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Subject: Re: Cold Front

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 21:04:42 GMT

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Luke paused in front of Elise's door and adjusted the box in his hands. He glanced down at his dog, who held a gift bag in his teeth. "Ready, Rommel?" He pressed the chime and a few moments later, Elise answered the door.

"Hey there! Come on in." She led them inside.

Luke placed the box on the table, then turned and winked at her. "Close your eyes."

"What? Why?"

"Just do it." He waited until she wasn't looking then turned. A minute later he took her hand. "OK, open. Happy Birthday, Elise."

She opened her eyes and gasped. "Oh, Luke, you didn't have to do that."

On the table lay a small birthday cake. It was covered in chocolate frosting and decorated with pink roses. Luke had lit half a dozen candles and stood next to it, smiling. "It wouldn't be a birthday without cake. Make a wish."

Elise closed her eyes, then opened them and blew out the candles. "There. Now I wait and see what happens."

"What did you wish for?"

"You know I can't tell you!" She looked down at the cake again and her eyes got misty. "I haven't had a birthday cake in years."

"Aw, don't cry. I can't handle women in tears." Luke took her into his arms and held her tight.

She smiled up at him. "God, what a mess I am." She took a napkin and dabbed at her eyes. "Did you make this yourself?"

Luke shook his head. "Way beyond my cooking capabilities. Cassie made it with pointers from me. This however..." He snapped his fingers and Rommel trotted forward, the bag still in his teeth. "Here you go. Your real present is still in Montana. I'll bring it when me when I get back."

Elise raised an eyebrow. "Are you going to tell me what it is?"

"Nope. Open this one."

They sat down on the couch and Elise carefully took out a small object wrapped in tissue paper. She unwrapped it and gasped. "Luke! It's beautiful!" She carefully turned the small mermaid statue over in her hands. "You made this?"

He shrugged self-consciously. "Yeah. It just reminded me of you somehow."

"I can't believe the detail." She peered down at the tiny figure, spying sea shells, kelp, even a starfish carved into the statue's base. She smiled up at him. "Thank-you, so much."

He held up his hands. "Don't get all weepy on me again."

She laughed as she placed the figure down on the table. "I won't. I don't want to ruin my make-up!"

Now Luke chuckled. "All ready for the big date?"

She nodded. "I've made a salad and you brought dessert. Virgil told me not to fuss, that he'd handle dinner."

"Then I'd better get out of your way. The mutt and I are going for a quick run." He turned and hugged her again. "Happy Birthday, honey." At the door Luke paused and turned. "Don't stay up too late." With a wink and a wave, he and Rommel left her to finish getting ready.

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