



FRISKY BUSINESS/ Kelley

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“Get your nose out of my crotch!”

Dayna Thompson glared at the mangy mutt who had a rabid fascination with her privates. *Aren't K-9 dogs supposed to be better trained than this?* The Perverted Police Pooch wagged his tail and aimed his snout for her hoohoo. She caught the cold, wet nose before it made contact and pointed her finger in his face as if he were one of her 6th graders.

“No. Go lick something and leave me alone or I'm paying for the neutering myself, hear me?”

The big German Shepherd licked at her hand, totally oblivious to the threat against his canine manhood. Gunner was fresh out of K-9 training and seemed fine every time Jace snapped the vest over the dog's broad chest. He understood the uniform. But once that sucker was off, he was nothing but pure overgrown puppy and into everything. He inevitably headed straight between her legs, a command she hadn't yet managed to get his handler to follow.

Dayna curled her lip and picked up the damp, chewed ball from the living room floor with two fingers and pitched it into Jace's kitchen. Gunner took off after it but slid on the linoleum, skidding face first into the refrigerator. He shook his head, snagged his toy and barreled back to the couch. He dropped the slimy ball at her feet and plunged snout-first between her knees.

“Gunner, no!” Her firm reprimand may as well have been a consent form because all he did was snuffle against her skirt. She grabbed his ears and pulled him back. “Stop it, you horny mutt. Go play.”

The fuzzy haunches pressed close to her leg, nearly tripping her as she stood. He stayed like that until Dayna paused in front of Jace's opened bedroom door. The dog bounded inside and sat staring at the bed with a whine, his thick tail thumping the floor. Dayna knew the feeling. She was about ready to whine herself. It seemed Jace didn't allow either of them the privilege of crawling into that bed. Maybe if she thumped her tail on the floor, it would get her better results. With her luck, it would be the only type of tail thumping she would get.

Damn it, it was Valentine's night. They'd been dating for six weeks now. Why hadn't they reached the get-nekkid-and-funky stage yet? It wasn't because they didn't have the attraction level. Sparks had nearly ignited when they'd met and the following weeks had been just as combustible. But for some damn reason, every time they got close to doing the deed Jace slammed on the brakes. *Screeeeeeech!* It was a wonder he hadn't left skid marks on her living room floor since she couldn't get him within three feet of her bedroom with signal flares and a road map.

She would've been insulted if he didn't pop a woody every time he held her.

And he held her a lot.

That's a lot of wood.

From the half-opened master bathroom door, silence rushed when the shower cut off. Gunner padded to the threshold and Dayna nibbled her lip. The bed loomed so large and empty in the room. Devilment whispered down her spine and settled somewhere south of her border. *I have been a bad, bad girl, Officer Rafferty, and I must be punished.*

With a deep breath and instant decision, Dayna hopped in the middle of the bed and attempted the *Hello lover* pose—the one she hoped to high heaven didn't make her thighs look fat. She shook her dark hair behind her, propped on one elbow and made sure her skirt hiked just a smidgeon too high on her leg.

If four inches could be considered a smidgeon.

It totally was a smidgeon.

If she was Lady Godiva.

*Oh my holy hell! In my next life, I wanna be a towel.*

Jace strolled out of the bathroom wearing nothing but a stark white towel and beaded water. Beaded water that trickled into thinning lines sliding down his legs and arms. *Damn lucky water.*

"Dayna!" Ebony brows rose above widened sapphire eyes and his body came to a complete standstill. Okay, not *complete* complete. His gaze zeroed in on her thighs and his chest rose with a sudden inhale. The towel shifting a bit in the front spread a feline curve along her lip.

*Hello Woody, wanna play?*

He jerked his eyes from her legs and stalked to the dresser. “I...uh...I thought you were waiting in the living room.”

“I followed Gunner in.” She had. His pointy-eared head had entered the bedroom first. That was her story and she was sticking to it. He could ask the dog if he didn’t believe her. “I was getting lonely out there.”

“Oh. Sorry. It won’t take me long to get dressed.” Caramel rich, his voice alone coaxed her panties to wetness and she shifted on his bed. Who wanted him to get dressed? He could leave the towel on and she would be fine. Just fine, indeed. Or he could take the towel off and she would be even better. Two large, firm hands slicked through his wet hair, whisking it away from his face and she swallowed. Dayna had felt those hands skimming her through clothing. She wanted them on her bare skin.

*Frisk me, Officer Rafferty, I need a strip search in the worst way.*

A pair of pale mint boxers slid over Jace’s ass under the towel, but not before she caught a brief glimpse of smooth, firm skin. It wasn’t enough, just a quick flash. *I want flesh, not flash, damn it. Vanna, I wanna buy a vowel!*

Jace kept his gaze firmly focused on the dresser top in front of him, the black belt with its accessories coiled like a sleeping deadly serpent. Not even the holstered handgun could distract her at this point. His mirrored reflection spiked a hunger deep in Dayna’s belly that had nothing to do with a promised seafood dinner. Screw seafood, she wanted to see more.

She craved water. Not tap water, not bottled water, but the one slow droplet sliding down his belly right now. Thirst consumed her and nothing but Rafferty-flavored Evian would quench it. Whipping the white terrycloth from his waist, he blotted his arms and chest. Her eyes followed each slow swipe, her tongue sneaking out to lick at her lip.

*Hi, my name is Terry and I will be your towel for this evening. Please glide me along your skin in long, luscious strokes and allow me to lap the moisture from your succulent body.*

Jace flicked the towel back into the bathroom with a haphazard toss and Gunner darted after it. His snarls and woofs echoed in the tiled room as he subdued his cloth prey. Dumb dog.

“Our reservations are for eight,” Jace reminded.

A giggle tickled her lips. She knew what time their dinner reservations were for, she'd made them. Jace was flustered. *Good.* The closet light spilled enough illumination across his face to highlight the slight tinge to his cheeks. A pair of dark pants snapped with a sharp crack and he yanked a blue dress shirt off the hanger with enough force to send the twisted metal clattering to the floor. If he got any more adorable, she'd eat him up...which wasn't a bad idea.

*Hot cop with honey bar-be-cutey sauce. Finger-lickin' good!*

Deep navy trousers jerked over his thighs but he left them unfastened until he shrugged on the shirt and glanced toward the bed. "How was class today?"

Dayna heard the polite question. Knew she should answer him. But her mind was focused elsewhere. It was focused on that dwindling line of dark hair trailing down to a barely there streak above a hard, flat stomach. *Yummy, yummy, yummy, I wanna lick that tummy...*

She didn't remember getting off the bed, but her feet moved and her fingers skimmed up his bare stomach. "Class was...fine."

God, he smelled good. The first time in his apartment, she'd checked his soap, certain it was something like Droolable DoMe Blend. Nope, plain old Dial. Jace created his own unique and titillating fragrance. That scent burst into her bloodstream and propelled her to nearly panting want. Her hand floated up, across his sternum. A gulp worked his throat and her fingertips danced over his Adam's apple.

"Dayna." The way he said her name, husky with self-denied pleasure, thrilled through her. His kiss met her step, a soft groan mingled with her sigh. *Yes! We have contact!*

Contact was mild. Contact was timid, gentle. This was a bottle-rocket. *KaBoom!* Like a dam cracking, a shudder worked his shoulders and his arms pulled her close. She let loose a small gasp and he sucked it in, delving his tongue deeper inside her mouth. A purr formed in her belly and she rubbed her breasts across his bare chest. Sharp nips scored along her bottom lip and he soothed each twinge with a lick and a nibble. Her hands smoothed under his shirt collar, kneading hard muscles, skating her nails over his skin. One firm hand sank into her hair, holding her still to accept his maddening kiss.

As if she was going to run away.

*Uhm, no.*

The barely concealed ardor that always simmered beneath the surface bubbled and steamed, just short of boiling over. Dayna turned up the heat. Short nails in Frosted Apricot Allure scraped down his chest. With far more patience than she truly had, she toyed with the dark sprinkling of hair before circling one flat male nipple. Her mouth vibrated with his low growl and his palm slipped from her waist to her ass. A swift tug pressed her soft belly into growing hardness.

Jace really should have zipped his pants if he wanted dinner. The only thing Dayna could think about was appetizers of the naked sweaty flesh variety followed by sixty-nine courses of the Joy of Sex.

Dessert could be a shared shower.

Breakfast could be leftovers.

She slid her hand around his waist, dipping her fingers beneath the slack waistband of his pants at the small of his back. He was hot, his body temperature scorching her hands and enflaming her senses. A burn started deep inside her, licking with growing flames. Pale mint cotton hid nothing, and some wanton slut gene rotated her hips against him. He moaned and she did it again. He throbbed, firm and heated against her tummy.

A cold, wet nose shoved into her crotch from behind. Ripping her lips from Jace's mouth, her so-not sexy squeal bounced off the walls. His arms were still holding her and his rump-molesting mutt kept sniffing into her butt. To escape, she tried using Jace as a ladder.

*"Gunner! Platz! Lass das sein!"*

The barked German command worked like a magic wand. The K-9 retreated and sat, thumping his thick tail. His pink tongue licked his lips and Dayna fought a blush. Great, he thought her crotch smelled like kibble. Perfect.

The moment destroyed, Jace released her and stepped back. His zipper whizzed upward with a loud rasp. Dayna glared at his dog. She was so taking that mutt to the vet. *Snipsnipsnip*. If she wasn't getting any nookie, neither was he.

"Sorry." She wasn't sure what Jace was apologizing for, the interruption or his dog's behavior. His chest still heaved and despite his now fastened pants, Woody hadn't quite disappeared. "He doesn't do that to anybody but you."

“Lucky me,” she grumbled. Of course she was the only one. That was how her luck worked. His dog couldn’t stay out of her panties and Jace wouldn’t go there. He buttoned his shirt and tucked the tail into his pants. *Buttsniffer One, Orgasm Zero*. She had a sudden urge to bang her head against the wall. Instead, she collapsed into a boneless pile of unsatisfied flesh on his bed with a wail.

“This is ridiculous. They ought to hand German Shepherds out in high schools. He’s the best birth control in the world.”

Jace’s chuckle poured over her in sensual waves as he fished a pair of dark socks out of a drawer. The deep, rich tone twanged her lust and fed her irritation. How hard was it to get laid, for crying out loud? Apparently pretty damned hard with a strangely reluctant boyfriend and his twat-obsessed pooch. One guarded his zipper like Fort Knox, the other licked his balls like they were bacon.

Her sex life sucked.

No, wait.

It didn’t even do that.

The bed dipped under Jace’s weight and she rolled her head in his direction. He sat to pull on his socks, the broad line of his shoulders straining at the blue shirt. Two things occurred to her in a flash. One, RumpRover wasn’t allowed on the bed, and two, this was as close to going to bed with Jace as she’d gotten so far. Opportunity knocked on the door and she was damned well going to answer it.

Rolling to her knees, her hands smoothed up his back and around his shoulders. Dark, damp hair brushed her cheek as she leaned in, nuzzling his neck. His head angled with a sigh and she flicked her tongue up to his earlobe.

“You don’t really want seafood, do you?”

“Don’t you?” So deep it bordered on obscene caller, his voice carried the banked flame of desire. *Burn, baby, burn, burn...*

“I want something else more.” There. That was as close as she could get to saying ‘do me’ and not die of embarrassment if he turned her down. And what straight man turned down a willing woman already in his bed?

A soft noise broke from his chest and he caught her fingers sliding down his shirt front. “Dayna, you’re not making this easy.”

*Well duh, I don't want easy, I want hard.*

Jace stood abruptly and walked to the dresser, leaving her kneeling on his bed. Rejection washed over her with a chilled breath. He was saying 'no'. Jace really didn't want her no matter what Woody said. Hands pressed on the dresser top with his head hung below his shoulders, his slow exhale rang loud in the still room. Humiliation flooded her cheeks and something in her chest broke with a howl. He blurred in her vision and her nose started to burn.

*Where's a rock when you need to crawl under one?*

Gunner's rough tongue lapped at her toes and she jumped. The movement spurred the need for escape, to get away from the mutt and his master before she really started crying. The last thing she wanted was to be turned down and let him see her with her nose all red and shiny in the same five minutes. Red noses weren't the least bit cute on anything except some dysfunctional reindeer, and Christmas was months ago.

She scrambled off the bed and Gunner's snout hit a bull's eye. A sob seared her chest. *Wrong male.* She shoved the big furry head aside, darting for the door.

Her name echoed up the hall but she didn't slow. Yanking her purse off the couch, she looked for her shoes. She'd kicked them off when she'd come in, leaving them beside the front door. Now only one pump sat forlornly on the rug. A quick search turned up the footwear under the couch. The heel had been chewed off and the ankle straps were missing. Tears spilled over her cheeks and fury zipped through her belly like a tsunami.

Okay, enough was enough. First, the dog thought her hoohoo was a free perfume counter, then her boyfriend didn't want to have sex with her, and now her favorite pair of sexy shoes got mistaken for a chew toy. In a strange, twisted way, it made sense. Gunner didn't want to share her naughty kibbles and bits so he gnawed on her fuck-me shoes so Jace wouldn't be tempted. The trouble was Jace didn't want her. She couldn't tempt him with a bottle of lube and rubber sheets. Maybe she ought to take Gunner out for dinner and toss Jace a rawhide bone.

*Not that he's throwing me a bone of any type.*

Shaking with far too many emotions, she thundered back down the hall with the damp and demolished pump in her hand. She nearly collided with Jace exiting his room. Gunner's face made a bee-line for her and she held the shoe like a gun.

“Stop right there, Fido. You owe me a pair of shoes. One step closer and I’ll take the price out of your flea-bitten hide.” He dropped to his belly and buried his nose under his paws.

*Yeah, cower, Cujo. Don’t mess with me right now.*

“I’m sorry.” The softness of Jace’s words was nearly covered by the dog’s whimpers. The low entreaty tugged at the frayed edges of that broken place in her heart and she couldn’t look at him. Not if she wanted to hold on to her anger and anger was all that was keeping her from dissolving into a weeping puddle of hurt right now.

“You should be. He’s not a puppy and those shoes were expensive.”

“I didn’t mean about the shoe. I mean, yeah, sorry about that too, but I meant…”

*Yeah, I know. You’re sorry you find me as sexually appealing as a hornets’ nest in your jockeys. I’m warning you, Officer Rafferty, if the words ‘I just want to be friends’ cross your lips, you’re gonna get stung right in the woodpile.*

Jace reached to stroke her cheek and she turned her face away. *Nuh-uh, no way, you don’t get to be all sweet and lovey-dovey after rejecting me.*

He slowly lowered his hand and tucked it deep inside his pocket before leaning his shoulders against the wall. She scowled as his lips firmed. What the hell was he upset about? Was she supposed to thank him for not wanting her? This was just too weird. Did somebody switch gender roles on her when she wasn’t looking? Weren’t men supposed to be walking hard-ons and women the ones holding them off? Was this some twisted sex version of Freaky Friday? That couldn’t be. It was Tuesday.

“Dayna, you have no idea how bad I want you.”

A sardonic snort burst out. “Let’s see, on a scale of one to ten with one being ‘chopped liver’ and ten being ‘oh yeah baby, frisk me’, I’d guess I fall somewhere around minus six.”

“Try around twelve and a half.”

*It’s Opposite Day, boys and girls! Where yes means no and no means yes!*

Hot tears welled again and she pressed her lip tight to her teeth to stop the quiver.

“You have a really funny way of showing it, Jace.”

Iron shot into his jaw. He pushed off the wall with a grunt and stomped to the dresser. The top drawer slid open to reveal a pink envelope. It was obviously a

Valentine's card. His long fingers stroked the top edge hesitantly before he extended it to her. He didn't face her at all.

"Here. I was going to wait until the restaurant to give it to you. I bought roses but Gunner ate them. I do have something else in the car but this...this is the most important."

She tossed her purse on the bed and reached for the pastel paper with a trembling hand. It was a card. Big deal, she had one for him in her purse. What could be so important in a card? Did Hallmark suddenly have the market on sexual rejections?

*Roses are red.*

*Violets are blue.*

*I think you're sweet,*

*but I won't screw you.*

The tear of the envelope screamed loud in the room. There was no other sound except for the panting of one stupid rose-eating, shoe-chewing mutt with a crotch fetish. Blinking rapidly, she pulled the card from the paper. A red and purple heart with a soft airbrushed look graced the front with the words 'Happy Valentine's Day' written across the top in a fancy script. Nice. Not mushy or corny, just...nice. Bracing herself, she flipped the card open.

There was no poem, no cute little saying, nothing. Just three handwritten words.

*You are #2.*

Number two?

*Number two?*

What the hell was number two? Her teacher mind flew to bathroom phrases but even as frustrated and mad as she was, she seriously doubted Jace was calling her ca-ca. So what the hell was number two? Second best? Runner up? Also ran?

Low and sensual like a blues rhythm filling the night, his voice drifted toward her. "You'd have liked my father, I think. He was a gruff old bear but damned if he didn't believe in right and wrong, black and white, no blurring it. My dad always told me there were two kinds of women in the world. Those you 'do' and those you say 'I do' to."

Her mouth dropped open. Jace straightened from his slump and looked directly into her eyes. “I don’t know where we’re headed, Dayna. I just know that I don’t want to screw this up by treating you like a number one. You mean too much to me to risk that.”

*Well now, don’t I just feel like the Floosey from Talahoosee.*

Closing the card, she searched her scrambled brain for something to say. Nothing seemed right. Everything was either too flippant or too crude or too sappy. Thumper from Disney’s Bambi sounded in her ear. *If you can’t say something nice, don’t say nothing at all.*

So she didn’t say anything.

She just stepped to him and kissed him.

His mouth took hers in the purest of kisses. It wasn’t the kiss of frantic lust or starving appetites. It was the touching of hearts, the promise of more. It was perfect. He pulled back a fraction and rested his forehead against hers.

“I do want you, Dayna. But I don’t want to have sex with you. I want to make love with you. I know it’s too soon to say it and I’m probably screwing up somehow, but I can’t help it. I love you.”

Now it was her turn to step away. She tugged from his light embrace and he cringed. The crestfallen expression on his face twinged her soul, but she had to move. She fumbled in her purse until her fingers closed around the plain white envelope.

“Here.”

Jace took the card but wouldn’t look toward her. The regret lining his face turned his eyes to ocean. Dayna bit her bottom lip and waited. He slid a finger under the flap and tore upward with a fierce tug. Cards for men were kind of dorky and it was hard to find a decent one but she really had looked. She’d wanted to find the perfect card. It wasn’t perfect, but it was the best she could do.

Plain blue with a couple’s clasped hands on the front, it read—*For the Man in My Life*. His jaw twitched and then he flipped it open. Dayna bit down so hard she winced. His eyes rounded as he read the six words.

*Happy Valentine’s Day – I love you.*

His incredulous look shot to her and she grinned. “What? You thought I wanted you just for your body? What kind of girl do you think I am?”

A sultry spark lit in his eyes and a wicked curl appeared on his lip. “You love me?”

“Yeah.” Tongue to her lip, she walked her fingertips up his chest. “I do.”

Smoldering lust erupted in blue flames and his grin turned naughty. *About damned time.* “I love you. You love me.”

“You start singing Barney songs and I’m out of here. I’m so not in the mood for preschool games.”

With a smirk, the cards got tossed to the dresser on top of his belt. Warm hard hands pulled the edge of her blouse loose from her skirt band. “I always liked ‘you show me yours and I’ll show you mine’.”

“Why does that not surprise me? I bet you had little girls lined up around the block.”

“Hey, I don’t kiss and tell.”

She tugged his shirttail out of his pants with a saucy challenge. “Prove it.”

Her giggle met his smirk in a teasing kiss. His hands curved around her waist and his lips traced to her ear. “You know, Gunner chewed up your shoe. And you can’t get into Monroe’s in your bare feet so...I don’t think we’re going to be able to make those reservations.”

Fingers sliding along his shirt front, she opened the first button she came to. “Guess not. Guess we’ll just have to stay here and...find something to do.”

“We could order a pizza.” His suggestion caressed her cheek and his fingers slid over her hips, walking her backward toward the bed.

“Later, maybe. I’m not that hungry...for food.” She drew him down to the deep sage coverlet. His weight settled easily beside her and he bent to take her mouth.

A hard nose jammed between her legs and she bolted upright with a screech. A long, wet tongue swiped across her face followed by the scent of Alpo. Her brain channeled Charlie Brown’s Lucy...*Ew, dog germs! Get some hot water, get some disinfectant!*

Grabbing the dog’s ears, she pushed his head away. Two brown pleading eyes stared a split second before his nose dove back between her knees.

“Gunner, *lass das sein! Geh Draussen!*” Jace’s command sent the dog running and she glowered at the fuzzy butt hightailing it out of the door.

“I thought he was trained! Why is he always crotch diving?”

“He *is* trained.” Jace’s chuckle bordered on erotic as he drew her back down on the bed and slipped a palm under her blouse hem. “Neither one of us can resist you.”

“But you don’t drink out of the toilet,” she grumped.

His midnight brows arched high. “Think of it this way...he loves you as much as I do. He just can’t talk.”

Dayna twined her arms around his shoulders and nibbled at his ear. “You talk too much, Officer. I’m going to have to place you under house arrest. I think a strip search is in order, too. You may be concealing...something.”

His smile slid along her throat, nipping and nuzzling. “Oh yeah, baby, frisk me.”