

Excerpt from “Ace of Hearts”

They arrived at the restaurant, just missing the lunchtime crowd and the host seated them in a booth at the back. The lighting was low, and as far as Tony was concerned, a tad bit sexy. Even though he appreciated the atmosphere, this was supposed to be about work. Tony ordered a scotch and water and instantly regretted it when Shevaughn refused a cocktail because she was on duty. Mistake number one.

While he waited for the waiter to bring his drink, he began drumming the table with his fingers. Shevaughn shot him a look of annoyance. Mistake number two.

Tony took a sip of his drink and looked at a fish tank with one large, single fish that he'd spotted when they first walked in. He needed to be on safer ground.

“He needs a girlfriend,” he stated, nodding towards the fish tank.

“Excuse me?”

“The fish...” he pointed. “He needs a girlfriend.”

“The fish? Why do you say that?”

“Look at him, all alone in that tank. He needs someone to take care of him.”

“Oh, so does he need a mate or a maid?”

“Both.”

“So that’s what a girlfriend means to you?”

“Hold on, I wasn’t talking about me.”

“No?”

"You read too much into that."

"Did I?"

"Okay, let's just say the poor fish needs a companion."

"He may be very happy by himself."

"Are you?"

"Am I what?"

"Happy by yourself?"

"What makes you think I'm alone?"

"No wedding ring, no picture of a man in your office..."

"My, aren't we the detective."

Her attitude showed in her voice.

"Hey, no big deal, I'm not married either."

"Is that a proposal?"

The scotch went down the wrong pipe and Tony choked, loudly.

"I didn't realize the thought would be so upsetting."

"No, no, I swear, I just choked."

"Your timing was perfect."

"Well, I can see you're never going to believe me."

"That you just happened to choke when I mentioned marriage? Like I may be considering it..., with you? You're one egotistical idiot, aren't you?"

"Now, don't take it that way, it wasn't like that."

"That's what it sounded like."

"Okay, okay, can we start over? Hi, I'm Tony O'Brien of NBS News."

“Is that your way of calling a truce?”

“Please.”

“I’ll think about it.”

He couldn’t hide the look of disappointment on his face.

“Truce,” she said smiling, raising her water glass. “I was just joking earlier.

Boy, are *you* sensitive.”

Good, she has a sense of humor. This woman was winning him over by the minute.