

## EIGHT

“I don’t know if things are going to work out with Erik,” Mary said, glad Erik was in another room of her parents’ house with her dad.

Her mom narrowed her eyes worriedly. “Are you two having problems?”

Mary gripped her hands together, wanting to tell her mom the truth. But what was true? Erik had started out, in truth, as a blind date like so many others. There was no deception there. Then it had turned into something else. Something she couldn’t define. Were they still pretending? It didn’t feel that way. “I’m so confused.”

“All relationships go through transition points along the way.”

“Transitions?”

“You get to a certain point when things need to move to the next level. If both people are ready, you move, sometimes without notice. If not, it either stays the same or falls apart. Even after marriage, people and relationships grow and change.”

“I think we are at one of those transition points. I don’t know if we’ll make it to the next level.”

Her mom patted her shoulder. “Be patient. Don’t force it.”

That was the problem. Their whole relationship had been forced from the beginning. And now where were they? What were they?

[SB]

Erik had one hand draped over the top of the steering wheel. “I put the latest spyware on your parents’ computer and showed your dad how to use it. I also organized their email and added Mah Jong for your mom.”

Mary sighed and looked out the side window of his car.

“Is something wrong?”

“No,” she said to the black glass reflecting back her long face. Nothing was wrong, but nothing felt right either. Or was it that it *did* feel right and *that* was wrong?

After a long silence, Erik said, “Are we having our first fight?”

She turned to him. “First fights are for people who are really dating.”

Erik glanced from the road to her. “Feels like a fight to me.”

“I’m not mad at you, if that’s what you are asking.”

“Then what are you?”

She drew in a deep breath and exhaled. “I don’t know. Confused, I guess.”

“About what?”

“You.”

“How so?”

She gave him a sideways glance. “Phoebe told me.”

He was silent a moment, staring out at the dark road stretched before them, then he spoke slowly. “Exactly what did she tell you?”

“About your no computer rule with friends and family except for special instances.”

“So.”

She turned to him. “All you’ve done since I met you is work on my family’s computers.”

“They needed help. Was I supposed to just ignore the need?”

“You had a no computer rule for a reason.”

“That rule doesn’t apply here.” He pulled into her driveway. “Do you not want me to help your family?”

She sighed. “No.”

“Then what?”

“I don’t know.” She got out, and he walked her up to her front door. “I’m sorry for being in a sour mood. Thank you. I really do appreciate all you’ve done.”

His eyebrows were furrowed as she closed her front door. She leaned her forehead against it. Was she confused because he seemed to be breaking his rule for her, someone he was only pretending to date? She hadn’t asked him to fix anyone’s computer, and she certainly hadn’t expected to see him after that first “date”. Or was her confusion something else altogether?