

Seeing the Love**Chapter one****< Lucas requests chat >**

The Messenger icon flashed at the bottom of Natalie's screen. She shifted the telephone handset, to rest it on her shoulder—the posture strictly frowned upon by the health and safety gurus—and clicked her mouse to open the chat window.

Natalie: *Hi Lucas*

Lucas: *Hey Natalie. You on the phone?*

Natalie: *Yeah. What's up?*

Lucas: *Can you call when you're done? I want to run through the order details for Bryce Electronics.*

Natalie cursed silently. She just *knew* there was going to be a problem with this one. Bryce were her most demanding customer, and this particular order had been their most complex so far. Corporate-IT sales was a cut-throat business, and Bryce seemed to delight in being difficult. Her heart sank. She blew out a frustrated breath and tapped a quick reply.

Natalie: *Will do*

Lucas: *Catch you later*

Natalie shifted the phone into a more comfortable position. She'd be fretting about that damn order all afternoon. As soon as this conference call was over, she was due in a sales-review meeting, and that would take the rest of the day. She worried her bottom lip with her teeth. The chat session with Lucas was still open. With the call continuing in her ear, she balanced the phone again and typed some more, her fingers flying over the keyboard.

Natalie: *I have a meeting after this call, and that will take the rest of the afternoon. Can you tell me what's wrong?*

She waited, darting her attention between the chat window and the invoice currently discussed on the call. They didn't need her input for the moment.

Lucas: *We're low on that model of laptop. We can either ship what we've got and the rest later, or change to another model.*

“Bugger.” She only realized she’d spoken out loud when there was a surprised exclamation on the phone. “Sorry,” she said. “I just spilled my drink. I need to leave the call for a few minutes.”

The instant the line cleared, she speed-dialed Lucas.

“Hey.” He sounded surprised. “Thought you had a meeting?” His deep, lilting voice washed over her, as smooth as melted chocolate. One of these days, she’d have to find out if he was as sexy as he sounded.

“Yes, but I don’t want to wait. How bad is it? The delay?”

She heard the faint clatter of keys, hundreds of miles away, in their national distribution center. “Two—maybe three weeks. Is that too long to wait?”

She visualized her sales bonus folding up like an origami bird and flying out of the window. “They said they’d cancel the order if they didn’t get it this week.”

He chuckled. “They always say that, and you always sweet-talk them.”

Despite her anxiety, she smiled. It was nice of him to say that. Lucas tapped some more, and then continued. “I’m sure I can do some juggling at this end. I’ll e-mail you this afternoon, so you have all the options when you get back from your meeting.”

*

Lucas was good at juggling. He spoke to the stock controllers, the buyers, two other salespeople, and finally the dispatch team. When Natalie’s order was filled, every item scrounged from the shelves and from other customers orders, he finally sat back and smiled at his screen.

It had taken most of the afternoon, and he now had a backlog of e-mails to respond to, but it was worth it. He had a soft spot for Natalie. Maybe it was because she treated him as a normal person? A regular guy. Her voice was beautiful, and that was reason enough. He harbored more than one fantasy about the girl behind the voice. Was she blonde? Brunette? She sounded dark and exotic rather than blonde and

ditzy. The complete opposite of his ex-wife. It was a shame he'd never meet her, but really that was for the best.

He stared intently at his screen, and reset the zoom to double-check the totals. Yep, it was all there. He pressed *Send*, and then pushed back from his computer. He needed some fresh air. He'd only gone a few steps, when his Messenger chimed.

It was Natalie.

Natalie: *Lucas Wade, you are an angel in disguise. Thank you, thank you!!!!!!*

His eyes were beginning to water from the length of time he'd been staring at the screen, but he couldn't resist her.

Lucas: *No problem. Happy to help.*

Natalie: *Was it a big hassle?*

Lucas: *Nah. Just a couple of calls. Did your meeting finish early?*

Natalie: *It's running late; we just broke for 10mins. Seriously, thanks, Lucas.*

Now I know that order is okay, I won't have nightmares.

Lucas: *You're very welcome. Hope your meeting doesn't make you late home*

Natalie: *I don't have any plans for tonight, anyway. How about you?*

Lucas: *Not much. Take my dog for a walk. Go to the gym. Have a beer.*

Nothing exciting.

Natalie: *More than me. What kind of dog do you have?*

Lucas: *A golden Labrador. She's called Molly.*

Natalie: *Awww, I like Labs. Gotta go, Lucas. Have a great evening.*

Lucas was partway through a call the next afternoon, when a courier appeared beside his desk. Lucas hesitated a moment but continued speaking, while reaching out for a pen. He had to squint to find the receipt but thought he had it covered, until Dave, his well-meaning desk-buddy, stuck his head over the partition.

“Here, mate. Let me take care of that for you.”

Lucas swallowed down his frustration. “I’ve got it.”

Dave had already scrambled to his side, pen in hand, ready to sign for the delivery. Lucas pretended to be engrossed on the call, and ignored both Dave and the delivery. Inside, anger raged. He *wasn't* incapable.

A good ten minutes later, he finally assumed a calm enough tone to thank Dave, and then turned his attention to the flat package that lay on his desk.

"Let me open it for you." Dave obviously hadn't finished his Mr. Fucking-Helpful routine.

Lucas gritted his teeth and tried to smile. He feared it came out more as a snarl. "I said, I've got it."

He struggled to find a way into the padded envelope and ended up ripping the corner with his teeth. There was no way he'd ask Dave. He'd stab himself in the hand first.

Whatever it was, there wasn't much weight to it. About the size of a dinner plate, wrapped in tissue paper, with even more frickin' adhesive tape holding it together. It was a Frisbee. A bright-yellow Frisbee with writing scrawled across the front.

He blinked, perplexed. A sales gimmick? A mistake? No matter how hard he stared at the writing, he couldn't quite get it. Handwritten rather than printed, the letters looped and swirled in thick black lines that danced uselessly in front of him. Damn it to hell.

He could ask Dave? Nope. Not doing that. Likewise, he didn't want to call someone else across. Annoyed, he shoved it to the side and ignored it.

Flashes of sunflower yellow at the corner of his vision taunted him for the next hour. He tried again to read the words, but they evaded him. Maybe it was just some advertising slogan.

He focused on work. The only thing he could still do well.

Sian solved the mystery for him when she strolled past his desk to ask him about a meeting. "What's this?" She picked up the Frisbee and examined it. "How sweet. You know I'm going to ask, but who's Natalie?"

"Huh?" What did Natalie have to do with the Frisbee?

"Have fun with Molly. Thanks for saving my customer. Natalie." He heard the smile in Sian's voice, as she deciphered the writing. "Would that be Natalie in the Auckland office? The account manager? What's her surname... Fountain?"

“Fontaine.” His voice was gruff. “Natalie Fontaine.” Warmth bloomed in his chest. It was just a gesture; it sure as hell didn’t mean anything. But yeah, it was nice of her.

Sian was speaking, and he hastened to listen. “What did you do for her, Lucas?”

“Oh, just a bit of juggling. Nothing much.” He didn’t mind Sian as much as the others—she wasn’t quite so irritating—but he still didn’t feel like chatting to her about Natalie Fontaine or why she’d sent him a thank you present. Would Sian take the hint and leave?

It seemed not. “She’s the one with the French accent, isn’t she?”

She has the most beautiful voice in the world. “Does she? I hadn’t noticed.”

Helpful Dave decided to join in. His head popped up like a meerkat’s.

“Natalie Fontaine? She likes talking to Lucas. Does she know about—”

“About what?” Lucas cut him off mid-sentence. “About what, Dave?” The challenge had been issued, the gauntlet thrown down. “About the fact that I work damn hard and do a good job?” He curled his fingers around the edges of his keyboard.

Silence hung between them. Sian was the first to crack. “I’ve got...uh...a meeting. Catch you later.”

He could *feel* Dave staring at him over the partition. *Go on. Say it. Does she know I’m as good as blind? A fuckin’ cripple? Say it.*

Dave cleared his throat. “Nothing, mate. I can’t remember what I was talking about.”