**Stephanie's Amazing Race**

by staceyshackleton

**Stephanie's Amazing Race - Part One**

*Stephanie allows The Stranger to challenge her to an amazing race of exhibitionism.*

*This is a story about Stephanie, a quiet and reserved woman who gradually finds herself taken out of her comfort zone due to dares by The Stranger...*  
  
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Nothing moved in the hotel room. A heavy, almost suffocating quietness had settled over the one bedroom suite, making itself at home for the past five minutes. The entire room, despite having yet to be serviced by the cleaning maids, gave off a sterile and calm vibe.   
  
From the outside at least, the room's single occupant - a petite businesswoman who stood stock still in front of a full length mirror - seemed to share that sense of calmness. Her arms hung by her side, her brown hair hung neatly down to her shoulders and rested gently on the top of her business suit. She hadn't moved her a muscle in those five minutes, and seemed almost in a state of trance. Only the occasional flicker of her eyes, along with the momentary, involuntary clenching of her jaw, actually betrayed the fact that her mind was a massive battleground of emotions and desires.   
  
It had been a long week at work for Stephanie Henderson. She'd never been to Boston before, and the packed nature of her work trip hadn't exactly allowed to her to see much of the sights. That might be about to change, she reflected, drily. Perhaps she might end up as one of the sights. That last thought arrived unprompted in her mind, and she spent more than a few moments trying to unsuccessfully dispel it.   
  
She finally broke her trance by turning her head and glancing out of her hotel window. Beyond the wall of glass, the early evening light broke through several layers of clouds, casting a dull glow over the Boston Public Gardens. Stephanie had stared out at those Gardens every morning, as she'd dressed for another day in the Boston Office. Today had been her final day here. Tonight, she'd hop on a flight home, and collapse into a peaceful, relaxing, work-free weekend.   
  
Stephanie found herself slowly dusting off some invisible speck on her business suit, as her mind began to wander further.   
  
Before she got on that flight though, before she could get home and spend a relaxing weekend unwinding from the stresses of the past five days, there was the small matter of the message.   
  
The message. Stephanie felt her throat go a little dry with excitement, anticipation, fear, exhilaration and uncertainty. The message had arrived just over five minutes ago now. She 'knew' who it was from, even if she had no idea who that someone really was. She'd even been expecting the message on some level, and still it had caught her off-guard when it appeared abruptly on her phone.   
  
She tore her eyes away from looking at the Gardens beyond her window, and brought her attention back on to phone. The message was still open on the screen, and she let her eyes wander over the short burst of text one last time.   
  
"Hello Stephanie," it started, "I hope you've had a good trip to Boston." Stephanie let a half-smile crack through her otherwise impassive face, "I've arranged a little entertainment for you before you finally head home. It all starts when you pick up the package from reception..."   
  
And so that was it. There would be a package waiting for Stephanie at the reception. There was only one person in the entire world who knew what was in that package, and sure as night follows day, that person was not Stephanie Henderson.   
  
Stephanie Henderson closed her eyes, and gently stretched her neck, rotating her shoulder muscles at the same time, as if to let go of some tension.   
  
In theory at least, if she went and picked up that package, she wouldn't have to go through with anything. In practice, well, that was an entirely different matter...   
  
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The hotel lobby was surprisingly crowded given it was the end of the day. She was staying at a major hotel in the centre of Boston, near to both the offices she'd been working at for the past week and the entertainment and restaurants that had similarly been denied to her by the efforts of that work. There was a small queue of people waiting at the reception desk, and Stephanie slipped quietly in behind them. Unobtrusive, unassuming, largely unnoticed. The 'Stephanie Henderson Way', she reflected.   
  
This was her second trip to the reception desk today. Earlier in the morning, before her final trip to the office, she'd headed down to check out. She'd been halfway through explaining how she'd like to leave her luggage here until this afternoon when the staff member had politely interrupted her. Apparently, he explained, she was still booked in for one more night.   
  
Well, that was more than a little odd. She'd booked the trip herself, her work had paid for only five nights, and she had a 10pm flight home. She was told "someone" had rung up to add another night on to her stay, and that it had already been paid for.   
  
A strange combination of nervous and anticipation and rocked her world at that exact point. She had a very good idea just who that "someone" might be. Still, her flight wasn't until 10pm, and she couldn't deny that a shower tonight and a place to relax by herself would be welcome. Even if she knew that her mysterious benefactor had other things on his mind than her relaxation.   
  
The queue gradually shortened, as the reception staff worked hard to satisfy their guests. Stephanie's pulse was now unnaturally high as she found herself the next in line to be served, and a number of different possibilities were beginning to flash in front of her mind. Stephanie and her mysterious benefactor had discussed a... game. A game for Stephanie Henderson. A special game with a special purpose. They'd been talking about it for a while now, and had agreed that they'd go through with it and get Stephanie to play at some point over the coming month. She'd even had suspicions, even desires, that he'd pick this business trip to get her to play the game. Now though, now that this was really going to happen, her stomach churned with the fears of how exactly he'd choose to interpret the loose rules that she'd laid down for him.   
  
Was she ready for this?   
  
"Yes miss?" a voice intruded on her thoughts. She looked up. A man behind the reception desk coughed politely, indicating she should come forward. Behind her, a larger older woman harrumphed at the way Stephanie was dawdling and clearly slowing down the rest of the waiting guests behind her.   
  
Stephanie shook herself back to the more immediate concerns of the moment, and stepped forward to the desk.   
  
"I'm Stephanie Henderson, room 1012. There's a package for me?"   
  
The man behind the counter consulted his computer for a second, and Stephanie saw a flash of recognition spark in his eyes.   
  
"Ah, yes, Ms Henderson. Something arrived for you today. Wait here please."   
  
The man disappeared into a back room for 30 seconds, allowing Stephanie enough time to visualise all manner of weird and wonderful objects that he might bring back. When he finally did return, he returned with a small-to-medium sized suitcase on wheels.   
  
Wordlessly, Stephanie took possession of the suitcase. With her mind racing now as fast as her pulse, she started back to the lifts, barely remembering until the last second to give the man at the desk a quick thank you smile.   
  
With her package received, Stephanie Henderson returned to her room.   
  
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Stephanie gripped the card tightly and scrunched up her eyes just as she finally finished readings its contents. When she opened them again, the action was accompanied by her suddenly exhaling, a faint gasp emerging from between her lips. Her breathing was ragged at this point, and her chest noticeably rose and fell as she struggled to regain control over herself. Staring wildly ahead, Stephanie once again came face to face with the woman in the mirror. She looked familiar, in some strange kind of way, but at the same time the woman seemed so very different.   
  
With a few more deep breathes, Stephanie Henderson retook some small measure of self-control, and managed to - at least temporarily - halt the trembling that had afflicted her hand.   
  
Slowly, carefully, still not quite trusting herself to not lose it again, Stephanie let her eyes glance back down over the card.   
  
There wasn't much text on the card, but what there was spoke volumes. In a clear, bold font, the title at the top of the card simply said: "Detour". Beneath it were some instructions, and the choice that had just sent Stephanie Henderson's composure into a tailspin..   
  
The card had a subtitle, playfully laid out in italics, and that read: "Go for run, or go for a swim."   
  
Stephanie now forced herself to re-read the entire card, to make sure she fully understood what she was being asked to do.   
  
"In 'go for a run', you must put on running gear and run for three miles around the city. Don't worry about the weather, we've ensured you'll be dressed appropriately." Stephanie's heart raced at that seemingly innocent attempt at reassuring her.   
  
"In 'go for a swim', you must put on some swimwear, and swim fifteen lengths in the hotel pool. Do not take a towel or any other clothes with you on your trip to - and from - the pool. Once you have completed one of these two tasks, you may read your next card."   
  
She didn't have a bikini, or a running top. Actually, it was more accurate so say that she hadn't packed a bikini or a running top. There was still the small matter of the suitcase that she'd been given. When she'd opened the suitcase after returning to her room, she'd been greeted with the sight of three medium-sized boxes, snuggled neatly against each other, taking up the entirety of the suitcase. Each box was labelled with a number: 1, 2 and 3. Attached to each box was a card, and it was the card for box 1 that she had now just read for the second time. She hadn't opened the box itself yet, but she realised that there was no more delaying to be done. It was time to open the box, and understand exactly what she was being asked to choose between.   
  
Her hands still betrayed the underlying tension and nervousness that permeated through her body, and she fumbled at the lid of the first box for a moment before stopping, laying the palms of her hands on her sides, and regathering her composure. As she brought her heartbeat down ever so slightly, and felt the trembling subside again, she placed her hands back on the lid of the box with exaggerated care.   
  
The box was a plain brown affair, although the sturdiness of the construction spoke of an undeniable quality. The lid of the box fitted perfectly, but also came off effortlessly when Stephanie applied the right force at the right spot.   
  
As she placed the lid gently to one side, Stephanie surveyed the contents of the box. There was a pair of white running shoes - in her size of course - with light red trimmings providing a bit of colour. Matching the colour of the trimmings were two small packages, neatly arranged in gift wrap of the exact same shade of light red.   
  
Stephanie paused for a moment, before delicately lifting both the packages out of the box and placing them on her bed. She left the shoes in the box for the time being, and went to undo the gift wrapping, before suddenly jerking her hands away. Taking a few steps back, she leaned back again the table unit opposite her bed, her eyes wide open. Stephanie couldn't help glancing back at the stranger in the mirror, and she fancied for a moment that she could see a strange hunger in the eyes of the woman who stared back.   
  
Tearing her eyes away, she turned her head to now look out of the window again, and saw the dark clouds gathering on the horizon. The weather forecast had predicted persistent light showers, and nature seemed to be reaffirming that prediction.   
  
She could just leave. Pack up the clothes, close the suitcase, and walk out of the hotel. She could go catch her flight in three hours, and be home in five hours. What was stopping her?   
  
Even as she entertained a dalliance with the idea of simply leaving, the reminder of why she couldn't barged it's way to the front and centre of her mind.   
  
She couldn't just leave, because part of her had known she would just leave. And so that part of her had given the game master... something. Something... deeply personal. A letter. A letter with an embarrassing secret that the game master was not to open. A secret that Stephanie didn't want the game master to know, but that special part of Stephanie had reassured herself that this was okay, because the game master was not to open the letter under any circumstances at all. The game master would never open the letter, never learn the secret, and nothing would be revealed. Another part of her had wondered why she was trusting the game master with this - with her - but the part of Stephanie who needed the game master to have the letter had won the day.   
  
Wait. Some of that wasn't quite true. The game master was only to open the letter in one circumstance - if Stephanie Henderson did not complete her amazing race.   
  
But she could still just leave, couldn't she, Stephanie thought. She could write a report, tell the game master about how she'd done her amazing adventure, and fake the details of how she'd dabbled in the arts of exhibitionism. She could do all of that from the safety of the airport lounge, dressed in the same, safe business clothes that were such a hallmark of Stephanie Henderson's wardrobe.   
  
Except he'd find a way of knowing that she was lying. Perhaps her report might betray something about her deception. Perhaps he has people keeping a discreet eye on her. Either way, she couldn't risk it.   
  
As she leant back on the furniture and focussed on the options laid out on the bed, she knew that the small part of her that wanted to force Stephanie Henderson - conscientious, hard working, prim and proper Stephanie Henderson - to go through with this, had won.   
  
She took a deep breath in and took two steps towards the bed. Feeling almost like an observer watching a robot go about it's work, she saw herself slowly undo the colourful paper wrapping around the two sets of clothes.   
  
The first to reveal it's contents was 'go for a run'. Stephanie quickly took out a white running top and shorts, and then gave an involuntary gasp when she realised that the only remaining item in the packaging were a pair of simple, plain white anklet socks. There was no sports bra at all. For a brief moment she lifted the wrapping paper up to check it hadn't fallen out without her noticing. She was no more than half way through the act of doing so however, before she felt the absolute certainty hit her that the sports bra's absence was far from accidental.   
  
She steeled herself for the worst, and picked up the running shirt. It was a simple white colour with no gaudy branding or advertisements. Two short sleeves would cover the tops of her arms, but nothing else, and as she ran a hand over the material, she knew the t-shirt was a blend of polyester and lycra. She shook her head to try and clear her mind, and took a deep breath in as she lifted the garment up to inspect it more closely.   
  
Stephanie Henderson was an accomplished runner, and was by no means a stranger to the concrete pavements in her neighbourhood. People frequently saw her running along - with a graceful, almost effortless gait — in her loose, modest t-shirts and baggy shorts.   
  
She instantly realised that modesty was not going to be a significant feature of this run. She'd never owned a figure-hugging t-shirt before, but she'd seen enough of them on more showy women to know that this particular item was a compression t-shirt. Useful for running, she had to admit, but also tight and prone to detailing every curve and line in her upper body.   
  
She let a strangled gasp out as she realised the implications of this tight, figure-accentuating garment in the light of the fact that she'd also be without any form of bra.   
  
An impartial judge would most likely have described Stephanie Henderson's chest as "petite". However, while she may have shopped for bras in the A-cup and B-cup sections of the department stores, if she'd asked any red-blooded male their honest opinion, she'd also have been told that she made up for any possible lack of quantity with an undeniable sense of quality.   
  
The tight compression running t-shirt, coupled with the absence of anything underneath it, would perfectly frame her breasts for a public showing. And that didn't even factor in the question of the weather. Should it rain... oh dear, what if the rain came!   
  
Stephanie clenched her fists and had to close her eyes again. It didn't help though. The image of her running in the rain, her tight white t-shirt becoming progressively wetter and wetter, the shocked stares of the pedestrians as they gawked at her increasingly exposed chest. She felt momentarily dizzy, and had to place a hand on the bed to steady herself.   
  
For a moment she was lost in a possible future. A future in which Stephanie Henderson dashed along the streets of Boston, thousands of people milling around, all witness to her first ever act of exhibitionism. In her future, the rain came down persistently, steadily, and without mercy. She could feel every drop of water that hit the front of her -t-shirt. Every collision of water and material set off a nerve firing wildly in her body, until she felt like she was going to be consumed by the raw physicality of the weather.   
  
She had her eyes fixed on the road ahead, deliberately not looking down to see what damage the water had done to her top. That was of no great help though. Looking ahead, it merely allowed her to realise what impact she was having on others. Wherever she went, the men of Boston would stop what they were doing, and their eyes would focus tightly on future-Stephanie. Not on her face, no. Never on her face. None of the men made eye contact, none of the men would remember the pretty face or the flowing brown hair that cascaded down to her shoulders. Still, she was undeniably the centre of their attention. As she ran past, she could actually feel heads move to follow her, and while the wet clingy t-shirt material might no longer be visible, she could sense their eyes drop to the hot pants that now adorned her backside.   
  
Stephanie's love of running had provided her with an athlete's body, a fact that she'd spent the past ten years of her adult life largely hiding from everyone around her. As she flashed-forward, future-Stephanie could no longer say she was hiding anything from anybody.   
  
Future-Stephanie could feel the reaction of every man on the street burn through her mind, leaving a trail of mixed emotions in it's wake. Embarrassment, fear: yes and yes. However, thrown in with those emotions were other feelings: elation, excitement, and a once-deeply-buried desire to be lusted over.   
  
If the reactions of the men around her caused future-Stephanie to feel like she was a tumultuous sea of sensations, then the looks from the women really set her body alight. She could see in the eyes of some women the unmistakable sense that they saw her as a threat. Those out for a walk with their boyfriends or husbands gave future-Stephanie a flinty look and tried - largely unsuccessfully - to pull their partner's attention back on themselves. She saw two women mutter something under their breaths as she ran by, and even without hearing the words, Stephanie could feel her ears burn red.   
  
A few women even treated her to admiring looks, and as future-Stephanie dashed down one street, she could have sworn that one women even winked at her, while playfully biting her lip. Future-Stephanie felt herself immediately look away from the flirting woman, but then forced herself to look back and return the woman's attentions with a shy smile. A shy smile, she thought to herself! There was nothing else shy about Stephanie on that run.   
  
As she felt herself carried through the streets of Boston, future-Stephanie was nearing her hotel again when something suddenly broke her out of her day-dream. Back in the hotel room, Stephanie could feel something tracing a line up her thigh, and the shock of the real-world sensation dragged her - reluctantly - away from her vision.  
  
Re-focussing her eyes on the room around her, she quickly looked down at her thighs to see what had invaded her personal space. She was greatly surprised to discover her own hand was the culprit, one finger gently pressed against her skin, playfully tracing a line up along her left thigh, and with clearly only one final destination in mind. She was even more shocked to discover her other hand was also tracing a finger up the side of her body, and was now lingering just at the edges of her right breast.   
  
Shaking her head firmly, Stephanie pushed her own hands away and out to the side, and coughed a couple of times so as to bring herself fully back to the here and now.   
  
Her mind temporarily cleared of any visions of running through the rain, she checked out the hot pants that had come with the running option. The hot pants were a darker shade of red than the lining on the running shoes, and came only one inch further down from her backside. Stephanie had seen others running in such apparel, occasionally, but this was many times tighter and more revealing than anything she'd ever worked up the courage to wear out in public. The soft fabric felt almost obscene in her hands, and there was certainly no doubt that the material would accentuate the full effects that ten years of daily running could have on the female derriere.   
  
Stephanie heard the words "oh my God" echo through the room, and she guiltily looked at the hotel room door before realising that she'd been the one who'd actually spoken.   
  
With her head turned towards the door, she once again caught the image of the woman in the mirror. Stephanie could now see the woman had a redness in her cheeks that Stephanie hadn't noticed before, and a slightly sheen to her hands and neck that betrayed a certain amount of lady-like perspiration.   
  
Looking back at the bed, Stephanie began to weigh up her options.   
  
A tight, white compression t-shirt and red hot-pants waited for future-Stephanie in one possible universe. In the other universe, future-Stephanie had a walk to and from the hotel pool in whatever swimwear was safely wrapped in the second, as-yet-unopened package.   
  
The second option would of course be the shorter option. It was slightly complicated by the fact though that the hotel she was staying in had two towers, with a reception lobby in the middle that joined the two towers together. Of course, it went without saying that the tower that contained the swimming pool was on the other side of that lobby to the tower that Stephanie was staying in. Stephanie instinctively knew that the Game Master must have known that some how.   
  
If she chose the second option, she have to wear swimwear to and from the pool across what would undoubtedly be a busy lobby, and along several corridors and elevator rides where she'd be on full display. She was under no illusions that the swimwear chosen for her would be some modest one-piece that covered most of her torso. Given the running option, she fully expected something skimpy and revealing.   
  
Of course, she'd seen other women wearing such outfits around, brazenly flaunting themselves to an admiring or jealous public. How hard could it be? Of course, those other women weren't Stephanie Henderson. Those other women didn't have a reputation to maintain, and a sense of what is proper behaviour for a young woman. Perhaps though, she found herself privately thinking, perhaps even Stephanie Henderson's grasp on what is proper behaviour wasn't quite as strong as first assumed.   
  
Her gaze danced back and forward between the opened running package, and the unopened swimming package. Unwilling yet to unwrap the latter, and perhaps channeling some deep-seated need to throw herself at the mercy of chance, Stephanie suddenly grabbed the swimming package and - out of habit more than anything else - headed quickly for the bathroom to get change. As she was about to enter the bathroom, she paused, turned and gave one last look at the clothes left on the bed. A look of almost regret swept across her face, before being replaced by something that still shocked Stephanie to the core. She felt a commitment welling up inside of her that this would not be the last time she faced the option of running in those clothes.   
  
Shivering slightly with uncontrollable anticipation, Stephanie silently disappeared into her impromptu changing room.   
  
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The firm click sounded ten times louder than it should have done. Amazingly, Stephanie even heard it over the pounding of her own heart, as she stood in the tenth floor corridor outside of her room. The click of the room door closing had sent a shockwave through her body, and she was firmly rooted to the floor as she desperately sought self-control over her own limbs. Every fibre of her being seemed to be telling her to get back inside the room, and to cover up the gratuitous amounts of skin that her swimwear was currently flaunting to the world.   
  
Shaking her hands to try and relieve some of the nervousness tension that was paralysing her, she experimentally took a step forward towards the lifts at the end of the corridor. A noise further down from the other end of corridor elicited a small shriek from Stephanie as the thoughts of someone discovering her like this popped into her mind.   
  
Calm down, Stephanie thought to herself. You've got to calm down. There are far more public areas than this deserted corridor for you to make your way through yet.   
  
Stephanie tilted her head back, and clenched her jaw in determination. Tugging at the material of her swimwear slightly, in a futile effort to make it cover more of her body, she then started forward again. Her legs and arms swung in a tense, almost robotic fashion, and every time her own footfalls made a sound in the corridor she had to fight against the urge to fling her arms across her chest and crotch. Nonetheless, she began to make progress towards the lifts that would take her to the lobby, and a wild excitement grew in her eyes.   
  
The swimwear that had been selected for her was not one that would have been found naturally in Stephanie's dresser at home. The tag that had fallen out of the packaging as she'd retrieved the bikini - her mouth wide open in shock at the time - had clearly identified the clothing as coming from the Victoria's Secret's line of swimwear. It was fair to say that Stephanie Henderson was not a valued, repeat customer of Victoria's Secret.   
  
The bikini top was strapless in the bandeau style, and wrapped around her chest to at least cover her nipples. The bandeau was not complete all the way around though. At the front, between her breasts, the two cups were connected by four thin strands of material that kept the bandeau from falling off, but did little to obscure the view of her cleavage. The bandeau's side-ruching only served to even further define the contours of Stephanie's modest, yet mesmerising chest, and the swim top continued around to a simple back clasp that Stephanie swore was going to give away at any time.   
  
The entire bandeau was a rich grape colour. Had Stephanie's mind not been focussed on what other people would be thinking when they saw her, she would've had to admit to herself that she looked rather beautiful in the outfit.   
  
The grape-coloured bandeau was nicely matched by a light purple bikini bottom, whose thin strap-like sides linked a small strip of material that covered her most private of areas to a slightly larger strip of material over her backside. Like the bandeau, the bikini bottoms also had a ruched effect that gathered in the material, only in this case the ruching was directly over her ass so that the material settled deep into between her two cheeks.   
  
Without needing to look in a mirror, Stephanie could feel the material riding gently into her bottom. Unlike with her own - more modest - swimwear at home, any patrons of the hotel who happened to be following Stephanie would get a perfect view of her athletic, well defined backside. Even though there was no breeze to speak off in the corridor, Stephanie could still feel the air gently waft across her bottom, and fully half of each cheek was completely exposed.   
  
She was - Stephanie reflected - no longer tiptoeing out of her comfort zone. She had well and truly caught the first long-haul flight out of her comfort zone, and was heading towards destinations unknown.   
  
The journey to the lifts took less than thirty seconds, and the no-one else was in the corridor. Still, as Stephanie stood by the doors, and pressed the button to call one of the lifts, she felt wave after wave of exhilaration, embarrassment and anticipation wash over her. She stood still for what seemed like minutes as the lifts slowly made their way up to her floor, and with every passing second she felt like her clothes shrunk another millimetre or two, exposing just a tiny bit more skin to anyone who stumbled across her.   
  
Stephanie also couldn't rid herself of the thought that when the lift arrived, someone may already be in it. Not only could she not shake that thought, she couldn't even figure out whether she'd be disappointed or relieved if the lift was empty when it came.   
  
A loud bell-like noise signalled that the lift had finally arrived, and not for the first time today, panic began to well up in Stephanie.   
  
The doors on the right-most lift slid quietly open, and with her arms unnaturally rigid at her sides, Stephanie tentatively walked into it.   
  
The lift was empty. Stephanie outwardly experienced a feeling of relief, although she had to admit the feeling was far more muted than she'd been expecting. As well as that though, the feeling of relief was tinged with something else that she couldn't quite put her finger on.   
  
Stephanie stood in the middle of the lift and pressed the lobby button on the control panel. As the doors slid shut, obscuring the view of her relatively safe corridor, the notion came to Stephanie that the next time the doors opened, there would most likely be somebody else on the other side. Stephanie felt something stir inside of her. There was that strange feeling again.   
  
She was on the tenth floor, and the lift would only take fifteen or twenty seconds to reach the Lobby. The light on the control panel counted down the floors as she headed ever onwards to a date with a lobby full of hotel patrons and staff.   
  
Nine, eight, seven, seven, seven. Seven. Hang on. The light had stopped at seven. With a jolt she realised the lift was slowing down too. She hadn't hit the button for floor six though, which left only one other possible explanation...   
  
Stephanie gulped as the doors slowly began to slide open.   
  
Beyond the opening doors, the lights of the sixth floor corridor shone brightly, and illuminated the figure of a man waiting patiently, head buried in a paperback book. The man barely glanced up as the doors finished opening. He walked into the lift and took up a position next to Stephanie, casting only a cursory glance at the control panel to check it was going in the right direction.   
  
Stephanie stood frozen to the spot, starring directly ahead at the now closing doors. As the floor jolted slightly, indicating the lift's continued journey to the lobby, she could feel her heart racing along, and perspiration began to build up once more.   
  
The man's appearance in the lift had suddenly driven home the enormity of what Stephanie was doing. Standing there in her Victoria's Secret swimwear, she was now more exposed to this stranger than she'd ever been exposed to a stranger, or a even a friend, before.   
  
Stephanie Henderson - someone who her friends and family would instantly describe as "reserved" and "quiet" - was now heading into a crowd of people wearing this flimsy bikini.   
  
As these thoughts raced through her mind, she felt movement from the man beside her. For the first few seconds of the ride, the man had kept reading his book. Obviously engrossed in it's contents, the man had initially only given Stephanie the briefest of side-looks so as not to walk into anyone already in the lift.   
  
Now though, a change was sweeping over the man. As Stephanie turned her head slightly to look, the man's eyes stopped moving across the page and became fixed on a single spot. As she watched, his eyes slowly grew wider and wider, until they almost seemed to be popping out of his head. Then, as if caught by a fishing line that Stephanie was expertly wielding, his eyes began inexorable journey towards Stephanie's bikini clad body.   
  
The man, rendered speechless momentarily and with his mouth slightly open, let his eyes wander up and down Stephanie's body. She could actually feel his eyes moving over her skin, up her legs, lingering on the thin side-bands of her bikini bottoms. She felt her own face go a little red, as she imagined his laser-like gaze on her bottom might burn through the thin purple strips of material and cause her bikini bottoms to flutter helplessly down to her ankles.   
  
As his gaze finally continued up, she could feel a tinkling sensation where she imagined he was looking. Suddenly, the whole world exploded into a cacophony of sensations. The otherwise smooth lift ride now felt bumpy, as every slight, minor, almost imperceptible jolt from the lift shaft shot up through her nearly overloaded sensory system. She felt his eyes rest on her nipples, and almost as if on command, she felt them harden under the thin material of the grape-coloured bandeau. Finally, after what had seemed like minutes but could only have been seconds, his eyes finally met hers, and he stood there, staring for a full two uncomfortable seconds. Then, as if belatedly realising how he must look, he shook his head slightly and tried to say something.   
  
"Ahhh... hi? Umm.. yeah, hi." was pretty much all the man could manage though.   
  
Stephanie had been desperately trying to suppress a low, thrilled moan that she could feel building up inside of her, and it took her a few more seconds before she trusted herself to open her mouth to reply.   
  
"Hey." she said, with forced calmness. She quickly waved a hand in what she hoped would be interpreted as a friendly greeting.   
  
The man was medium build, dressed in a light brown t-shirt and with reasonably nice dark grey sports pants. He was also, judging by the movement at the top of his sports pants, wearing fairly loose boxers underneath. His hair was cut short, but with a sense of style around the fringe. If Stephanie had to guess, she'd have said that they were roughly the same age. Stephanie had never overtly courted the attentions of men using her physical assets before. Previously, it had been the intellectual pursuits that had guided her to friends or potential partners. Now, dressed as she was, Stephanie found that she couldn't deny that she - at least in part - welcomed his attentions.   
  
The man saw Stephanie's wave, and went to return it, instantly sending the book he was carrying crashing to the floor. Startled, the man reached down retrieve it and took three goes to actually pick it up off the carpet.   
  
Stephanie just managed stopped herself in time from laughing, and surprised herself to find that part of her was secretly loving this.   
  
As the man finally stood up again, the lift itself stopped, and the counter on the control panel signalled that it's two occupants had now been safely delivered to the lobby.   
  
Stephanie took a deep breath in to steady herself, and the man let out a strangled cough as her chest swelled up with the intake of air.   
  
As the doors opened, Stephanie looked at the man again.   
  
"After you?" she politely asked.   
  
The man, flustered by the book falling and the beautiful woman in front of him, hastily waved away the gesture and indicated that Stephanie - as the indisputable lady in their twosome - should most certainly go first.   
  
Stephanie found it within herself to let a small smile grace her lips, and she nodded her head in recognition. As she turned to look out into the lobby, she felt herself become detached from her own body. She felt it move out of the lift almost under it's own control, and into the wide expanse beyond. Feeling like an impartial, remote observer of her own actions, she even noticed the man follow slowly behind her. He almost stumbled a couple of times, his focus never wavering from the retreating backside of a beautiful woman in a skimpy bikini.   
  
As she walked into the hotel lobby with an absurdly over-the-top calm, the man was suddenly not alone in having Stephanie Henderson as the immediate centre of his universe. In that respect, he had ten other men and women for company.   
  
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The pool room door was flung open, and Stephanie almost threw herself through the door frame. Quickly checking that there was no-one else in the pool, she just as quickly closed the door, threw her back against it, and let out a laugh that rang loudly around the large rooftop facility.   
  
The past few minutes had been absolutely terrifying. Not to mention absolutely amazing. Terrifyingly amazing. Or perhaps just amazingly terrifying.   
  
As the peals of laughter slowly settled down, she closed her eyes and visualised those past few minutes all over again.   
  
The lobby experience had been the best part by far.   
  
As she had stepped out in the open area, the two staff members on duty behind the reception desk had, in perfect synchronisation, swivelled their heads to watch her move. Both of the staff members were men, and both had been in mid-conversation with other patrons when the lift doors had revealed Stephanie to the masses.   
  
Confused by the sudden break in conversation, the hotel guests had then also turned to look at whatever had grabbed the staff's attention, and were now similarly taking in the beautiful form of a petite brunette.   
  
Stephanie made herself walk across the lobby to where the second set of lifts allowed access to the other tower. At the top of that tower was the swimming pool where she'd been instructed to swim 15 lengths. She was trying to suppress the thought that - as odd as this might look now to the assembled men and women around her - she'd have to make the return trip soaking wet, and with small water droplets glistening all over her body. Now \_that\_ would be embarrassing.   
  
A man and a woman sat at a table in the lobby, seemingly waiting for a taxi, bags waiting by their sides. Husband and wife? Boyfriend and girlfriend? Stephanie didn't know and couldn't know, but what she did know was that as she walked past them both, the man sat up noticeably. From the corner of her eye, she could tell he was trying to check her out without being seen to check her out. She could also tell that his female companion saw through his futile attempts at hiding this just as easily as Stephanie did. As Stephanie continued on her way, she could see the woman's eyes narrow, and she half-imagined that she saw the words "bitch" surface on the woman's lips.   
  
Stephanie knew she should be embarrassed at flaunting herself like this. Part of her was embarrassed. Deeply embarrassed. Sure, some women wore this style of clothing in public. Some women also danced naked in bars for a living. Some women covered themselves up completely so no-one could see anything. She'd always thought she knew where she was placed on that spectrum of fully clothed to fully naked, but she was beginning to get the sense that she may have just found herself sliding along to the right a little.   
  
She was also tired. Not physically tired, at least not yet. The tiring business trip hadn't quite hit her physically. That might have to wait until she was safely home over the weekend. No, she was tired emotionally. She suddenly found a voice inside of her telling herself that she was tired of being the quiet one. Tired of being the reserved, professional-above-all-else person that silently faded into the background. She was tired of not being noticed.  
  
As the man and his partner continued to notice her, she felt a new found well of strength bubble up inside of her.   
  
She forced herself to a stop, and then turned to face the couple. Fixing a smile on her face to mask the waves of terror, excitement, fear and arousal that she was currently trying to ride, she took a few steps towards them.   
  
"Hey." Stephanie said. "I don't suppose either of you two know where the pool is, do you?"   
  
Stephanie knew where the pool was, of course, but that wasn't the point of the question.   
  
The man didn't respond, and seemed preoccupied with trying to figure out where he should look, or whether he should pretend not to hear the question and let his companion deal with it.   
  
His companion seemed to suddenly give him a slightly withering look, and then turned to her face Stephanie.   
  
"Top floor, south tower." she said, with a hint of steel in her voice. "You should probably hurry. Pool will be closing soon."   
  
Stephanie nodded her head in acknowledgement. Message received. Rough translation: "Get out of here now, I don't like the way my partner's checking you out."   
  
"Thanks." Stephanie said, with a sweetness in her voice that probably sounded as forced as it felt.   
  
Turning on her heels, Stephanie continued back on her journey, sensing that behind her the other woman was beginning to have a few things to say to her man. Stephanie almost felt sorry for him, but she was too swept up in the moment to give that too much attention.   
  
She was now in the exact middle of the lobby, walking past the main front doors of the hotel. Whether it was her, or someone outside, something triggered the doors and they opened up to let in the cold late afternoon air.   
  
Stephanie felt a rush as a breeze wafted into the lobby, and played around her tummy, breasts and legs. Her hyper-sensitive sense of touch screamed at the interaction of the breeze on her bare skin, and the coldness of the air gave her a strangely enjoyable sensation around her bottom. It was almost like her wind was giving her ass a playfully, light, innocent slap, and Stephanie found herself confused at the arousal that she felt from that. The Stephanie that she knew certainly wasn't in to that sort of carry-on. Of course, the Stephanie that she knew was safely back in her hotel room, dreaming up excuses for not having completed the race.   
  
The outer doors closed again, and the breeze receded. Stephanie continued on her way, through a sea of glances, gasps, and disapproving looks.   
  
In reality, the lobby wasn't actually that big, and in normal time a woman could cross the entire place in under a minute. Stephanie was travelling in bikini-time though, and she was so wired on the emotion of the moment that she felt like ten minutes passed before she finally reached the south tower's lifts.   
  
She pressed the up button to summon a lift, and almost immediately the doors of the central lift pulled apart. The lift inside was empty, and Stephanie gracefully made her way inside and turned around to face front. She was somewhat startled to see the man from the previous lift standing right there, almost about to enter the lift too. He was still holding his book tightly too him, and he seemed slightly surprised to be there himself.   
  
Stephanie opened her mouth to say something, but her mind froze for a moment. She fumbled for the "open door" button, and held it pressed so the door wouldn't slide shut and the man would be trapped outside.   
  
Neither one of them said anything for a moment, and Stephanie realised she couldn't exactly hold the button forever.   
  
"Ahh.." Stephanie ventured, "are you coming up this tower too?"   
  
"What? Umm, no. No, sorry. I'm... ahh..." the man seemed caught out by the question and momentarily unsure of where he actually was going. As he desperately cast his eyes around him to figure out where he was, a spark of recognition seemed to suddenly hit him.   
  
"Yes, that's right, I'm going to the reception desk". The man said, with some measure of authority returning to his voice.   
  
"Oh." Stephanie said, unsure exactly how that brought the man to be standing in front of her. "Well, the reception desk is back that way." She pointed back to the middle of the lobby, and the man slowly turned to look at where she was indicating.   
  
"Oh, yes." the man continued, stumbling over this words. "Yes, yes, of course. I was... umm... just making sure you got to the, agh, ... lift safely."   
  
The man instantly scrunched up his eyes as the last word escaped from his lips, and agony consumed his facial features at the all too obvious stupidity of what he'd just said. Stephanie wasn't exactly a mind-reader, but she didn't need to be one to know that the one and only thought going through the man's head right now was a far less polite take on "You idiot! Who in their right mind says something like that?!"   
  
Stephanie let the "open door" button go, and placed a hand delicately over her mouth to hide the smile that she was currently sporting.   
  
"Well, good luck with the reception, sir." She replied, and gave another small wave with her other hand.   
  
"Yes, err... thanks." the man said in return, slowly backing away and forcing a cheerful smile.   
  
As the doors of the lift began to close on her admirer, Stephanie had a sudden attack of un-Stephanie'ness. The attacks had been constant and overwhelming over the past few minutes.   
  
"Excuse me, sir?" she called, attracting the attention of the man one last time. As he turned to look at her, and with doors narrowing the view of the lift car, Stephanie spun around on the balls of her feet, bent over slightly at the waist, placed her hands on her knees, and gave her fellow hotel guest a sexy shake of her bottom. Then, with the doors almost closed, she spun back around and bounced up and down on the spot a couple of times. She found herself consumed in the moment as she felt the bandeau both support her breasts, yet still permit their jiggling as they gently rose and fell with her movements.   
  
The doors finally closed, and the last thing Stephanie heard from the lobby was the sound of a book hitting the floor for the second time in as many minutes.   
  
She simply had no idea who this woman was.   
  
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Stephanie still had the pool to herself as she completed her tenth length. The excitement from the lobby walk was still with her, and was powering Stephanie on to what would have been a personal best time were she in the mood to time herself.   
  
There were several things she still couldn't comprehend. Firstly, that she'd been out in public with barely half of her backside covered. Secondly, had she really talked to that strange couple with such a confident voice? Thirdly, what was with that show she'd put on for the man from the lift?   
  
She reached the end of the pool, and did a quick turn, before setting off on her eleventh leg. Her slim arms held a hidden power to them, and combined her taut athletic legs, she was propelling herself along at a great rate of knots.   
  
Her stomach tightened as she imagined how she'd look, all wet and flustered, walking back through that lobby.   
  
Was it too late to ring the concierge from the pool phone, and request a towel? Was it too late to consider her modesty.   
  
She turned and pushed off for her twelfth leg, knowing full well the answers to those questions. Yes, and most certainly yes.   
  
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There were fifteen floors in the south tower of her hotel. It would take all of thirty seconds for the lift to make it's way down to the lobby from the top, but as before seconds were stretching into minutes.   
  
This time, she didn't even have the lift to herself from the very beginning. She'd emerged from the pool only a few moments ago, and had discovered that at some point late in her swim, she'd been joined by a couple of older men - perhaps in their forties.   
  
As she'd stepped out, energised by the fifteen lengths and - perhaps even more so - by the thought of what was to come, she'd realised that she should probably get rid of a little of the surface water pouring off her body. There was a difference between "sexy-when-wet" and "just-dripping-wet". The part of her who was curious about putting on a show was getting louder and more demanding, and the rest of Stephanie Henderson was having a great deal of difficulty talking reason to that other part.   
  
She'd decided that it was within the spirit of the rules given to her that she could at least shake some of the more obvious water off her body.   
  
She'd stood by the side of the pool - devoid of towel - and quickly shook herself, flipping her hair around twisting her body and arms this way and that. Some of the water flicked off, and she felt now that she was wet, without being saturated. This entire action though was greeted with a sudden bought of coughing.   
  
Looking out into the pool, she realised that she was not alone, and that the coughing was from an older gentleman who had seen her and completely messed up his stroke, resulting in swallowing a decent amount of pool water. As he struggled to regain his composure, Stephanie also noticed that he had a friend, who was sitting at one end, legs in the water, about to hop in, but now entirely engrossed in Stephanie's performance.   
  
Stephanie felt the red flush of embarrassment flood into her cheeks, and instinctively turned to leave. She'd only made it three steps though, before that rebellious side of her seized control of her legs. Refusing to let her take another step further, that part of her instead forced Stephanie to turn around, and placed her hands on her hips.   
  
Stephanie found herself opening her mouth again.   
  
"Excuse me sirs, has anyone seen my towel?" she asked, seemingly innocently.   
  
The men spluttered for a moment, and made a show of casting their eyes around the poolside. After a few brief moments though, it became self-evident that no such towel was going to materialise. One of the men even made the genuinely kind offer of lending her his towel. Stephanie smiled inwardly at that gentlemanly gesture.   
  
"Oh, it's okay, but thank you anyway. I'm sure I can slip back quietly to the North Tower without being noticed." Stephanie smiled at them, and then shocked herself by giving them a sexy wink.   
  
Turning around, she headed out of the pool, and bit her lip at the thought of what she'd just left those men imagining.   
  
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After leaving the pool, Stephanie had found that there were more than just the two men up on the top floor with her. The floor also had a smaller array of hotel rooms, mostly larger suites for the richest guests, and two of those guests were waiting at the lift to head down to the lobby.   
  
They'd all entered the lift together. Stephanie in her wet bikini, water droplets on her exposed skin, her brown hair now darker after the swim and flattened to her neck and back.   
  
Her companions on this return ride was - by sheer coincidence - the older woman from the reception this morning, and her companion. Now that Stephanie had a few seconds with them, she guessed the older woman was in her late 40s. She was slightly overweight, although far from obese, and dressed in what were clearly expensive clothes. The dress she wore covered her completely, although the material glistened in the light of the lift car. A necklace of large pearls featured prominently around her neck, and she was several rings that clearly sported valuable diamonds. Her own black hair seemed was longer than Stephanie's own brown hair, and was also straight and severe.   
  
Her companion was a well dressed man who looked in his early 50s, although possibly quite spry for that age. A tuxedo and dress pants gave off an image of affluence and influence, and Stephanie couldn't have felt more at odds with these people given the state of her own attire.   
  
Her breathe quickened again, and she didn't say a word to either the woman or the man as the rode to the lobby. Earlier, the woman had harrumphed her for being slightly tardy in approaching the reception desk, and clearly nothing Stephanie was doing now was improving that first impression in the eyes of the woman.   
  
Stephanie heard the tut-tut of the woman, as she leaned in to whisper something to her companion. Without even looking, she could feel the man's furtive glances thrown her way. As with the man in the previous lift, Stephanie could feel his gaze exploring the most intimate parts of her body. She almost felt like he was caressing her backside, and just as she was about to almost turn away, she then sensed that he was looking at the side of her breasts. The thought that her nipples might be quite prominent in the bandeau material flashed to the front of Stephanie's mind. Closing her eyes, she could see herself through the man's own eyes. A petite, brunette beauty in a scandalous swim suit. Her backside only half covered, and two sharp points protruding from the front of her top.   
  
Stephanie gulped, not for the first time tonight, and almost gasped for air when the lift suddenly chimed to announce their arrival at the lobby.   
  
Stephanie dashed out as the doors opened, without even an acknowledgement to her companions, and set her eyes firmly on the lifts for the North Tower. Striding forward, she wondered why this was getting harder with every possible step. She'd only just been down here before. She'd almost been confident then. There was something about the water on her skin though. Whether it was the feeling of the droplets slowly easing - almost teasing - down her body that made her even more sensitive, or whether it was just the fact that everyone would be wondering why this brazen beauty hadn't bothered drying herself. There was something about this return trip that was making Stephanie almost hyper-ventilate. The intensity, the raw emotion of the moment, was beginning to get to her.   
  
Eyes ahead, one foot in front of another, Stephanie swept through the lobby, interrupting conversations and dragging attention along with her.   
  
As she passed the outside doors, they once again opened to let in the night air. This time the cold breeze interaction with the water on her skin forced a shivering moan from her. The moan wasn't just from the cold though, and Stephanie was beginning to wonder if she'd keep it together long enough to make it back to the room.   
  
She finally reached the lifts, and mercifully there was no-one else waiting for one. As she continued her quick, sharp breathing, she was acutely aware that he rest of the lobby was unnaturally silent. After what seemed like an eternity, the bell of the arriving lift echoed through the lobby, shattering that unholy quiet, and the doors to the left-most shaft beckoned. Her emotions on a knife edge, Stephanie threw herself into the lift and frantically hit the "close doors" button, lest someone else try and join her for the ride.   
  
The doors closed. Stephanie's eyes closed. She'd survived, for now.   
  
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