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Written by Cathy Kelly

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CATHY KELLY

Someone Like You

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To John, with all my love

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SOMEONE LIKE YOU

CHAPTER ONE

Hannah stretched one slim, tanned leg in the direction of the taps, clasped the hot tap expertly with her dripping foot and felt hot water flood deliciously into the bath.

'You've done that before,' said Jeff in amusement as she sank back against him in the water, her back slick against his bare chest, nothing but lemon verbena-scented bubbles between them.

'I love reading in the bath and, in the winter, it's horrible sitting up out of the water to turn on the taps, so I've learned how to do it with my feet,' Hannah murmured as the water level rose slowly in the cracked old roll-top bath and the heat flooded all over her limbs. She felt gloriously tired yet happy, every inch of her body satiated even though she'd had practically no sleep last night. Sharing a bath after such a wonderful, marathon lovemaking session had been a brilliant idea. The bath water eased the aches caused by Jeff's very energetic lovemaking. There had been one mad moment when they'd almost fallen off Hannah's bed and she'd just managed not to shriek out loud in agony as a shooting pain had rocketed up her back into her neck. That was obviously the drawback of flings with younger men, she decided gleefully: they had no concept of back problems and were keen to do gymnastic things with mirrors, armchairs and the ties of your dressing gown. The only thing poor Harry had ever done with the ties of his dressing gown was to let them trail behind him all over

the kitchen floor picking up bits of fluff, spare cornflakes and dust.

What was she calling him 'poor Harry' for anyway? 'Poor' my eye. Parasitical, Lying Bastard Harry suited him better. Thinking of parasites, she grimly hoped that his year-long trek around South America meant he'd finally met that infamous parasite that lived in tropical rivers and swam up the urine stream of any man stupid enough to pee in a river. Once it swam into your system, you were in big trouble. Hannah hoped eradicating it would involve some agonizing operation where Harry couldn't sit down without wincing for a week. Something like the duck-billed speculum thingy which women had to endure being inserted for cervical smear tests, but much, much worse.

'Is there anything else you can do with your feet?' Jeff asked wickedly, whisking her away from the Amazon and agonizing medical experiments by nibbling her ear provocatively.

'No,' Hannah said firmly, concentrating on letting the water soothe the nagging ache in her right hip. She closed her eyes and began planning the next hour: her small suitcase was neatly stowed on top of the wardrobe in the boxroom and the clothes she wanted to take to Egypt were carefully arranged on the boxroom bed. It would take half an hour to pack, ticking off every item of clothing and every toiletry on her pared-down list. Then she had to empty the fridge. No point coming back to a disgustingly smelly kitchen through carelessness. When the kitchen was linked to the sitting room by badly fitting double doors, limiting bad smells was particularly important. Logistically, Hannah thought as her mind ran through her preparations with the precision of a Swiss watch, she only had a couple of minutes more to soak in the bath.

Jeff had other ideas. His mouth began trailing down her neck on to her shoulders while his hands rippled under the

water, stroking Hannah's thighs suggestively. She could feel the muscular chest with its six-pack stomach contracting with desire as he touched her.

She sat up abruptly and turned off the hot tap, her dark hair slicking against her skin like a tangle of seaweed.

'We don't have time, Jeff,' she said sternly. 'It's half nine already. I've got to be at the airport in a couple of hours and I've got some phone calls to make, not to mention the fact that I haven't packed yet.'

Jeff pulled her effortlessly back into the bath with arms used to bench-pressing double her body weight. 'If I was going with you, you wouldn't need to pack very much,' he said, nuzzling her ear. 'Just a couple of G-string bikinis and a sexy dress like that one you were wearing last night.'

Hannah had to smile. The amethyst dress was incredibly daring and unlike anything else in her limited and quite conservative wardrobe: two flimsy spaghetti-strap little slip things worn together, she'd bought it in a designer shop in a sale and it had hung in her wardrobe for a year before she'd felt brave enough to put it on. But last night, for the launch of the hotel's new nightclub, Jupiter, she'd decided to drag it out and wear it.

'There are going to be loads of famous people there. The guest list is like flicking through *Hello!*' one of Hannah's hotel receptionist colleagues had wittered excitedly about the launch weeks beforehand. 'We've got to pull out all the stops, girls. We can't let the hotel down.'

So Hannah had pulled out all the stops, had set her long dark hair in curlers so it rippled down her back like a sheet of raw silk and had shoe-horned herself into the ruinously expensive dress she'd nearly taken back to the shop so many times on the grounds that it was a waste of money. All the other Triumph Hotel receptionists had gasped in shock at the sight of the normally staid Ms Campbell in something other than her off-duty uniform of crisp white

shirt, ironed blue jeans, blazer and loafers. She looked phenomenally sexy, they said, stunned. Who'd have thought she could transform herself from a frostily polite receptionist into a siren with just a dress?

Jeff Williams, who ran the hotel's new gym and was as yet unfamiliar with Hannah's reputation as a bit of an ice maiden, had gasped with pleasure at the sight of her gym-toned, curvaceous body clad in a wisp of filmy chiffon that clung in all the right places.

Unlike the starstruck members of staff who spent the night gazing cow-eyed at the various stars knocking back Moët in the roped-off area of the nightclub, Jeff and Hannah spent the evening discovering that they both loved to dance. They drank far more mineral water than alcohol as they moved sinuously on the dance floor, jiving, boogie-ing, salsaing and even waltzing when the DJ played some slow, jazzy numbers. High on having fun, it only took two glasses of white wine to give Hannah a heady buzz where the idea of letting Jeff kiss her seemed natural really, rather than a complete mistake.

'I'm ten years older than you,' she reproved as they squashed up together on one seat, his muscular arms wrapped around her and his fair head bent over hers. She felt ridiculously like a teenager on a date, but it was fun.

'Thirty-six is hardly old,' Jeff had murmured, kissing the tendrils of dark hair that clung to her cheekbones.

As his bachelor pad was miles across town and sounded like a laddish bombsite shared with three other young men, it seemed more sensible to have that cup of coffee in Hannah's immaculate apartment, a mere stone's throw from the Triumph Hotel.

Sitting on the small, hard sofa-bed, Jeff had admired the unusual brocade cushions that Hannah had hand-stamped with gold fabric paint one weekend, and then attempted a little handiwork of his own, stroking fingers up and down

Hannah's arm in a very erotic manner. He hadn't pounced on her. She'd known he wouldn't: used to having women swoon at his gym instructor physique, Jeff didn't have to bother at all to attract gorgeous women, so he always made a point of making sure they knew what they were doing when things got intimate.

'Are you sure you want to?' he asked, his eager and ardent eyes proof that he certainly wanted to.

Hannah, who'd already decided she deserved a celebratory bonk after twelve months of celibacy, had said yes. It had been wonderful, rather like picking up the old tennis racquet you hadn't used since you'd fallen in love with Wimbledon and Ivan Lendl sixteen years ago, and realizing that you could still lob the ball over the net without making a complete fool of yourself.

Jeff wasn't to know that the last time she'd had that much exercise, she'd been in the middle of a class of fellow step-aerobics fans, all sweating like pigs with their T-shirts glued to their backs, their thighs aching and a supermodel-lookalike screaming at them to 'move your arms, girls!'

Neither was she about to tell him that he was the first person other than herself to sleep in the queen-sized bed with the yellow brocade headboard Hannah had re-covered because she hated the original peach Dralon fabric. Men, particularly young men, she always felt, were nervous of the concept of both celibacy and women who made a conscious decision to have sex, instead of just getting carried away by too much vodka and a nice line in flattery. Conscious decisions implied another big C – commitment.

She figured that if Jeff discovered he was the one she'd chosen to break her enforced year of celibacy, he'd probably have run out of the apartment like the clappers, imagining he'd got himself involved with a neurotic bunny boiler. If only he knew.

Life had taught Hannah that men were useful for only

one thing, and it wasn't earning money, either. She'd learned her lessons early on, from her feckless father. When you were born in the wilds of Connemara where only the hardiest of livestock could survive, farmers like her father either toiled away until their fingers were gnarled with arthritis and they were old before their time, or they turned to the bottle and let their wives shoulder the burden of feeding the kids and paying the electricity bill. Hannah's father had chosen the second path.

Her mother was the one who'd grown old before her time, her strong-boned face a mask of lines and misery by the time she was forty. Watching Anna Campbell come home white with exhaustion from cleaning out the kitchens in the local hotel and then sit down to knit another piece of the Aran sweater she was being paid buttons to finish, made Hannah vow never to end up in the same position. No man would ever enslave her in unholy matrimony or come home roaring drunk, screaming for a dinner he hadn't contributed a penny to. No way.

She'd earn her fortune and be utterly independent, a career warrior who'd never have to strain her eyes knitting by the lights of a feeble lamp for the extra few pounds to kit her children out in reasonable clothes for Sunday Mass.

Failing her final school exams and the arrival of Harry had been the fatal glitches in this foolproof plan. But, thought Hannah, grinding her teeth even though the dentist had warned her to stop doing it, she was back on track now. Sort of. A new job, a cultural holiday to give her some of the education she knew she lacked, and a new life. Jeff, lovely though he was, wasn't part of the new life. He'd get in the way and make her think about love and things. She'd had enough of love to last her a lifetime, thank you very much.

The water was getting uncomfortably cold and she was

going to be late if she didn't move soon. Hannah stood up gracefully and climbed out of the bath.

'You're in great shape,' Jeff said, admiring her toned arms and small waist.

'You mean for someone of my age,' she teased, wrapping a towel around her body and rubbing her jawbone where she felt the most pain from her constant teeth grinding.

'For anybody,' he emphasized. 'You must work out a lot. I see so many women who let themselves get out of shape. They think if they're not an athletic build, why bother. But you really work at it.'

Hannah paused in towelling her hair dry and thought of the hours she'd spent on the StairMaster in the past year, jaw clenched as she pounded Harry out of her mind. Getting him out of her life had been difficult enough: eradicating him from her thoughts was another thing entirely.

Before Harry (or BH as she liked to think of it) she'd been in reasonable shape for a twenty-seven-year-old who smoked like a chimney. Of medium height and with a genetic tendency to put on weight, she was still young enough not to bother much with exercise, preferring the Marlboro Light Exercise Plan of lighting up whenever she felt hungry.

But during the Harry years, she'd spent far too long cuddling up next to him on their old sofa, sharing mammoth takeaways and entire boxes of chocolates as they watched videos. Life was one long *Little House on the Prairie* fantasy of delicious meals and lazy evenings toasting their toes in front of the fire while Harry discussed the novel he was going to write and Hannah stopped caring about leaving her dead-end job in the dress shop to pursue her dream of being rich and utterly independent. She stopped caring about her figure and was even persuaded to give up smoking when Harry went off the fags for an article he was writing about nicotine tablets. No cigarettes

meant more chocolates and cups of tea with three sugars to make up for the pain of wanting a fag. Harry didn't put on a pound: Hannah put on another twelve.

In cohabiting bliss, her ambition had disappeared along with her waistline. Until that awful August day she'd thrown him out and had started reclaiming her life – and her figure.

'I go to the gym and to three aerobics classes, one toning class, and I walk about ten miles a week,' she told Jeff.

'You can tell,' he said solemnly. 'You gotta put the work in to get the body you want.'

Hannah nodded sagely. It was a pity she was leaving the hotel. It would have been fun to work out with Jeff, even if their fling probably wouldn't have lasted very long.

Men like Jeff were always looking over your shoulder to see who was coming along behind you. One pretty, pouting twenty-something in a thong leotard asking him to explain the lateral pull-down machine and it'd have been all over.

Mind you, if she'd been staying on at the hotel, she wouldn't have gone off with Jeff in the first place. The Triumph Hotel's gossip network was far superior to the actual hotel network. It took over half an hour to have an omelette delivered to a guest's bedroom via room service and only ten minutes for a juicy bit of news to travel all the way from the kitchens to the concierge desk, having reached the business centre and the restaurant into the bargain. The gossiping that would have gone on if Hannah had been seen walking out with the gym's new manager would have been hilarious to behold.

After a year when she had gossiped with nobody, dated nobody and revealed not one item of information about herself to the naturally inquisitive staff, Hannah couldn't have coped with seeing the floodgates of curiosity come rushing open. But she had her reference, her new job was

lined up for when she returned from holiday and nobody could touch her for one carefree fling. 'Indulge yourself,' advised all the women's magazines when it came to getting over unhappy love affairs. 'Have a massage, treat yourself to an aromatherapy session.' Jeff was her first AH (After Harry) treat. More fun than aromatherapy and less painful than a facial, but guaranteed to give you an inner glow that Oil of Olay couldn't manage.

Happily unaware of his status as a reward for a year of celibacy, Jeff let more hot water flood into the bath and lay back in the bubbles. Trying not to let herself get irritated because he obviously had no intention of leaving, Hannah concentrated on rubbing moisturizer into her face.

She had been able to reshape her body with endless hours of exercising but her face remained stubbornly the same as ever: rounded with a pointed chin, slightly too-beaky nose and bright almond-shaped eyes the exact colour of toffee. With a sprinkling of amber freckles scattered across her nose and cheekbones, the cumulative effect of sparkling eyes and the rippling nutbrown hair should have been that of a casually pretty woman. Attractive but no beauty, would be the conclusion if someone had described Hannah to a stranger.

But a simple description would leave out the very thing which transformed her. Hannah glowed with that fleeting, most unbottleable quality that people lacking it did everything to acquire – sex appeal. From the way she walked with that languid sway of her enduringly curvy hips, to the way she drank her tea, wide mouth pursing up softly around the china to take a first sip, screamed of sexuality. She didn't do it on purpose: in fact, she didn't have to do anything. Hannah Campbell, thirty-six-year-old hotel receptionist and spinster of this parish, had been born like that. And it drove her insane.

When her long shaggy hair was tamed into the gleaming

knot she wore for work and her small tortoiseshell glasses sat on her nose, Hannah could look as stern as the headmistress of a school for delinquents. Which was why she'd never bothered to get contact lenses. Nowadays she wanted to be able to hide her natural sexuality, to conceal it with sedate clothes, fierce glances and Reverend Mother spectacles.

Sex appeal was all very well in its place but all it had ever given Hannah was Trouble, with a capital T. Being naturally sexy in her rural home town meant you either got an undeserved reputation as a complete slapper or you aroused rage amongst the local lads who didn't take kindly to being constantly given the cold shoulder.

Sex appeal was all very well for Hollywood starlets, Hannah felt, but for normal women it brought sheer, unending hassle. Well, she amended, with a smidgen of guilty pleasure, her sex appeal had given her the delectable Jeff. But he had overstayed his welcome so it was time for Sexy Hannah to disappear and Ms Cojones of Steel Campbell to take her place.

She expertly coiled her wet hair into a scrunchie and fixed her visitor with the steely look she'd perfected when departing hotel guests insisted they'd had only two drinks in the hotel bar the previous night instead of the ten doubles itemized on their bar bill.

'Jeff, you've got to get out of the bath and leave. I need to be out the door in three-quarters of an hour and I need time to myself. Come on, now.'

Responding to her schoolmarm voice the way he hadn't responded to her gentle wheedling, Jeff climbed out of the bath, stood in front of her and stretched, his splendid naked body dripping water on to the black and white tile-effect lino.

Hannah couldn't help staring. God, he was beautiful: from his short blond hair down to his big feet. Six foot of

rippling muscle without a flaw anywhere. Poor Michelangelo would have killed to sculpt something like Jeff Williams.

Hannah gulped as she tried to concentrate on what she simply had to do in the next hour. Packing and sorting out her guide books. She wanted to learn something from this holiday and she'd hoped to spend a while reading her *Let's Go: Egypt* so that she wouldn't embarrass herself in front of all the other people on the trip, people who probably knew about history and mythology . . . Then Jeff smiled a slow, lazy smile and traced one finger along her chest until it hooked under her towel and pulled, tumbling the towel to the floor along with her mental timetable.

Oh, what the hell, thought Hannah, letting her sex drive shift into fifth gear. After all those evenings trying to forget what physical pleasure had been like and watching endless re-runs of *Inspector Morse*, she deserved this. It wouldn't take her that long to pack. She could read her guide book on the plane.