

“Somebody has to initiate the break-up, you know, be the first to put it into words. How often was it you? Fifty percent of the time? Sixty percent? I’m guessing it was a lot higher.”

With no response and seeing her thinking, he continued his gentle questioning. “How many times did you say, ‘It’s not you, it’s me’, or ‘I’m sure you’ll find somebody else who’s better for you’? How many of the guys are you still friends with after agreeing to ‘just be friends’? How many times did the guy get angry, or plead, or beg?”

Kiel watched her stare off into the distance. When she turned back to look at him with her mouth slightly agape he saw the dawn of realization come into her eyes and he continued mildly. “That’s what I call the pain of false starts. And every time it happens it leaves a little scar on a heart.”

Alex protested, “But ... but that’s how it’s done. Everybody does it that way,” but she felt inside that it was a weak excuse.

Kiel shook his head. “Random trial and error? Not everybody. Because I know myself, because I know what I need in a life partner, I can greatly reduce the amount of scar tissue created. I choose to do so.”

Alex tried to grasp this new concept. “I get it!” she exclaimed. “It’s like if I’m going shopping for new winter gloves, I don’t look through the men’s extra-large size because I already know they won’t fit,” grinning proudly.

“That’s a perfect analogy!” and Kiel grinned back at her. Shifting his gaze to the lake, he said mostly to himself, “I wish I’d thought of it.”

*“Perfect. He said ‘perfect’. Take that Ashlyn! I am so ‘not stupid’.”*

Kiel lay back down staring glumly at the sky again. “However, just because someone is

right for you doesn't mean that they think you are right for them. Unlike gloves, they don't have to go home with you."

Alex studied him. Not unsightly, but he'd never be chosen for the cover of a magazine. Straight brown hair overdue for a cut. Striking blue eyes though and a strong chin. Certainly not athletic. Arms and belly were not flabby but not toned either, not a gym rat like some of the guys she dated. Nor was he as tall as the guys she was usually attracted to; only about three inches taller than her five-seven. She stole a glance at his shorts, her vanity deflating a little when she observed that its earlier bulge had disappeared.

*"He is so-o-o-o ... different. Nobody talks about this kind of stuff. Ever. They talk about other people, their parents, or school. Girls talk about who's dating who. Guys talk incessantly about sports or cars or sex. Maybe it's a 'smart' person thing. I should introduce him to Ashlyn."* Immediately an obstinate "No" resounded in her head.