

Nate and Audrey from BLIND FAITH – Weathering the Storm

In BLIND FAITH, Nate and Audrey had met and dated before. Years ago. This scene is from when they were young and dating, so it takes place before any of the Sin Brother books. But we included it as extra content for Nate and Audrey's story. I've edited it a little bit since then because I can't help myself. Enjoy!

XO

Rebecca

Nathan Dean stretched his battered knuckles and tossed the bloodied towel into the bin after beating a punching bag senseless. From birth, he'd been a soldier trained as a killing machine, and had worked hard at it for the past twenty years. Yet in all the missions through his teenaged years where he'd not only had fought to survive but had taken life, not once had he felt such desperate uneasiness. The kind of temple-pounding, gut wrenching, future impacting anxiety that only could be brought on by one thing.

Valentine's Day.

"I should've bought her a girly necklace," he muttered. He'd been on mission and then in the infirmary, and he hadn't had a chance to steal either money or gifts.

Jory Dean, his youngest brother, looked up from the computer tablet he was scrutinizing from his bunk across the barracks. At sixteen or seventy years old, he'd hit his growth spurt and now sprawled over the entire bed. "Twenty percent of men buying Valentine's Day presents buy something in the shape of a heart." He glanced back at the screen. "Fifty percent of those have diamonds."

Nate dropped to his bunk and fought a wince as stitches along his ribs pulled. "You've been researching this?"

“Of course.” Jory’s gray eyes sparkled, and he grinned. “You like Audrey, and I figured you’d screw this up.”

Good point. His entire life, he hadn’t paid attention to any holiday other than Christmas, and last time he’d done that, he’d ended up in the infirmary. “This is a made up holiday.”

“Yeah, I know. I guess.” Jory shrugged.

Nate scrubbed both hands down his face. He’d been dating Audrey for nearly a month, and every moment was filled with her. Even half the world away, doing things that would take his soul, somehow the thought of her eased his pain.

At nineteen, the woman was perfect. Pure blue eyes, long dark hair, and the sweetest heart every made. He hadn’t seen real sweetness, softness, his entire life, and everything in him wanted to wrap her close and keep her safe.

Even from him.

The first time he’d kissed her, he’d nearly gone mad with the fire engulfing him. He had to remember to be gentle and not let the beast way down emerge. She deserved softness and not overwhelming heat.

The laptop dinged, and Jory snorted, turning the screen toward Nate. Shane Dean, the crankiest brother, frowned from a world away. “Mission going well,” he muttered. “Are you still stressing about your Cupid issue?”

Nate coughed. “How the hell are you at a computer?” More importantly, had Nate been acting like such a jackass that his brother would violate protocol and call in?

Shane snorted. “You think I can’t find a computer somewhere in the cold?”

Ah. So Shane was in Siberia somewhere. Nate nodded. “I’m fine, Shane. The plan for a nice, safe picnic is in motion.”

Shane shook his head. “If you get out of the compound without getting shot, then the commander and Dr. Madison are letting you go. You understand that, right? This is part of their plan.”

“Yes, I understand that.” God. Nate might be in love, but he wasn’t a moron. “They want Audrey and me together, and I’m sure that bitch Madison is taking notes.” But he could outsmart them and still get what he wanted.

An explosion sounded across the computer. “Gotta go,” Shane said, disconnecting.

“That had better not have been Shane,” Matt said, stomping combat boots into the room. Fake gray had been sprinkled through his hair to give him age, and he hadn’t had a chance to wash it out yet. His gaze serious, his mouth twisting, he tossed a bag toward Nate. “Best I could do.”

“That wasn’t Shane.” Yes. Valentine’s Day cards. Nate took out several and flipped through them. Then he frowned. “They’re all in Arabic.”

Matt shrugged. “You have no idea what I had to do to even find cards there.”

Nate swallowed. “Thanks.” Shit. Matt had been on a deadly mission, and yet he’d made time to steal a couple of cards. “This was nice of you.”

Matt rolled his eyes. “I don’t get it, believe me, but I like Audrey, and if you want to give her a card, do it. Just keep in mind that we’re blowing this place soon, and you’ll say goodbye.”

Nate glanced down at the muted red cards. If everything worked out the way he planned, and to be honest, it never did, Audrey would be coming with them. He needed to get her away from her psychotic mother and the commander.

He glanced at his watch. “Shit. I gotta go.” Standing, he glanced down at his black cargo pants and dark T-shirt, wondering if he should’ve stolen a tie or something from the wardrobe room they used for missions.

Matt clapped him on the shoulder and all but threw him from the room. “Go enjoy your first and probably last Valentine’s Day with Audrey. Forget about the stupid stuff and just concentrate on the woman.”

“He’s gonna screw it up,” Jory whispered, his gaze back on the tablet.

Matt gave a half-salute. “If nothing else, get some.”

Nate shook his head. They really didn’t get it. Audrey was the real deal, and he wasn’t letting her go. No matter what. “See you later.”

Matt turned him then, gray eyes serious. “Enjoy today, pretend you’re a real person, and then store the memory. You know there’s no future with Dr. Madison’s daughter or anybody from our lives right now.”

The words cut deep and settled. Nate nodded, even while his brain discarded that fact. Sometimes nobody could predict the future, and he’d give up his last breath to make sure Audrey was his. Now. Off to play cupid.

A mile or so from the car, after a peaceful walk, Audrey Madison spread her skirts over the army blanket, her gaze on the sprawling mountains in front of them, her body acutely in tune with the soldier setting out food. She’d never met anybody like Nathan, and something in her, deep down and feminine, wanted to heal him. Show him that some people, some women, were good and could be trusted.

When he kissed her, he made her believe in men again. She hadn't had a father, and the soldiers around the organization, especially the commander, were cold blooded killers.

Nate was different. Oh, he'd killed, and he could turn cold in a second. But a warmth lived in him, one just for her.

She smiled and accepted the glass of wine he handed over. "How did you get free of the compound?" she asked.

He lifted a shoulder. "Wasn't that hard, so I have to assume your mother and the commander are fine with us meeting."

She lifted her chin, studying him. "They don't care what I do, but I think they do care about you." Sometimes she thought her mother cared, but then reality set back in.

His eyes darkened to storm clouds. "They have us pretty well where they want us, considering one of my brothers is out on mission at every time. We can't all four get together and plan."

Shame and guilt rode down Audrey's throat. "My mother and the commander totally suck."

Nate leaned over and brushed a knuckle across her cheek. "Not your fault, and not your problem."

Tingles flared to full out quivers through her just from the simple touch. So she forced a smile and tried to appear sophisticated. After years at all-girl's schools, of minor dates with boring boys, Nate was way out of her experience.

At well over six-feet tall, dangerously sexy, gray eyes and seriously ripped muscles, he should be something out of a fantasy. But the raw reality of him, of the things he'd already seen

and perhaps done, stamped hard on his chiseled face. He hurt, deep down, and yet a gentleness lived in his touch she couldn't help but want.

Lightning cracked overhead, and his body went on alert.

Something bit her leg.

She yelped and scrambled up, spilling wine over the blanket.

Nate instantly rose, reaching for her in a protective move. "What?"

Her legs ached, and she glanced down to see red ants. Panic flushed through her.

"Eesh." She bent and swatted.

Nate frowned and dropped to his haunches, running his hands over her bare legs and tossing off all the ants. "Oops."

She grinned and tried to ignore the heat slamming into her core from his touch.

Lightning cracked again, and the skies opened up. She ducked her head.

"Shit." Nate grabbed her hand and loped into a run for the stand of trees at the top of the mountain. Ran splattered down, instantly plastering their clothes to their bodies.

Audrey laughed and headed for the closest tree.

Lighting sparked too close, and tree branches dropped.

"Not below a tree," Nate said, shoving her farther inward and tackling her into a culvert. Well, a big ditch.

She coughed out air, heated instantly by his hard body. Mud surrounded them. "I thought we were supposed to stand beneath a tree to avoid lightning?"

"No. Always go for the biggest ditch." His voice lowered to hoarse, and an incredibly hard erection settled between her legs.

Her nipples peaked. "Oh," she breathed.

Then he smiled, and she forgot to breathe ever again. "I'm sorry about the day," he said.

She chuckled against him. "It's perfect. Any day with you is perfect."

He shook his head, vulnerability flashing for the smallest of moments across his face.

"The things you say sometimes. So sweet."

"You're sweet," she said.

"I'm nowhere close to sweet. Happy Valentine's Day," he murmured, protecting her from the stabbing rain. His lips brushed hers, once and again, and happiness cascaded through her. "Sorry about the mud," he said.

She shrugged, intrigued by her body brushing against his. "Um, I had another idea after the picnic."

His chin lifted, and his eyes darkened. "Oh?"

Heat flushed into her face. "Um, yeah. Well, my friend Cindy's parents are out of town, and they have a really cool pool house, and I thought for the night, well..."

His gaze dropped to her already tingling lips. "Are you sure?"

"Yes." She slid her hands around his hard back, marveling at the strength. "You and me, Nate. I'm sure."

He kissed her then, driving back her head, unleashing a passion stronger than the storm around them. Stronger than she could've ever imagined. She kissed him back, holding tight, pouring every ounce of feeling into the moment.

Finally, he lifted his head. "I wanted today to be perfect."

"It will be." She leaned up and traced the contours of his face. "We're going to be okay, right? Survive everything?"

He leaned into her touch, a dangerous man with such kindness. “Yes. We just have to make it through the storm first.”