

Flip-Flop Folly

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As promised, here is the sequel to Bathing Suit Bother, where Jessica and Seth continue the shop-a-thon at the boutique - this time looking for flip-flops. And, of course, Seth is not letting Jessica away with anything!

"I swear it's a sickness. Women and their shoes. Why one person needs a thousand pairs of shoes for every outfit and occasion and in every blessed color Roy G. Biv has to offer, I will never know. All a man needs is three pairs of shoes, tops: sneakers, boots, and loafers. No need to mix and match or color-coordinate or what-have-you. What shoes we do have go with anything and everything."

"Now, that's not entirely true, Seth. You can't wear sneakers with swim trunks, loafers don't go with jeans, and the only time you could possibly pull off cowboy boots with a tuxedo is if you were performing on the CMA Awards. It *does* pay to mix, match, and coordinate, whether you're a woman or a man."

Seth shot a face right back at the *so-there* expression Jessica was shooting him. "Well, go to war, Miss Mitchell," he deadpanned. "But the fact remains that all a man really needs in footwear are three good pairs of shoes, no more, no less."

"Oh, for goodness' sake. You make it sound like every woman's closet is overflowing with shoes. Mine certainly isn't!"

"Oh, really?" Seth folded his arms. "How many pairs of shoes *do* you have in your closet, Jessica? Tell me the truth."

"Twenty."

"Ha! Overflowing!"

"Twenty pairs of shoes is not overflowing!"

"It most certainly is. Do you have a pair of shoes for every outfit and occasion?"

Jessica's cheeks colored. "Well... something like that."

Seth held up his hands. "Well, praise the Lord and hallelujah. Now we're getting somewhere." He returned his arms to their folded state across his chest. "Would you care to enlighten me on just what you need all of those dad-blamed shoes for?"

"I can show you better than I can tell you." Jessica made the *come-hither* motion with her index finger and beckoned him toward the display of shoes on the wall opposite the boutique's beachwear display. "I'll start out by saying that I only need one pair of sneakers and one pair of loafers. Sometimes, I like wearing clogs – they go with jeans and dress pants, so they're handy to keep on hand. Then there are the pumps and formal shoes." She waved a hand at the dressy display. "The open-toed shoes and the strappy ones with the rhinestones are only for very special occasions, like dances or benefits. I usually wear basic pumps anytime, and I have at least six of the same pair in different colors at home. That's always important. Buy whatever's comfortable and looks good and buy at least four or five more in different colors. That makes life a heck of a lot easier."

"Doesn't make your closet any less roomy, though. I'm also ready to bet that they don't make your feet hurt any less."

"I'm used to it."

"I don't know how you do it. If I had to wear heels like that, I'd fall on my fanny and crash through the floor doing it."

"Which reminds me of an old joke I heard once: if a man falls in the forest and there is no woman to hear him, is he still wrong?"

"Not in the slightest," Seth said firmly, returning Jessica's playfully smug smile tit-for-tat. "I wasn't wrong about all of those bathing suits you tried on, was I?"

"No, you weren't," Jessica conceded, "and I'm counting on you to be just as right when I pick out my shoes."

"Well, *that* you can take to the bank. Just do me a favor and don't pick anything like this," Seth returned, indicating a pair of stiletto heels on display nearby.

Jessica took one look at the shoes and hooted with laughter. "Favor granted, Seth. If I wore those, I would be the one falling on my fanny."

"You'd have a long time to fall, tall drink of water that you are."

"Oh, hush," Jessica ordered, giving his arm a smack. "Save the wisecracks for the flip-flops." Once they had progressed down the display to the summer shoes, she plucked a few pairs of flip-flops from the shelf and tried them on one pair at a time, modeling them for Seth. He was no easier on her about her prospective footwear than he had been about her bathing suits.

"What the heck are those? If somebody took *Saturday Night Fever* and *Splash* and smashed them together, you'd get those mud-ugly shoes," he said when Jessica tried on a pair of tangerine-colored wedge sandals.

"Uh-uh. The last thing you need is to look like you're wearing Las Vegas on your feet." This regarding a pair of gold lamé-esque flip-flops with golden glitter on the straps.

"And we're back to Pepto-Bismol Land," he said when she tried on a pair of hot pink flip-flops. "Read my lips, Jess: No. Neon. Pink."

"Spoilsport." Jessica turned back to the wall and retrieved another pair. "What do you think about ruby red?" She slipped on the flip-flops and posed her legs.

Seth laughed in a loud crack. "I think you ought to be dancing down the Yellow Brick Road singing 'We're Off to See the Wizard,'" he quipped, still guffawing. The flip-flops were brilliant red and decorated with glitter and sequins, a summery spin on Dorothy's famous Ruby Slippers from *The Wizard of Oz*.

Jessica looked down at the sparkling shoes. "I like them, but they won't go with my bathing suit." She kicked them off, returned them to their rightful place, and fetched yet another pair from the wall. "How about these?" She modeled flip-flops that bore a colorful yet pretty melange of blue, orange, teal, and purple sequins. Strangely enough, these colors didn't clash, but created a beautiful illusion, even to Seth's fashion-impaired eyes.

"Now *those* are more like it," he said with approval. "They kinda look like tropical fish."

Jessica smiled at her feet. "You know, you're right. They do," she said, knocking the toes together. "So you approve?"

"Indeed I do."

"Sold!" Jessica drew her feet out of the flip-flops and back into her own sandals, and carried her new shoes up to the counter at the front of the house, where Julie rung them and the bathing suit and sarong up and bid the twosome a cheerful farewell.

As they walked down the street, Seth smiled over at his friend. "Well, Jess, are you satisfied with your finds?"

"Translation: is the shop-a-thon over?" Jessica's midnight-blue eyes sparkled as bright as day. "Yes, to both. I couldn't have done it without your help – and your sarcasm."

"Well, you know that anytime you need brutally honest opinions on anything, you can always call me," Seth chuckled, hooking his arm around Jessica's. "What can I say? I'm a loud-mouthed schnook."

Jessica laughed. "Yes, but you're *my* loud-mouthed schnook."

"I'm a loud-mouthed schnook who's roasting out here. What do you say we head on down to the beach after we go back to your house?"

"I was just about to suggest that very thing! And we can take a picnic along with us."

Seth grinned. "Woman, I am already two steps ahead of you. When you called me up this morning asking for my help in finding a bathing suit, of all

things, I put a basket, blankets, and a few other things in the trunk of my car just in case. I will provide the supplies if you provide the fixin's."

"Deal." Jessica returned his enthusiastic grin. "What sort of other things did you bring?"

"Well, my own swimsuit... a couple of kites for us to fly... and a pair of binoculars."

"Binoculars?"

"Ayuh. The killer whales come in close to shore at night, and it's always around sunset that you can see the dolphins jumping out of the water."

"Seth, do you really want to spend the rest of the day at the beach?"

"Jess..." Seth slipped his arm out of the crook of hers and hugged her around the shoulders. "As long as you're with me, I'd go to the moon."

"Same here, Seth," Jessica said happily, laying her head on his shoulder as they walked on. "Same here."