



Friday Night Delights

By Selena Blake

## **Chapter Five**

Friday night Zach strode up to the bar where Garrett Martin was serving drinks. Thanks to Monica and Cherie, Zach knew more than he wanted about the bartender's attributes. And while he didn't support the plan, he supported Cherie and he certainly wasn't saying no to dancing with her.

Anything that put her in his arms was fine by him.

"Rolling Rock. Thanks."

Garrett nodded and for a brief second, his gaze traveled past Zach to the dance floor. But he quickly returned to the business at hand, plucked a chilled green bottle from the ice bin, popped the top and slid it across the well-worn slab of wood.

Zach murmured his thanks and turned to survey the crowd. Jackson and Monica were gyrating in the center of the dance floor. Cherie and her girlfriends surrounded the couple, arms raised as they hopped around, singing at the top of their lungs to the latest new country hit.

They certainly knew how to attract attention. Zach didn't miss the way several other pairs of eyes were locked on the fun-loving-party.

Even Garrett seemed to be sneaking not-so-covert glances their way. Maybe Monica was right and all she'd needed was to show Garrett that she was a desirable woman. Still, Zach hated games. He liked to think he was smart enough to know a good thing when he found it.

He zeroed his gaze on Cherie. She was as good as it got. Currently back to back with Jackie, gyrating to the song, footloose and fancy free. He couldn't wait to get his hands on her.

But that was a problem within itself. As soon as he laid a finger on her, he was going to want so much more. Touching her brought out his most primitive urges and with her sweet voice and delicious mouth, he was a goner. Control lost and the better for it.

A dance floor was not suitable for what he had in mind. He planned to strip off that little slip of a dress, tease her until she begged and then finally, satisfy them both in the most elemental of ways.

"Which one's yours?" Garrett asked, breaking the lusty haze.

"The blonde," Zach called over the music.

Garrett nodded. "Pretty."

There was no desire or interest on the other man's part. That struck Zach as odd and he couldn't tell if the bartender honestly respected another man's territory or if he genuinely wasn't interested. But what red blooded, heterosexual male wouldn't want Cherie?

"You must see a lot of beautiful women," Zach replied.

It wouldn't hurt to see if Monica had a chance. The sooner they fixed that situation the sooner Zach could rest easy and have Cherie all to himself.

Garrett shrugged. "Honestly, they blur together."

There it was again. That feeling that the man wasn't all that interested in the women he served. Maybe he had a girlfriend. Heck, maybe he was married but Zach didn't see a wedding band on his left hand. Perhaps he didn't wear it at work so he could earn better tips.

Zach cracked open a peanut, tossed the shell on the floor to join the thousands of others, and popped the salty, roasted nut into his mouth. Had he been a decade younger and serving drinks tonight, even he'd have a hard time staying behind the bar. The group in the center of the dance floor was having one helluva good time.

He let out a slow breath and watched Cherie's hips swing with the rhythm of the song. Holy hell. That little shimmy would drive him crazy if he didn't stop watching. But he was mesmerized, a moth to her flame. And what a flame she was.

Forget dancing with her, the only way he was gonna get outta this bar without a killer erection was if he took matters into his own hands. And he'd never been desperate enough to jerk off in a public bathroom.

He was just about to turn back to the barn when Cherie spun and smiled at him. He sucked in a sharp breath and felt the familiar kick to the heart. It stabbed him every time she glanced his way and looked at him like he was her whole world. With her he wanted to believe that everything and anything was possible. That they could live together from now until their last days.

"She won't wait forever," the voice came from behind him. He swiveled on the barstool and saw Garrett watching Cherie. There wasn't a hint of desire in the man's eyes, just casual observation.

"Yeah."

"Gonna put a ring on that finger?"

"Considering it."

Garrett gave a single nod, poured a shot of whiskey and sent it sliding down the bar. Obviously well practiced, he didn't spill a drop.

"What's holding you back?" Garrett asked.

Zach was surprised at how easy it was to talk to the other man, a stranger by all estimations. But then, that was the sign of a good bartender.

"Not a clue," he said and drained his beer.

"Want another one?"

Zach nodded. He knew his limits and he wasn't anywhere near it. Cherie had fixed him an amazing dinner so he didn't have to worry about drinking on an empty stomach.

“You know that’s all a show, right?” Zach said.

“What?” Garrett leaned closer.

Zach jerked a thumb at the dance floor. “That. Jackson’s gay. Monica’s just trying to get your attention.”

Garrett’s brows lifted. He rocked back on his heels and sighed, his lips forming a small O shape. Then he gave a single, disappointed shake of his head.

It wasn’t the reaction Zach had expected. For a split second Zach wondered if the other man was a racist. There were still plenty shoved into the nooks and crannies of the south. He didn’t have patience with them, just as he didn’t have patience for homophobes.

He straightened atop the barstool and Garrett looked from one end of the bar to the other before leaning toward Zach again.

“Thanks for letting me know. I hate that she got her hopes up for nothing.”

The hair on the back of Zach’s neck prickled.

“Who got their hopes up?” Cherie’s voice was just loud enough to hear over the music and Garrett turned her way.

Zach dreaded the next words out of the other man’s mouth. On one hand, he didn’t need to protect Cherie from the ugly realities of life. She understood them plenty well. But he wanted to. He wanted to protect her and shield her from nastiness and sorrow and pain.

He wanted to keep her away from ugliness, safe in his arms.

Garrett opened his mouth and paused. Damn, Zach really didn’t want to punch the guy but, short fuse and assholes didn’t mix.

“I’m more team Jackson.”

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