

I happily let him lead me out through the back door, followed closely by Brian and Steve. Minutes later, James and I were cuddling on the back seat of the beat-up band van, Nomad's primary transport, for the short drive back to the motel. James was murmuring how he couldn't wait to get me alone. Brian, who was driving, was trying to get me to navigate, and Steve was stretched out, riding shotgun and snoring lightly.

"Turn right at the next light," I called out to Brian, while James busied himself with one hand under my sparkly tank top and the other slipping down the front of my jeans. "Stop," I whispered to him.

"Me? Stop?" Brian called out.

"No, you go. You stop," I told James and swatted his hands away. I was not into public displays of affection, and we would be back at the motel in just a couple of minutes, I reasoned. But James was not to be ignored, and just for a moment, I gave in to the thrill of being desired.

Arriving back at the motel, Brian flung open the door to let us out. The cool night air enveloped me as I struggled back into my top and pulled my jeans up. Suddenly shy, I whispered to James that I couldn't let anyone see me. Even at this second-rate establishment, fraternizing with guests was *verboten* and would get you fired. Just ask Rosa, former member of the housekeeping staff. She had changed a traveling salesman's sheets, but rolled around with him on them first. Goodbye, Rosa!

"No problem." James pulled off his T-shirt and covered my face with it. Then he hoisted me over his shoulder and within seconds, we were back in his room and everything felt right and wonderful, and I once again experienced the thrill that was post-concert high James Sheridan, Rock God.

After a second nearly sleepless night, I was dozing and James got up to take a shower. When the phone rang, he called out for me to answer it. Knowing it could be someone from housekeeping or even the front desk, I decided to pick up but not say anything until the caller identified himself. It was Alex.

"James?" he asked. "No, it's Jill," I told him. "Who? Oh yeah, motel girl. Put my brother on." *God, what was this guy's problem?*

"He's in the shower," I told him. "Do you want me to have him call you?"

"Yeah, sure, and tell him we're due at the venue for a sound check in 15, okay? Got that?"

"Sure thing," I muttered, and hung up before he could say anything more.

Just then James came back in looking like the cat that swallowed the canary. Wearing a towel around his waist, his long hair dripping, he asked, “Who was that?”

“It was Alex,” I told him. “God, he hates me.” James looked concerned. “What did he say?” I felt foolish. “Nothing. I mean, he just... I don’t know. I just don’t think he likes me very much.”

“He’s just jealous,” James teased. “He always wants what I have, and I saw you first.” He crossed the room and wrapped me up in a hug.

“Wait, no,” I protested when his hands started exploring my half-naked body. “You’ve got to get down to the Palace, James,” I told him. “Alex said something about a sound check.”

“Oh, bloody hell,” he complained. “God damn Alex and his sound checks.” And he started to kiss me again. Minutes later, we were rudely interrupted by a pounding on the door. I ran and hid in the bathroom while James opened the door just a crack to talk with Brian. I heard enough of the conversation to know that something was going on with Alex and everyone seemed to be walking on egg shells to avoid pissing him off further. James came back, looking embarrassed, and told me, “I’ve got to go, Jill. I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay,” I told him. “I’ve got a lot to do today and before you know it, I need to be back here. At the front desk, I mean. Not *here*, here,” I explained, gesturing around the room.

“But I want you *here*, here,” said James. “Promise. Okay?”

*Okay?* Yeah, it was more than okay. I told him that I probably couldn’t make it to the concert, but that I would meet him after my shift ended at midnight. He kissed me and hurried out and I lay back on the bed with a big smile on my face. Shivering with excitement at the thought of seeing him again that night, I allowed myself a few minutes of daydreaming, then hopped up and prepared to leave. Reaching into my bag for my keys, I suddenly realized that I was stranded—my car was still parked downtown in the Palace parking lot. I peeked out the window to check if the guys had left yet, but I couldn’t see the van or the wagon. I would be lucky if my car hadn’t been towed or stolen, I realized, as I picked up the phone on the nightstand and called Beth to have her come get me. She said she would, so I hunkered down in the room until I heard her honking her horn twenty minutes later. I would offer to buy her lunch or something. I hoped that she didn’t have Jesse with her, as I had a lot to tell her and none of it was rated ‘G.’