

Tickled Pink

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5/7/14

For those of you who can't get enough of Seth and Jessica, here's a Slice of Life that will tickle you pink!

It had long been said that laughter was the best medicine of all. As grouchy as Dr. Seth Hazlitt was half the time, one could hardly claim that *that* particular proverb was his credo, but he *did* know how to laugh, contrary to popular belief. He also knew how to make other people laugh, especially the woman who never failed to bring sunshine into his life. And was he ever making her laugh now.

Screams of laughter erupted from Jessica Fletcher's mouth as she squirmed under Seth's nimble fingers. They'd been watching a classic movie together in her living room, but now *Animal Crackers* was mere background noise – although Seth had to admit that for a moment as goofy as this, there was no better accompaniment than the antics and slapstick of the Marx Brothers. The whole thing had started when Seth made a smart-aleck crack about something, Jessica poked him in the stomach, he poked her back... and a poke war metamorphosed into a tickle fight, in which Seth had Jessica totally at his mercy.

Not many people knew that Jessica was ticklish, but Seth knew every single ticklish spot on her body and which ones would reduce her to a heap of mirth. Her feet were ticklish for sure and certain, and he'd gotten some good giggles out of her when he tickled her under her arms, but her stomach was her weakest area and no mistake. When he yanked her shirt up and tickled her belly, she writhed beneath his hands and pleaded between laughs for him to stop, tears streaming down her cheeks.

Seth just laughed with her and kept his fingers dancing across the soft skin of her midriff. He relished the chance to make her laugh. She spent so much time bogged down in murder – in her books and in real life – that it seemed as though she hardly ever had time for a good joke or anything else remotely resembling humor. During those times, stress and the

seriousness of the whole thing got to her so much that she rarely laughed at all.

It was a darned shame, to Seth's way of thinking. Jessica had the most wonderful laugh he'd ever heard in his life: brassy, sexy, sweet, and joyous, with a hint of music thrown in. When she laughed, her entire face lit up and her eyes sparkled sapphire, just like they were now. Despite her pleas, he knew that she loved being tickled because it *did* make her laugh. And nothing gave him greater pleasure than knowing that he was the one bringing her such joy.

Another laugh burst from her throat as his fingers tap-danced along the sides of her slender waist. "Seth, please!" she cried, trying to worm away from him and failing.

"Please, I want more'? Okay!" Seth grinned and planted a big fat raspberry on her stomach. "I zerbit you!" he said, giving her another one.

"Seth!"

He ignored her, planting one raspberry after another on her midsection and one right inside her belly button. She let out a shriek of laughter and he beamed ear-to-ear at the sound, giving her three more zerbits to the navel before calling victory. "I win."

Jessica laughed breathlessly and shot him a playful glare from her prostrate position on the couch. "You always do."

"People have different ticklish spots, Jess. It's not my fault if that pretty belly of yours is your Achilles heel."

"Pretty? Seth, you're a doctor. You've seen one midsection, you've seen them all."

"True, but I can't tickle anyone else's but yours. That's what makes yours so special." Seth traced a finger around her belly button. "You know, my sister once told me that your belly button was where the Yankees shot you. Always did think that was funny."

Jessica laughed, whether from his tracing her navel or at the expression, he couldn't tell. "In that case, Joshua Peabody shot me."

Seth rolled his eyes. "The last time I checked, no one ever got shot by someone who didn't exist," he quipped, ever skeptical of the whole Joshua Peabody legend. "Although..." He smiled and tickled her belly button again. "If he did shoot you, he did a jim-dandy job of it."

"Seth, for heaven's sake!" Jessica chuckled, streaks of fuchsia shooting anew into her already flushed face. "What are you trying to do, turn me to jelly?"

"Nope. I'm trying to get you to laugh, woman. You work hard, too hard sometimes, and you need to laugh. *I* need you to laugh. It doesn't do for a person to be bogged down in mystery, murder, espionage, and Lord-knows-what-else 24/7. Now, not only am I your friend, but I'm also your doctor. For an overdose of mystery, I prescribe a shot of laughter. And there's no better way to administer that shot than by tickling you."

"And turning me every shade of pink on the spectrum," Jessica said, giggling as his fingers renewed their dance on her belly. "But I..." Giggle. "Suppose that's just a..." More giggles. "Side effect."

"And a darn good one, too," Seth said, his fingers gaining momentum. "You always do look pretty in pink." And with that, he launched another tickle attack on Jessica, this time adding his laughter to hers, a tonic that renewed their strength and filled them both with joy.