory."

"It looks perfect," Erica said. "Your staff has done a wonderful job making sure my son

has all of his favorite things. I know toddler cuisine isn't a Caesar's specialty."

"We believe in keeping our best customers happy," the waiter said smiling.

"I'm glad you're back today Michael. Justin was our waiter yesterday . He was very charming but I'd rather have you each day," Erica turned on her own well practiced charm.

"Did Justin flirt with you?" asked Michael grinning. "That guy makes Bill Clinton look like a monk. He's made it with practically all of the cocktail waitresses and half of the housekeeping staff."

"Oh really?" Erica asked. "Tell me more. I love gossip, even if I don't know the people involved."

"I told you not to call here."

" I had to. Someone may be closing in on us."

"What do you mean?"

"Erica Kane has been asking a lot of questions about staff members and robberies. She's not just making chit-chat. She's got her own agenda. Make sure she doesn't get any answers."

"I'll take care of it."

Erica stepped into the sauna and put the baby monitor on the bench beside her. She laid down on her stomach and thought about her conversation with Michael. It was all starting to make sense. "Should I tell Jack what I suspect or should I try to find out more on my own?" she thought. Just then she heard the sauna door open. "Is that you sweetheart?" she asked. Then everything went black as something crashed down on the back of her head.

The intruder moved Erica's unconscious body off of the bench and down to the floor, making it look as though she had fallen. Hands reached up and turned the sauna up as high as possible. Then they turned the baby monitor off. The intruder left the sauna, and then left the suite quickly.

"I've taken care of the problem you told me about."

"What do you mean, you took care of it?"

"Just what I said. Erica Kane won't be asking any more questions."

## Chapter 7

When Jack entered the suite the first thing he heard were Nicholas's screams. He rushed to the nursery where he found Coral trying to quiet the baby.

"What's wrong with him?" he asked taking his son in his arms. "It's ok, Daddy's here."

Daddy's here." The baby began to calm down. Jack turned to Coral. "What's going on?"

"I don't know Mr. Montgomery. I came in just before you did. Mrs. Montgomery told me to take the afternoon off. When I came in Nicholas was crying and I couldn't find Mrs. Montgomery at all."

"What do you mean you couldn't find Erica? She'd never go off and leave the baby alone. Jack's voice took on a note of anxiety. "Where did you look?"

"I looked in every room. Nicholas wanted his mother. I couldn't soothe him."

Jack handed the baby back to Coral. "Stay with Coral Nicholas. Daddy's going to find Mommy." He went into the master bedroom of the suite, checked the walk in closet, the bathroom, calling Erica's name. He pulled open the door to the sauna and was almost knocked back by the heat. "Erica!" He picked her up and carried her to the bed. "Baby, can you hear me? Wake up sweetheart! Coral, call 911!"

Coral came to the door with Nicholas in her arms. "Oh my God!"

Bianca was right behind her. "Mom! Dad, what happened to her?"

"I don't know. She's unconscious, she has a huge knot on the back of her head, she's burning up from the heat in the sauna. I said call 911!"

Bianca picked up the phone.

Nicholas began to scream again. "Mama!Mama!"

Erica's eyelids fluttered. "Nicholas, "she murmured and struggled to sit up. "Ooww!"

"Lie still sweetheart. Bianca's calling 911. "He pushed her gently back into the pillows and stroked her hair. "Coral, take Nicholas back to the nursery."

"I don't need 911. The hotel has a doctor on staff but I don't need him either. I'm fine." But as she tried to sit up again she was struck with a wave of dizziness.

"I'll call the hotel doctor," Bianca said, dialing the concierge office.

"Honey you have to lie still. What happened? Did you fall? Why did you have the sauna up so high?"

"I don't know. I don't remember going in the sauna. Jack, if a doctor is on his way up here hand me my robe. I'm not going to greet anyone wearing a towel."

Jack smiled feeling a little relieved. "I guess you're going to be all right if you're worried about how you're dressed." Bianca brought Erica a robe and Jack helped her sit up and put it on.

"I can still hear Nicholas crying. Bianca go get him. He needs me." Jack nodded his head, knowing Erica would feel better once she had the baby in her arms. Just then his cell phone rang.

"Jack, it's Kit. Listen..."

"This isn't a good time Chrissy. I'll have to call you back."

"But Jack, this is important!"

"Honey, Erica's not feeling well and I'm waiting for a doctor. I'll call you back when I have time." He turned the phone off and reached for Erica's hand.

"I think you'll be fine Ms. Kane," said the doctor after examining Erica.

Nicholas was sitting on Bianca's lap, much calmer after being cuddled by his mother. He was watching everything that was going on with great interest.

"It looks like you have a concussion and a moderate case of heat exhaustion from the sauna. You shouldn't turn saunas up to the highest level for long periods. It's easy to become over-heated. You'll need to drink a lot of fluids since you're somewhat dehydrated."

"I don't remember turning the sauna on high. I don't know how I got this lump on my head either."

"That's not unusual. A lot of people never remember what happened right before a concussion. My guess is you fainted because of the heat and hit your head on the way down. I can take you in to the hospital and run a CAT scan but I don't think it's necessary. I do want you to make sure to wake up every two hours for the next twelve hours. And of course keep the ice pack on the bump until most of the swelling goes down." He turned to Jack. "Make sure she's oriented as to time and place. If you have any difficulty waking her up call me right away."

"Are you sure she's going to be all right?" Jack asked anxiously.

"Fairly sure," he replied. "Call me if she has any nausea or seems disoriented, but I think she'll be fine."

Bianca took Nicholas back to the nursery as the doctor was leaving. Jack reached down and stroked Erica's face gently. "Does your head hurt?"

"It's not too bad," she said.

"You used to be a much better liar," he said smiling at her tenderly. "I can ask the doctor to give you something for the pain."

"You know I won't take anything," she told him. "It's really not that bad Jack. "

He bent down and kissed her. "Don't you ever scare me like this again."

She smiled at him even though her eyes showed she was still in pain. "No more saunas for me unless you're with me," she promised.

Chapter 8

"How's Erica?" Leo asked as Jack came into the living room.

"Resting. She says she can't sleep with me staring at her so I came in here.

"Jack still looked a little worried. "I found this in the sauna," Leo said, handing Jack the baby monitor. "It's really weird Jack. The monitor was turned off. Erica's a fanatic about making sure the monitor is on. She'd never turn it off or forget to check it if she took it into the sauna, especially if she and Nicholas were alone."

"That is strange," Jack replied. His cell phone rang.

"Jack, is everything all right?" Kit asked.

"Everything's fine," he answered. "I'm sorry I didn't call you back. "

"I understand. You said Erica wasn't well. What's wrong?"

"She has a concussion but she's going to be fine. What was so important?"

"It doesn't matter now. Take care of your family Jack. I'll talk to you in the morning." She hung up before Jack could question her further.

"How is Ms. Kane?" Michael asked as he pushed the room service cart into the suite.

"I'm fine," Erica answered, coming into the room.

"What are you doing up ? "Jack went to her side immediately. "I'll bring dinner in to you. You should be in bed honey."

"I'm tired of being in bed," Erica said. She was still a little unsteady on her feet and she leaned on Jack as he led her to the couch.

"I couldn't believe it when I heard you had to have a doctor. You must have fallen right after we talked," Michael said arranging the dinner on the coffee table.

Erica looked at him oddly. "This afternoon is really fuzzy. I don't remember what we talked about."

"Just hotel gossip," Michael said. "It wasn't anything important."

Jack, more than half asleep, stretched out one arm toward Erica, waking up instantly when he realized she wasn't there. He looked at the clock. It was 2:30. He got up and went into the living room. Erica was standing by the window looking down at the lights of the city.

"Erica, what's wrong? Is your headache worse? Should I call the doctor?" He took her face in his hands.

"I'm all right Jack. You have to stop worrying," she told him. "I couldn't go back to sleep after the last time you woke me up so I came out here. I didn't want to disturb you."

"It disturbs me when you're not next to me in bed," he said, hugging her.

She wrapped her arms around his waist and held on tightly. "You do know how much I love you, don't you Jack?"

"Of course I do. Honey, what's wrong? Something's bothering you."

"I'm just in a funny mood. I guess concussions will do that." She snuggled even closer to him as he tightened his arms around her.

Jack just stood there holding her. He knew she was keeping something from him and he had a pretty good idea what it was. But now wasn't the time to talk about it. "Let's go back to bed sweetheart. You've past the 12 hour mark so I won't have to wake you up again tonight. You need to rest."

"So do you," she said. "You look as tired as I feel." She reached up and stroked his hair. "You're right, let's go back to bed."

## Chapter 9

The next morning Erica sat propped up in bed watching Nicholas play with his Tiny Tot trucks. Jack came out of the dressing room straightening his tie.

He sat down next to her on the bed. "I really hate to leave you this morning but there are some things I have to take care of. Bianca and Leo have promised to stay here while I'm gone and Coral will be here if you need anything. Are you sure your headache is better this morning?"

"It's almost gone Jack. I'm just being lazy. There's no reason for Leo and Bianca to stay here. I don't need babysitters." Her voice softened as she smiled lovingly at him. "You're being overprotective. You do realize that don't you?"

"Indulge me," he said taking her in his arms and kissing her forehead, her eyelids, lingering on her lips. Finally he pulled away. "I'd better leave or I'll be here all day." He kissed her one more time and walked out of the room."

Coral came in just then. "Come on Nicholas, time for your bath."

"No!" he said running to the bed and crawling up in Erica's lap. "Want Mama!"

"It's all right Coral. He's a little clingy this morning," Erica said hugging the baby.

"He was so frightened yesterday when he cried for you and we couldn't find you," Coral said.

"I can't stand to think about that," Erica replied. "Poor little boy. He must have thought I'd abandoned him." She cuddled her son closer. "Don't worry Nicholas. Mommy is never going to leave you."

"Mom, I have something I need to talk to you about," Bianca said later as she and Erica were sitting out on the balcony.

"You mean about the money you and Leo have been taking from the safe?" Erica asked.

Bianca looked surprised. "You knew about that?"

"Bianca, several thousand dollars is missing. I may be wealthy but I always keep track of money. You know that."

"I'm sorry Mom. I was playing the slot machines the first night we were here and I lost the \$2000 you let me keep out of the safe. Leo was going to help me by winning it back but he kept losing more and more."

"It was your money Bianca. It isn't like you were stealing when you took it from the safe. But you shouldn't have been gambling. You're only 17. You know that's against the law."

"Believe me I've learned my lesson. I'm never going to gamble again. I'm sorry Leo and I were so sneaky."

"Jack, come in. I wasn't expecting you this morning." Kit led Jack into her living room.

"I just came from the DA's office. I've worked out a deal for you. If you'll plead guilty and testify against the others involved in stealing the money, you can get a lighter sentence with a fine and community service." Jack's voice was grim.

"What are you talking about?" Kit was stunned.

"Don't try to con me. I know you were involved in the thefts."

"How did you find out?" She sank down on the couch.

"I put several things together, starting with what happened to Erica yesterday. The sauna was turned up extremely high but Erica hates it when its too hot. The baby monitor was turned off and she never turns it off.

You called yesterday, sounding panicky, insisting you had to talk right that minute but I was too worried about Erica to listen. Later, you called back but whatever your crisis was seemed to be over. I didn't want to but I started thinking that maybe what happened to Erica wasn't an accident and that you knew something about it. Then I talked to Michael this morning."

"Michael! The room service waiter? What could Michael have to tell you?"

"He's talked to Erica a lot, passing on hotel gossip. Earlier yesterday he was filling her in about another waiter named Justin who's quite the ladies man. It seems he has a stable of girlfriends who work at the hotel including several on the housekeeping staff. According to Michael, if Ellen finds out one of her crew members is involved with Justin, she has them transferred to a lower floor. He also told Erica that Justin was moving up in the world. He had a lover on the concierge staff - the woman who was arrested for theft."

"I didn't know anyone knew about us," Kit said quietly.

"Then I went to Ellen and asked her about the thefts. She said she suspected Justin was behind them somehow but when she told her supervisor about her suspicions, nothing ever happened. She heard later that someone in the concierge office spoke up in his

behalf. That made her think that whoever this person was might be involved too." Jack shook his head. "How could you get mixed up in this Chrissy? Up until the last time, you couldn't have been getting that much money."

"You'd be surprised Jack. We played this out over and over again. Even splitting it three ways, it was a lot of money. Only a handful of people even noticed that they had been robbed. These people didn't know exactly how much cash they had in their safes. When a robbery was reported, the hotel usually just reimbursed them and kept it quiet. I'd give Justin the safe combination and he'd pass it on to the housekeeper for that room. When Ellen started having girls transferred, we knew she was suspicious so we laid low for a while. But then Justin needed cash quickly so we went for a big amount this last time. He's quite a gambler and he ran up debts to some people who aren't exactly patient."

"Why would you keep quiet after he put the money in your desk? He was trying to lay all the blame at your door."

Kit smiled sadly. "That was my idea Jack. I guess I'm a gambler myself. I knew my brilliant brother the attorney would come to my rescue. I thought you would get me off on reasonable doubt. It never occurred to me you'd try to find out who the real thief was." She turned away from the disappointment in his eyes. "I'm truly sorry Jack. I know I used you and I regret that. I didn't mean to hurt anyone. When I called Justin to warn him that Erica was asking questions, I never dreamed that he would try to kill her. After he called me and said that she wouldn't be asking any more questions I was terrified. That's when I called you but you had already found her. Do you think you can ever forgive me?"

Jack stood up. "For lying to me - yes. For endangering Erica - I can't make any promises about that. Are you willing to testify against Justin and serve a reduced sentence?"

"Why not? I'm just ready for this to be over."

"So am I," said Jack. "So am I."

## Chapter 10

Erica was sleeping on a chaise lounge on the balcony when Jack came back to the penthouse. She woke up as he bent down to kiss her. "Hey, how are you feeling?" he asked, caressing her face, then feeling gently for the lump on the back of her head.

"I'm fine Jack. How many times do you have to hear that before you'll believe it?" she said smiling. "Did you get everything done that you needed to do?"

Jack sat down on the edge of her chair. "Chrissy agreed to plead guilty and testify against Justin." He smiled slightly at the look of amazement on her face. "Did you think you were the only one who could put clues together? My question for you is were you ever going to tell me what you had found out?"

Erica looked down. "Probably not. It's so important for you to believe in the people you love Jack. You trusted her without question. I didn't want to take that away from you."

"Now which one of us is being overprotective?" He took her into his arms and hugged her tightly.

"I'm so sorry Jack. I'm so sorry you had to be hurt like this."

"It does hurt. I won't pretend it doesn't. I had this idealized picture of Chrissy in my head as this perfect little sister. I never let myself see that she had grown up into someone different. She did say she regretted what happened and I believe she was honest about that."

Erica pulled back from his embrace and looked him straight in the eyes. "I imagine the worst part for her was disappointing you. She does adore you Jack. I could see that the other day."

"Maybe. She did ask me if I could forgive her. I told her I wasn't sure if I could forgive her for putting you in danger." Jack took Erica's hand in his and kissed her fingertips.

"You will," she told him. "You're the most forgiving person I know. Look how many times you've had to forgive me." She kissed him. "Speaking of forgiveness, Bianca finally told me about the money."

"Did she? I wondered how long she would try to keep it a secret. So are we going to have to sign her up for Gambler's Anonymous?"

Erica laughed. "No, I think she's decided gambling isn't for her. Besides, we won't be here that much longer will we?"

"Just a couple of more days. I'd like to work out the final details on Chrissy's case."

The next day things were back to normal, at least by Las Vegas standards. Erica made a personal appearance at the Enchantment Boutique in the Forum Shops, signing autographs and dazzling the crowds. Then she and Bianca spent some time quality time shopping. Jack was able to play golf and relax a little. Leo actually met with investors for Incredible Dreams and developed a set of Dream Packages with Las Vegas connections. That night they all met for dinner. Afterwards Leo and Jack headed for the sports book area, Erica and Bianca trailing along behind them.

"I want to get in a World Series bet while we're here," Leo said. "The Red Sox are 5-1 right now."

"The Red Sox don't have a prayer," said Jack. "My money's on the Yankees."

"I don't get it," said Bianca. "The World Series is months from now. Won't the odds change as it gets closer?"

"Sure," said Leo. "But our bets are locked in at these odds."

"If you bet on the Yankees Jack, you won't win that much. Look at the odds, Erica told him looking at the giant board. "You should put your money on the Cubs. They're at 45-1. You'd make a lot more money betting on them."

"Only if they win," Jack laughed. "Honey, there's no way the Cubs are going to win the World Series."

"I like them. If you won't bet on them, I will," Erica grinned at him and walked up to the desk, taking out her checkbook.

"I think your golden streak just ended," Jack told her as they left the sports book.

"We'll see about that in September," Erica said.

"October!" Leo and Jack chorused, shaking their heads.

"Whatever," she said smiling.

A few days later the whole family was in the first class lounge at the airport waiting for their flight home. Nicholas was restless so Bianca took him over to the window to watch the planes take off. Jack settled down with a newspaper and Erica sat down next to him with a copy of Vogue. Leo decided to try his luck one last time at the slot machines. Jack turned to the sports page and noticed a headline "Cubs Sweep Braves". He read the article. The Cubs manager was quoted as saying, "I can't explain what's happening. It reminds me of that movie "Angels in the Outfield." It's like we're a different team. I've never seen these guys play this well." Jack looked down at Erica, then looked back at the newspaper. "It couldn't be," he thought to himself. "There's just no way." After a while Nicholas grew tired of airplanes and headed for where Leo was sitting, Bianca following at his heels. "Up," he demanded holding out his arms to Leo.

"OK buddy," Leo said, picking him up and settling him on his lap. Nicholas watched the pictures whirling on the slot machine in fascination, not caring that the money total was steadily going down. When the count hit zero Leo stood up.

"Play," Nicholas said.

"Sorry Nickster, there's no more money."

"Play!" Nicholas repeated, his dark eyes stormy. The little boy's tantrums were rare but like Erica's they were a force to be reckoned with.

"OK, one more round," Leo sat back down and put another \$20 in the machine. "Here Nicholas, you push the buttons."

Nicholas pushed the Play All button, laughing as the wheels spun around. He pushed it again and again. The 4th time he pushed it bells began to ring and coins began pouring out of the machine. Nicholas clapped his hands in delight. Leo's mouth fell open. Bianca groaned, "I can't believe it. My baby brother just hit a thousand dollar jackpot." Nicholas laughed and picked up a handful of coins, throwing them at his sister. "That's right, rub it in," Bianca laughed.

Jack and Erica walked over to see what was going on. "Nicholas hit a jackpot?" Jack said in disbelief.

"I don't know why you're so surprised. You always say he takes after me," Erica said picking up her son. "Some of us are just natural winners, aren't we Nicholas? Las Vegas is our kind of town."

THE END