

FALLING IMMORTALITY

EXTRA #1

by

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I met her in a supermarket. Farm Fresh. All she had in her basket was yogurt, a few cans of soup, and a handful of fruits and vegetables. It wasn't what I'd call a full meal, and I told her so.

“What would you know about it?” she said.

“I know if you eat like that all the time, you're going to shrivel up and die.” On her diet, I wouldn't even last a week.

“What have you got in there?” She pointed at my cart. If I could have moved it behind me, I would have. It was too difficult, and I ran out of time, so I just sort of stood before her defiantly, as she began to point. “Let's see, we have chicken, shrimp—frozen—white bread, pretzels--”

“Pretzels are healthy,” I said.

She just shook her head and continued her inventory.

“Fruit, no vegetables, pasta—”

“A man needs carbs,” I said. “It helps with the running.” I ran three miles on a regular basis and six miles on a less regular basis.

She stared at me the way a woman might eye a pair of pantyhose. “You don’t look like you need anything.”

“I work out several times a week,” I said.

She shook her head. “Lifting the bag of potato chips to your mouth doesn’t count.”

“Do you see any potato chips in here?”

“Maybe you just haven’t gotten around to that particular aisle. I do see some yogurt.” She paused, as she shifted her cart to the right while a woman with an attitude breezed by her. “That’s a good sign. And you have milk and juice, so you’ll get some liquids in your system. I’m not too sure about the Heineken, and I’ve never seen one person with so much coffee.”

“I like coffee and Heineken.”

“Hopefully not together,” she said. The look she gave me was one of amusement.

I was doing well for myself, and I hadn't even unleashed my full capabilities. The world was my ocean, and I was the boogie board. "No, I like to put several hours in between the two."

She shifted her cart a bit closer to mine. "I hope you don't start with the Heineken and end with the coffee."

"Not at all," I said. "You've got it backwards. What do you drink?"

"Not coffee and beer," she said. "I drink a lot of water, and when I'm going out, I like mixed drinks."

I shifted my cart forward to meet hers. If she noticed, she didn't say. "Let me guess," I said, "you like fruity, girly drinks."

She shifted back on her heels. "You sure know how to win a girl over."

"I'm right, aren't I?"

Her eyes narrowed, and she looked away. "You are," she said. The switch flipped back on, as amusement returned. Maybe she liked confident men.

I took that as a good sign. "That's good. I haven't lost my skills."

"And what kind of skills would those be?" she said.

"I'm a PI."

"A private incompetent?"

"Private investigator," I said.

Her eyes danced the mambo. “A private eye. I’m not sure I’ve ever gone out with one of those before.”

Bingo! “I think investigator sounds more sophisticated.”

However, I prided myself on adapting to the situation.

“Do you know James Bond?”

“I can’t say I’ve had the pleasure,” I said. “Does he shop here too?”

She put her hand over her mouth and laughed. It was a muted giggle with the slightest hint of something more. “I’m not sure if you’re serious, or if you’re faking it.”

“What if I’m seriously faking it,” I said. I hoped to fake her right out of her skirt. And she wouldn’t even see it coming. I hit harder than an overstuffed file drawer.

“I haven’t met too many men that could keep up with me,” she said. “I’m Alexandra Bridges.” She stuck out her hand, and I shook it. I liked being close enough to reach out and touch her. The slightest hint of lavender filled my nostrils.

“Casey Holden,” I said.

And by the time we left—together—I had her phone number.