

Excerpt from The Trouble with Love

"We can watch a movie." He led the way back into the living room. "I'm afraid that's all the entertainment I have available on short notice." He gestured to a cabinet containing at least fifty DVD's. "Take your pick."

"Okay." She settled into the mocha colored micro suede sofa next to him. Her nerve endings danced under her skin at his nearness. She didn't exactly feel uncomfortable so much as tickles of excitement supercharged her body, as if she were at the threshold of something new and wonderful. When she glanced at his face, she caught her breath as his dark eyes reflected open curiosity and warmth. "Gordy, I'm not sure..."

"You're not sure of what?" His whispered question sent a shiver down her spine. He reached up to stroke her cheek with the back of his hand, setting off a whole host of tingles.

Madelyn bit her lip. The touch of his hand caused tiny flames to ignite on her skin. "I—"

"Are you not sure of me? Not sure you can handle a romantic relationship?"

"I don't know. I've never really had a successful one before." She could barely squeeze the words from her tight throat. Seemingly of its own accord, her hand reached to cup his jaw. The rough stubble on his skin scraped against her palm and brought home his very maleness. When he turned his head and kissed her palm, his lips gently brushed the sensitive skin of her hand. Her stomach began to do acrobatics. "It's an interesting idea, and I don't want you to think I wouldn't welcome such a relationship with you, it's just..."

His hand crept from her cheek to caress the nape of her neck beneath the curtain of her hair. "We'll never know unless we try." He moved a bit closer to her and drew her into the crook of his arm. "If we find we don't suit then we wouldn't have sacrificed anything and our friendship would still be intact."

Madelyn was never sure after that which one of them made the first advance, but before she could form another sentence, she was in Gordy's embrace with her lips wonderfully manipulated by his. She smiled against his mouth and tentatively gave him the opening he requested. Her eyes drifted closed. He touched his tongue to hers, stroking it to learn every secret her mouth held until she quivered with unexpected longing.

With a soft sigh, she moved her arms about his neck and returned his kisses the best she knew how. She made no protest as he edged her back against the armrest of the sofa. His weight was a comforting compliment to her softness. Everywhere his body pressed against hers ignited in flames. She inhaled the woody scent of him and sighed with contentment before worry started to creep in. *What if I'm doing it all wrong? What if he thinks I'm too inexperienced in the art of seduction?*

Gordy's frustrated sigh broke the spell. He pulled away to look into her eyes. "What are you worrying about?"

The imp raged in her mind. *Why are you talking? Don't talk, kiss him!*

She ruthlessly thrust the imp into an unused corner of her mind and threw a blanket over him. "What makes you think I'm worrying?" Confusion flooded over her yet her traitorous body still clamored for him, clearly in the same camp as the imp.

"You bite your bottom lip when you worry." He leaned against the sofa cushions and pulled her to his side. "Spill it."

"Fine." He knew her too well. "I don't have a whole lot of experience with kissing. What if I'm not doing it right? What if I'm too sloppy or something and you don't tell me?" It was a valid concern, right? "What if I do things to you that you don't like?"

"And what if the sky is falling, Henny Penny?" He kissed the top of her head. "Experience will come but you've got to practice at it. You have to learn kissing just like anything else." He gently flicked her nose. "From that one kiss, I'd say you're well on your way. I'm sure your future husband will have no complaints." When Boo finally made an appearance, Gordy laughed. That one sound dispelled some of the tension. The dog issued a tiny little bark from the floor in front of them. "Hello, Boo. This is my special girl, Madelyn. You'd better be nice to her."

She grinned to see the tiny black poodle almost dwarfed by Gordy's hand as he gently laid the dog on her lap. "He's so cute!" She hugged the dog to her chest, giggling when his little pink tongue licked her chin. "What a sweet doggie!"

Gordy rolled his eyes. "Of course, Boo gets all the attention." He settled her more comfortably in his arms, one hand resting on her stomach, while the other assumed control of the television remote. "Boo always gets the girl."

"He should." Madelyn smiled. Her heartbeat still fluttered through her chest as his breath warmed her cheek and shivers of awareness raced over her skin. "Whatever, Gordy. You're just jealous." She ruffled the soft curls of the poodle in her lap. "So are we gonna watch a movie or what?" She ignored her body's response to the man beside her.

She valued his friendship more than a few kisses, didn't she?