“I don‟t know Cara.” Said Brianne brushing a delinquent curl off of her face that had escaped her loosely made chignon. “I don‟t want to impose.”

“Impose?” Cara raised her delicate brows, “Are you kidding? You‟ve carried me through this semester. I would have never made it without you and you‟re stuck with me for the next year and a half, so let me help you.” She reached over and touched her friend‟s arm, “I can‟t possibly let you go back to an empty apartment and a summer of checking groceries.”

Initially Brianne agreed to go and work for Cara‟s brothers, even giving up her job and apartment, but now she had reservations.

She and Cara met when they ended up Roommates in the dorm and instantly hit it off. Although Cara was extremely outgoing, Brianne wasn‟t and they both had completely different upbringings but opposites must attract because Brianne thought the world of Cara. “But I don‟t know anything about being a secretary.” She protested not only feeling like she was imposing, but insecure about meeting Cara‟s four older brothers. Cara had talked about them nonstop, and in Cara‟s eyes they were perfect. What if she did something to offend them? It worried her that she might put her friendship at risk with her, because she never had anyone that showed her such consideration before in her life.

“I‟ll teach you. It‟ll take you a week or so to catch on entering accounts into the computer and such, and I‟ll do the rest—don‟t look so worried, that alone is a full time job. My brothers have two full-time and two part-time secretaries, but during the summer business triples.” She gave her friend a generous smile that showed even white teeth, “Bree, trust me, you‟ll be doing them a favour. That way they don‟t have to advertise.” She used her nickname endearingly hoping that

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would help persuade her.  
“What‟s wrong with that?” she asked.  
Cara groaned and rolled her eyes, “You have no idea the

amount of woman that strut through the office trying to gain attention of any one of my brothers especially Rem and Gabe. They‟re outrageous flirts, and Jeb ends up getting more and more unapproachable when he has to interview so many women who make no attempt to hide their intentions. He won‟t let my other brothers do it, because they‟d hire any woman with—“ she made a crude gesture with her hands in front of her chest and Brianne burst out laughing, “—so he has to, and he really hates it. So you see, you‟ll be doing them a big favour, especially Jeb, because he won‟t have to do that.”

“I don‟t know.” She said apprehensively.  
“Please.” She begged with her large blue eyes twinkling.  
“I suppose that look works on them too.” She pinched her

lips together to keep from grinning.  
“Of course.” She beamed and blinked dramatically

fluttering her long blonde lashes.  
After a moment of contemplation Brianne rolled her eyes,

“Who could say no to you?” she got a generous hug for her agreement.

”I‟m so excited!” Cara said releasing her, “Why we‟ll be able to spend the whole summer together! I‟ll teach you how to ride horses, we‟ll fish—“

“Okay, okay!” It actually sounded like fun, and she‟d never been on a horse in her life but as a little girl she always wanted one.

“—and” she continued, “I‟ll have an actual friend, not all those women who try and butter me up to get close to my brothers.”

“That‟s awful.” She admitted. Cara was a wonderful person and very likable. It was obvious that she was

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Lietha Wards

outrageously spoiled from the amount of phone calls and spending money she got from the four of them. As for her buttering her up, that was out of the question. Brianne wasn‟t interested in a man, any man, she was terrified of them. Her father was an alcoholic and used to beat her up until cirrhosis of the liver claimed his life when she was twelve. Since then she‟d been juggled around to foster home after foster home and her experiences there gave her nightmares, literally. Unfortunately she never knew or remembered her mother. She left when she was just an infant.

“Also,” she added, “if they don‟t have to interview a hundred husband hunters for this job they‟re giving you, that will make them twice as happy.” Her eyes widened slightly, “I bet even Jeb will be happy about that!”

“He‟s the oldest, right?” she said trying not to laugh at the „husband hunter‟ comment. Of course Cara would think her brother‟s were handsome because she adored them more than anything else in her life. However, Brianne couldn‟t imagine that any man was worth that much praise. Then again, her past experiences with men had a negative impact on her life and her opinion of them.

“Yes, he‟s the one that took shrapnel in the leg in overseas in the war.” Her face became solemn, “I should tell you to avoid him Bree, he‟s not an easy person to get to know and I fear that he‟ll frighten you with what you‟ve told me about your childhood.”

Bree‟s eyes widened, “Does he have temper?” she was able to suppress the shudder that went through her. Every man in her life that displayed a temper also had violent tendencies. She was sure she had experienced more broken bones than a stunt man in her young life.

Cara shook her head and waved her arms to try and dispel Brianne‟s worries, “No, nothing like that. At least he‟s

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never used it on a woman. I just think his demeanour will be intimidating for you. He‟s not very warm to strangers. I could tell you not to fear him until I‟m blue in the face, but you will because he‟s an assertive man, and can be very blunt and unyeilding. I don‟t blame him. He looks after four younger siblings.” She laughed, “And my brothers are a handful at the best of times, except maybe Glen, he‟s kind of a saint.”

“Saint? Brianne laughed.

“you‟ll understand when you meet him.” She explained. “He never raises his voice to anyone, unlike Jeb.”

“Well, from the stories you‟ve told me, I can see where he‟s coming from. I‟ll remember your warning though.” She studied her friend‟s expression for a moment. She had no worries, it was obvious that she was raised with a lot of love and she envied her because she‟d never known that type of affection.

Even though she was nervous about meeting her family, in a way she was excited too. They did such a good job on raising Cara that they couldn‟t be as rough as the stories she told of them. However, Jeb already intimidated her and she never met him. Cara had told her that he was a war hero but didn‟t talk about the things he did overseas. It also seemed like he was the only one without a sense of humour. As she thought before, he was the oldest of five, so maybe his seriousness was well founded. Cara had told her that her parents were killed in a car wreck when she was ten and Jeb had instantly became the head of the family. By then he was home from the war with a wrecked leg, and not only had to rear four younger siblings, but he had to take over his father‟s business too. She had to admit, the man must be admirable to do all that and not go insane.

Cara continued to talk about her oldest brother, “He was part of an elite group of soldiers that were used for special missions.” Her voice dropped, “I don‟t know much, because like I told you before he doesn‟t talk about it, but apparently out of