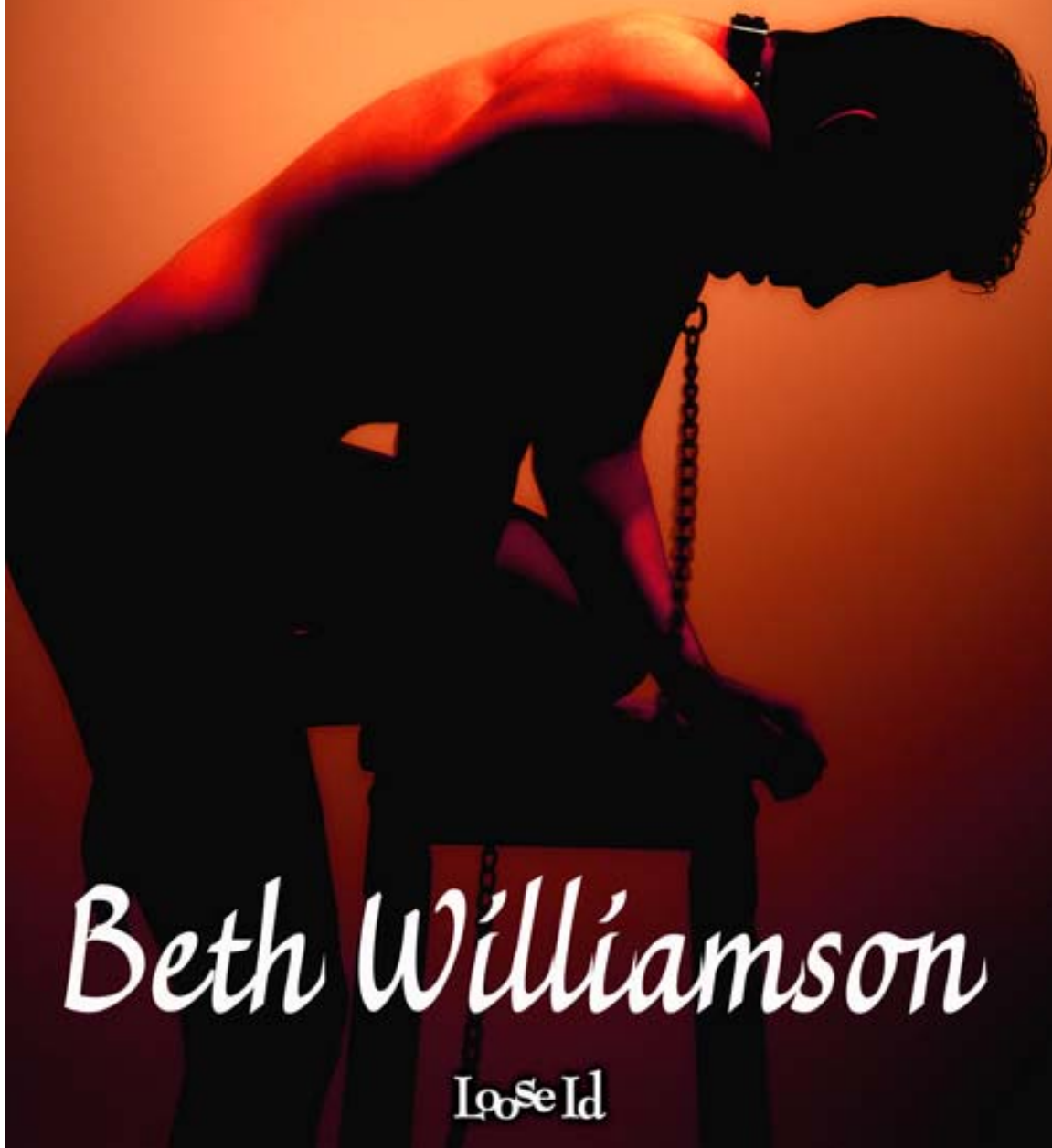


On His Knees



Beth Williamson

Loose Id

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Loose Id.®

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Chapter One

She woke in an instant. Adrenaline started pumping through her sleep-chilled body. Renny didn't know what had woken her. Perhaps it was the snick of the door closing, or the brief meow of a cat outside. Whatever the cause, she was wide awake and alert.

Someone was in the house.

Every single woman's fear, especially when she lived in an area that was easily accessible and hidden from public view. Her dream house fulfilled her lifelong need to own something tangible; however, it now appeared the dream was about to be twisted.

Renny glanced at the clock. The red numbers flashed 12:17 in a room as dark as pitch. The only light in the room came from the digits shining brightly in her alarm clock.

She bit down on any panic that tried to rise. She had a weapon and a cell phone, and she wasn't about to let someone chase her out of her new house. A sharp crack of thunder reverberated through the house, startling her enough that she bit her lip to the point of pain to keep from crying out. It was followed by a flash of lightning that temporarily blinded her. The gauzy white curtains on the bay window did nothing to shield her from its dazzling light.

Perfect. A thunderstorm would not only mask any noise the intruder made, but the lightning would also make it impossible to hide from him. Then again, he couldn't hide from her.

She stood and groped in the dark for her a shirt and shorts, but only found panties. Ah, well, the drawbacks to sleeping nude. She slipped the panties on, then felt her way to the nightstand and removed the taser gun. Her dad had convinced her to get something to protect herself after she refused his offer of a pistol.

Her palms were clammy and her mouth felt like a drought ridden prairie, but she gripped the taser gun and stood. As she walked toward the bedroom door, the thunder shook the house again, followed by a sizzling bolt of lightning. She spotted her shirt on the floor by her left foot and quickly grabbed it. After slipping it on, she felt a little better prepared. Less naked anyway, since panties and a shirt weren't exactly body armor.

The old Renny would have run from a challenge; whether or not there was danger involved was irrelevant. The youngest of five children, she had spent most of her life avoiding anything remotely resembling confrontation. That was before her divorce, before she found the courage to start her life all over again. The new Renny would confront everything head on, come hell or high water.

Whatever the outcome of the break-in, it would bring trouble, but she could not stop herself from finding out who was in her house. Renny trusted her instincts and they were all standing up like the hairs on the back of her neck.

Her heart thumped like a bass drum, sending adrenaline and blood racing crazily through her system. Beads of sweat broke out on her brow, between her breasts, and under her arms. Through all that, she felt cold. Perhaps it was the air conditioning set low enough at night to allow her to snuggle under mounds of covers. Perhaps it was cold raw fear.

Renny opted to believe it was the latter, but it didn't matter. She wouldn't let the fear control her. Courage and fear went hand in hand.

A deep breath in, she let it out so slowly, even she didn't hear it. Although she lived alone, she always kept the bedroom door closed when she slept. Creeped her out to leave it open. She glanced down at the taser and shook her head. To use it, she'd need to get close, really close, to whomever was in the house. She needed something with more reach, something longer.

The baseball bat. Nicholas's baseball bat. It was on the shelf in the closet, a trophy from her divorce battle with her ex-husband. The bat used by Mark McGuire to break the homerun record, it was obsessively important to him. He'd insisted on it in the divorce settlement, but she happily refused to hand it over.

It seemed more important than his wife had been, which was exactly why she refused to give it to him.

She set the taser gun on the bed, and tiptoed to the closet, thankful she'd purchased the deep plush carpet. As quietly as possible, she slid the door open and groped on the shelf until she located the bat behind the empty shoe boxes and purses. One of the smaller purses fell and landed on her face, almost scaring a scream out of her. Definitely made the sweat pools larger. She'd need a shower soon.

Sliding the bat down almost noiselessly, the weight of the wood felt solid in her hands. Comforting. Empowering. Whoever the asshole was who broke into her house, this bat was about to make him regret it.

A scratching sound made Renny jump. She watched in horror as the bedroom door slowly opened a few inches. A lightning flash revealed the taser on the empty bed. Renny hoped the intruder didn't see it. She crept back behind the door, keeping both hands on the baseball bat, praying her sweaty palms or racing heart didn't give her away.

The soft scrape of the door on the carpet was the only sound in the room, other than the blood rushing past her ears. She held the bat like a batter waiting for the ball to cross the plate. God help her if her aim was off even a little.

She swallowed, or tried to since her mouth was still as dry as cotton. Inch by inch, the door opened until she thought she'd yell, "Just get your ass in here!" Instead, she held onto her patience and waited, bat at the ready. Finally, *finally*, a dark shape stepped into the room and paused. When a rumble of thunder sounded, Renny knew she had only moments before the lightning flashed again, revealing her whereabouts, or at least where she wasn't.

Her opportunity came seconds later when he stepped further into the room. Renny swung the bat with all her might. After dinging a shoulder, it connected with a dull thump on the intruder's skull. He dropped with a grunt onto the carpet and lay still as death in the gloom.

Renny shook with fear and triumph, and damned if she likely didn't need new panties.

Holy shit.

She ran to the bed and picked up the taser, never letting the bat leave her right hand. Now doubly armed, she headed toward the bathroom to turn on the light. She didn't want to blind herself so she flicked on the light above the tub, which threw a small shaft of light into the bedroom. The unconscious lump on the floor didn't move.

Renny walked toward him slowly, until she was within reach. She poked him with the bat, then jumped back. Her heart couldn't take many more surprises. Fortunately, nothing happened. She blew out a shaky breath and figured she needed to make sure he was securely trapped before she called nine-one-one.

Rope. She needed rope. Did she have any? Maybe in the garage. That meant she'd have to walk around him, or rather, over him to leave the room. Better now than never. She tucked the taser into the elastic of her panties, hoping like hell it wouldn't slip and taser her pussy.

She tiptoed slowly toward him, baseball bat ready. It had only been a minute, but it felt like an hour, since she'd hit him. As she made a wide arc around the body, something caught

her eye, something that winked in the meager light from the bathroom. A silver necklace around the intruder's throat. A familiar looking open link necklace of white gold.

It couldn't be.

She stepped closer and peered at the intruder's face, knowing who it was, yet hoping she was wrong.

Nicholas.

It couldn't be! It sure as hell *shouldn't* be. Why would her ex-husband break into her house? He left *her*, not the other way around. Now he broke into her house in the middle of the night? The very idea made her head hurt, not to mention what it did to her heart.

Nicholas sure as hell owed her an explanation for this, among other things.

Renny headed for the garage ... and the rope. As soon she flicked the light on, she remembered how she got the rope. About two months after Nicholas left her, her friends convinced -- bullied -- her into rock climbing at a local indoor place. She had actually been excited about climbing and bought a new harness, carabiners and rope. When they got there, Renny learned how to step into the harness before slipping it on. The instructor checked everyone's and they all passed inspection ... until he got to Renny.

He frowned. "You need at least three inches of room between the strap and the buckle. There just isn't enough here to be safe. Sorry, but you're going to have to use one of our extra large harnesses."

His blue eyes were sympathetic, but it didn't make Renny feel any better. Fact was, her damn thighs were too fat to fit properly on the climbing harness the salesgirl had told her was one-size-fits-all. In the end, all Renny did was belay for others. She was too embarrassed to climb or wear a jumbo sized harness like a circus elephant.

She stared at the bright yellow and black rope sitting on the shelf next to the hated harness. Right on top were two carabiners, the locking kind. Now she had to remember how

to tie that figure eight knot and Nicholas wouldn't be able to move an inch. A rush of evil thoughts swirled through her mind.

Should she really tie him up? When would she have the opportunity to grill him on what went wrong? He'd left her after ten years of marriage without even so much as a note. Instead, a courier arrived at work and delivered the papers from the attorney after he'd filed for divorce. The most devastating, crushing moment of her life and all she had was a stack of papers in her shaking hands.

The memory of that moment sealed her resolve. Renny would make Nicholas talk. One way or the other.

Tying knots wasn't her specialty, but she managed just fine, probably due to the rage pouring through her. Damn Nicholas for leaving her, for scaring her, and for invading her private space. She hoped he'd wake up soon so she could find out the answers to her questions ... all her questions.

After tying his hands and feet, Renny made a bit of a loop to nearly hogtie Nicholas then secured it with a carabiner. She wanted to move him out of the doorway, but he was a big man, too big for her to move even if she was no petite flower of womanhood.

God, she really did need a shower after all that. Her stink made her own nose wrinkle. Well, too bad. He'd have to deal with it. What she really needed was a drink, so she headed to the kitchen to get some cranberry juice. The hardwood floors felt cool under her feet and the air conditioning cooled her somewhat. After she poured a glass, she reconsidered and pulled the vodka out of the freezer, adding an ice cold dash to the juice.

A long, satisfying gulp later, Renny felt more in control, less frantic. It had taken so long to get over the hurt inflicted by Nicholas' leaving. So long to realize it had nothing to do with her weight or their lackluster sex life, or anything else she had done or didn't do. It was

something Nicholas hadn't shared with her, and she'd be damned if she'd let him loose without getting a full accounting of why.

Why?

It was the question that chased around her brain when she slept, ate, worked, drove, or shopped. Everywhere and all the time, like a song that kept playing, she couldn't turn it off.

Chapter Two

A hammer slammed incessantly on his head.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

It took Nicholas a minute to realize it wasn't a hammer. It was pain, a lot of pain, accompanied by horrendous throbbing.

What the hell happened?

He'd gone over to Renny's place while she was away for the weekend. After getting the key from under the brick in front -- she was such a creature of habit -- he stepped inside. Then ...

Then what?

Everything beyond that was a bit murky, but he was fairly certain someone had conked him on the head. Who the hell had hit him? He kept his eyes closed and surveyed his body. A brief tug on his hands, then his feet, and a tilt of his head. Unbelievable. Not only was he tied up, but he was fairly certain he was hog-tied and lying on a carpet.

He breathed slowly in and out, bringing much needed oxygen into his system. Using his strength training, Nicholas slowed his heart rate and lessened the pain in his head

somewhat. After a minute or two, the dizziness passed. He cracked open one eye and peered at a pewter colored carpet.

The other eye opened and he shifted his gaze to the right.

Holy shit.

An incredibly round, luscious ass was directly in front of him, wearing a black thong and close enough to bite. He blinked and tried to speak, but his voice came out as more of a croak. The ass moved like greased lightning and he found himself face to face with a very angry looking Renny.

She looked different, definitely had lost some weight and she'd cut her hair. The golden, wavy hair that had hung to her waist for as long as he'd known her had been cut to shoulder length. It fell softly around her face, gently cupping her beautifully round cheeks.

"Renny? God you cut your hair!" popped out of his mouth before he could stop himself.

Her green eyes widened at the same time her mouth pursed into a tight white line. "What the fuck are you doing breaking into my house?"

"Did you just curse at me?"

This was Renny, wasn't it? It was as if an evil twin who liked sexy panties and dirty words had taken over.

"If you don't have anything intelligent to say, I'm going to knock you out again. Now I'm going to ask you one more time ... why did you break into my house?" She leaned in close and poked him in the chest.

"I didn't break in. You left the key where you usually do."

She poked him again and he realized she had a manicure with red hot nail polish. Saying that a year had changed her was an understatement.

"You know what I mean, Nicholas Johnson. This is *my* house and you are not welcome."

Not surprising, of course, but it still hurt. “I didn’t mean to scare you, Renny. Did you hit me?”

She slapped his shoulder. “Of course I hit you! You broke into my house. Did you expect me to make you cookies?”

“Jesus, of course not! I meant, I thought you weren’t going to be here.”

“And that made it okay to invade my privacy?”

He’d never seen her so angry, so passionate, so full of life. The Renny he knew would have apologized for hitting him, not ranted at him for making her do it.

“No, and I’m sorry. I really meant to just get what I came for and go. I honestly thought you’d be gone. Janie said --”

She clapped one hand over his mouth. “I’ll deal with Janie and her big mouth on Monday. Right now I’m going burn that goddamn bat. That’s what you came for, right?”

He shook his head and regretted every excruciating moment. His vision went a little gray around the edges and the next thing he knew, Renny was cupping his cheeks and calling his name.

“Don’t faint on me.”

“I don’t faint,” he replied weakly.

She cocked one blonde eyebrow and smirked. “Hmm, but apparently you do commit breaking and entering.”

“I really am sorry, Renny, I didn’t mean to scare you. I ... you really look gorgeous.” His brain must be rattled. Even if that’s what he was thinking, it definitely wasn’t the time to share it.

Her face drained of color and she sat back on her haunches with a ferocious frown. “You think that’s going to get you untied? Or stop me from calling the cops?”

Cops?

“Are you going to have me arrested?” The panic over that possibility didn’t actually bite like he thought it would. He was actually more upset that he’d scared the crap out of her.

“Why did you tie me up?”

She opened her mouth, then closed it. After a few moments, she finally spoke. “You broke into my house.”

“Yes, but after you knocked me out, you must have known it was me.”

Her gaze moved to the wall. “I recognized you.”

A vague answer. “You’re saying that you tied *me* up on purpose?”

Her green gaze swung back to him. “Damn straight.” She licked her lips and unbelievably, his cock twitched. The combination of getting knocked on the head and being tied up must have really knocked him sideways. She couldn’t have known about his newly discovered predilections, could she? He supposed someone could have told her, but it wasn’t common knowledge.

Renny might look different, and be acting differently, but she wasn’t the type to spy on anyone. If anything, she was too private, too secretive and gave others the same courtesy.

That meant she tied him up to punish him. Nicholas figured she was angry, hurt, and confused about his leaving. Perhaps his mousy ex-wife had discovered a vixen beneath her closed exterior. That fact that would have delighted him to no end if they’d still been married. Even now the thought made him ache for her, in more ways than one.

“When are you going to untie me?” His hands were getting a little numb.

“After you tell me the truth.”

“The truth about what?”

She threw her hands up in the air. “About everything. For God’s sake, Nicholas! Don’t be deliberately obtuse with me. You threw me out like yesterday’s trash and I want to know why.”

Nicholas stomach cramped. He didn't want to tell her, that was for sure. He'd hurt her enough already. "Renny, I ... I can't."

"Then I hope you enjoy living on my floor."

She stood and stomped over to the bed where something bright blue caught his eye. It looked like ... hell it was a vibrator! Renny refused to even consider sex toys when they were married and now she'd gone out and purchased her own. Nicholas knew then that he'd entered the Twilight Zone.

"Is that a vibrator?"

She stopped in mid-stomp and set her foot down slowly. Turning, she leveled an angry gaze at him. "It's none of your business."

"Bullshit! Our marriage fell apart partly because you wouldn't even consider anything beyond the missionary position, much less toys. It sure as hell is my business."

Renny grabbed the vibrator and a bottle of lube and held them in her hands with an evil grin on her face. Nicholas' heart jumped. What the hell was she planning to do?

"Oh, so our marriage failed because I didn't fuck the way you wanted me to?" The soft tone did not match the sparks shooting from her eyes.

"That's not what I said."

"But it's what you meant right?"

She practically sashayed toward him and he wiggled away like a side-winding snake.

"No, and don't put words in my mouth."

"I'll put something else in your mouth instead."

She got down on all fours and crawled toward him, the bright blue vibrator clutched in one hand, the lube in the other. Nicholas couldn't help the burst of sexual excitement that raced through him. Renny almost looked dangerous. She'd never been aggressive or even remotely uninhibited and here she was, stalking him like a lioness getting ready to have dinner.

“Renny?”

“Let me show you exactly what I like to do since you seem to think my repressed sexuality ruined our marriage.”

Before he knew it, she’d whipped off her panties and stuffed them in his mouth, not too far though. He could have spit them out, but he didn’t. Her essence coated his tongue and he knew then that she was turned on too. He couldn’t pinpoint the reason, he just knew his dick was growing by the second and he ached with the need to touch her.

She sat in front of him and spread her legs wide so he was treated to a clear view of her pussy, her *shaven* pussy. Sweet Jesus. The blood rushed from his head.

“Like it? Me too. I shave it all the time, Nicky baby. Smooth and silky.”

She pulled the T-shirt up and off and sat in front of him completely naked with her raspberry nipples looking as tight as diamonds and a pussy that begged to be licked. She cupped her breasts and pinched the nipples and Nicholas’ whole body jerked. He sucked gently on her panties, mesmerized.

One of her hands crept down her body toward her core and he held his breath until a finger swept in and dipped. She immediately brought the finger to her mouth and tasted. He moaned from somewhere near his toes.

“It tastes good too. See what you were missing, Nicky? You never ate my pussy ... well, maybe twice in ten years. I needed it, I wanted it, and all you wanted was for me to suck your cock. Well, tit for tat, baby. I didn’t want to give what I wasn’t getting.”

She shifted to her knees and crawled closer like a blonde cat, her breasts swinging, the nipples begging for his touch.

“Now I’m going to show you how I like it.”

Renny turned around and showed him her wet cunt, spreading her knees so he missed nothing. A foot away and all he could do was watch. He’d never been as hard in his life.

She picked up the vibrator, turned it on low, and slid the ribbed head up both thighs. When the head touched her clit, she mewled. Slowly, she rubbed it back and forth, driving him slowly insane.

“This is what I like. I want to be touched, excited, and pleased by my partner, rubber or human. Not just a quick fuck on Sunday morning. Look, Nicky, can you see how wet I am?”

He grunted and wished his hands were free to rub his cock.

“Can you smell me?”

Damn straight he could.

“Wish you could touch me?”

He grunted again. At this rate, he’d come in his pants without touching.

Renny pushed the head of the vibrator in and out, wicked torment. Each time the blue disappeared into the pink a bit farther. Nicholas found himself humping the carpet along with her rhythm.

Soon the entire vibrator was pumping in and out of her, faster and faster. She turned up the speed and rubbed her clit each time she pulled it out. Bracing herself with one hand, she fucked herself good, so good in fact that he came. It roared through him like white water rapids, shocking in its intensity and unexpectedness.

She came soon after, bucking and jerking against the vibrator, her juices flowing down to spatter on the pewter carpet. Through it all, he’d tasted her juices on her panties, and wondered how he could have never known Renny.

She pulled out the vibrator and it landed on the carpet next to his knee.

“Don’t you wish this had been your cock? Too bad you threw me away, Nicky.”

He wanted to yell and scream. He hadn’t thrown her away. He’d run away.

Renny practically flew into the bathroom. Shaking, she sat on the side of the cold tub and wondered what the hell she'd just done.

Jesus Christ.

Some demon must have possessed her, because she sure as hell never even thought about fucking herself with a vibrator in front of anyone, much less her ex-husband who was tied up like a Christmas turkey.

Her body throbbed with excitement, that languorous lick of adrenaline that coursed through after an orgasm. It had probably been the single most intense orgasm of her life, too. Maybe tying him up had been a freeing point in her life. Finally putting that ghost to bed, no pun intended.

She flipped the water on hot and stepped into the spray, chasing away the fear that nibbled around the edges. There was nothing to be afraid of. If she was right, he'd been just as excited as she was.

A dangerous combination.

Nicholas lay there in the semi-darkness and wondered why he wasn't pissed. She'd tied him up, masturbated in front of him, then left him on the floor alone. He wasn't angry at all. In fact, he wondered what she'd do next.

Just the thought made him hard again.

Chapter Three

The shower was exactly what she needed to calm down, to get control back after it had slipped so badly. She'd wanted Nicholas to give her answers; unfortunately the ones he'd given her just made her mad. She needed honesty, not bullshit from his pride.

She towed off slowly, making sure he lay on the floor alone for a while. That would teach him to break into her house and scare the living shit out of her for a baseball bat. She couldn't focus on the bat or she'd want to hit him with it again.

Sliding on her purple satin robe, Renny felt empowered again. Sexy, tough, and determined. Never mind that her hands still shook a bit. She'd spent the last year getting her head on straight and life had never been so good. Now she needed to lay her past to rest with Nicholas and everything would be settled.

When she pulled open the bathroom door and saw Nicholas, a thump went through her body. He was so gorgeous with his jet black hair and chocolate eyes, the way his smile lit his entire face. And his hands. Jesus, she dreamed of his callused hands on her hips and breasts. Just seeing him again set her back months on her journey to self-discovery.

Still, she loved him. That would likely never change. After all she couldn't make her heart do something it didn't want to.

With a deep breath for courage, she stepped into the bedroom and walked over to Nicholas. He popped one eye open.

“I have a really bad headache. Do you have something I can take?”

A smidge of guilt flittered through her as to the cause of his headache, but she waved it aside.

“I think I’ve got some aspirin in the kitchen.” Renny stepped over him, hoping he got a nice clear view of her pussy on the way by. A short intake of breath confirmed he had.

She returned in a minute with a glass of water and two pills. Since he was tied up, there was no way he could take them or even hold the glass. She kneeled on the floor next to him.

“Open wide, Nicky.”

He frowned but opened his mouth dutifully. She slid the first pill down his tongue to the back. The slick heat of his mouth slammed through her hand all the way to her nipples, which peaked like turkey timers. She held his head and let the water slide into his mouth. When he swallowed a dribble slid out the side and landed on her hand. Setting the glass back down, she put the other pill in his mouth and he deliberately licked her fingers. A frisson of pure arousal replaced the tingles she’d been feeling. This time when she held the glass to his lips, she made sure to remove her hand quickly.

Renny needed to maintain control and getting horny wasn’t helping.

“Now it’s time to answer some questions. I’m not untying you until you give me every answer either.” She set the glass on the nightstand and sat with her back against the mattress, legs out straight.

He looked at her suspiciously. “What questions?”

“Let’s start with an easy one. Why did you leave me?”

His dark eyes never left hers. “That sure as hell isn’t an easy one.”

“Well, then you’d better get started.”

He rolled his head to the side and stared at the ceiling. "There isn't a one sentence answer to that, Renny. You know as well as I do that our marriage was over at least three years before I left, we just hadn't had the funeral yet."

That hit her straight in the gut, stinging like a bullet. "Three years? So I was just a pity case to you? Gorgeous stud marries fat chick as a good Samaritan?"

"Don't start that shit again! God, Renny, I never, ever thought of you as the fat chick or anything like that. I loved you for who you were, not the size of your fucking ass."

He actually sounded like he meant that. It was hard to believe though. Renny knew she needed to lose at least sixty pounds to get in the proper weight range for her height. There was no doubt she was overweight and it had stunted her self-esteem.

"Okay, then, what? What did I do wrong?"

"You didn't do anything *wrong*." He sighed. "It just ... it's just like we were roommates, not husband and wife."

"You mean, sex?"

"Sex, life, dinner, movies, books. Everything. Nothing connected between us anymore. I don't know if we just grew apart or if it wasn't there to begin with."

Something inside her woke up and agreed with him. They didn't have anything in common by the last year of their marriage. Renny went out with her friends to see the movies she wanted to, or to concerts. Nicholas did the same -- they were never together except at home.

"So why didn't you just tell me?"

"I did! Jesus, I asked you to go with me all the time to do stuff, but you always said no. What was I supposed to do, drag you?"

Renny stared in his dark eyes and memories danced across her mind. Nicholas asking her to go white water rafting, hiking, or to a baseball game. She had always said no, and she

never invited him to go out with her friends either. Oh boy, now that hurt. A lot. Did she really exclude him from her life?

“What about sex?” she blurted.

“What about it?”

“Was it good? Was it enough?” She knew the answer before she asked the question, but she had to hear it. Not having this conversation with Nicholas before now was like a festering wound demanding attention.

“I ...” he paused. “I don’t want to hurt you anymore than I already have.”

“I guess that’s my answer.” She stood and headed back to the bathroom, and the tissues.

“Renny wait! Please. I didn’t say it was you, it was me too. You ... you never touched me, never initiated with me. I figured you weren’t interested anymore. Hell, the one time I tried to get in the shower with you, you screamed so loud Mrs. Lloyd next door called to see if I’d killed you.”

She kept walking into the bathroom and grabbed a tissue to stop the tears. Everything he said was true. So damn true. She’d pulled away from him, putting up a nice neat wall between them that she wouldn’t allow him to penetrate.

Even though leaving was cowardly, Renny realized now that Nicholas wasn’t entirely to blame for the fate of their marriage. It had been easier to lay all the blame at his feet since he ran. Renny was thirty-two years old, it was time to face the fact that her life had been royally fucked up by no one but herself.

She wiped her eyes and went back into the bedroom. Nicholas’ gaze was filled with regret and confusion. She lay down on her side next to him and cupped his cheek.

“I didn’t mean to drive you away.”

“You didn’t. I ran away because I couldn’t stand the thought of hurting you. I felt so worthless as a husband and lover ... I ... I was a goddamn coward and I hurt you so much.

Living with a stranger having once a week fumbling under the covers wasn't enough, Renny." He closed his eyes. "I needed more and you didn't seem to want to give any more."

Renny froze. "What do you mean?"

"I left out some hot movies, catalogs of sex toys and games; hell, I even started shaving my balls to make myself more attractive to you."

She'd remembered seeing the catalogs and the dirty movies and figured he was amusing himself. That fact alone had made her pull back even farther from him. It seemed as if he was cheating on her with himself, if that were possible.

"You thought porn movies and dildos would help our marriage?"

"Why not? Nothing else seemed to."

Renny rolled on her back and put her arm over her eyes. "What a couple of idiots we are."

The silence in the room was only broken by their breathing. It seemed like a mutually declared time out. She sat up and put her head between her knees, trying to make sense of everything he'd said.

"What about the bat?"

She lifted her head to look at him. "What about it?"

"It was the only thing I asked for, but you refused to give it to me." He shook his head. "I don't get it."

A surge of anger rushed through her. "I hate that bat and I wouldn't give it back *because* it was the only thing in the divorce papers you asked for. You left me like a thief in the night, and you asked for a goddamn bat."

"I wanted you to have everything since I had been the one to leave."

"That's bullshit. When you left, you took *everything* that mattered to me." Renny stood and headed for the kitchen. "I need a drink."

After Renny disappeared again, Nicholas let out an explosive breath and smacked his head onto the carpet. She thought he'd come back for the bat.

Son of a bitch!

He'd come to get one thing, a simple thing really, and it had turned into a night of craziness he'd never in his life expected. Renny seemed to have changed so much, he didn't know what to think of her. After leaving, he'd spent months wallowing in self-pity for being such a failure as a husband. Then he'd finally accepted the fact that the marriage just wasn't meant to be.

That didn't mean his feelings for Renny were gone. Far from it. Fact was, he still loved Renny. They'd met as sophomores in college and never even looked at another. Marriage followed graduation and somehow five years later, things slowed down from a whirlwind to a slight breeze. A few years after that, the wind was calm and their marriage seemed to bob like a cork in the water, going nowhere.

He really hadn't meant to hurt her, but he couldn't stay any longer. Now he felt like their dull, lifeless marriage had turned into a wicked thunderstorm like the one that raged outside.

He could only wonder what would happen when the storm passed.

Renny drank the vodka straight. A double and then some. The liquor burned as it slid down her throat to her stomach. If she wasn't careful, she'd get drunk and do something really stupid like tell Nicholas she still loved him.

Her heart clenched and she pressed her fist to her chest as if to stop the pain. Why did Nicholas have to break in on that night? Two days after her friend Janie told her about the sex clubs and her ex-husband's new proclivities for kinky sex. Apparently Janie's date had

thought it would be fun to go and she'd recognized Nicholas, wearing a collar and being led on a leash by some leather-clad bitch.

Just the mental image of him behaving like a dog for a stranger made her head hurt. Another question she planned on asking him just as soon as she fortified herself again. She glanced at the clock, shocked to realize two hours had passed and Nicholas hadn't once complained about being tied up. The knots weren't tight, but still, he had to be uncomfortable. At least, she thought so.

Perhaps being tied up wasn't a bad thing in Nicholas' new world. The question was, what would Renny do about it?

Chapter Four

Renny poured another vodka and sipped it slowly, pondering how she'd ask Nicholas about the sex club. It's not something she'd witnessed first hand, Janie had ... A sudden thought had Renny choking on her drink.

Janie!

Her best friend since childhood and she'd set them up! Not only had Janie told Renny about the sex club, but Nicholas said Janie told him that Renny would be gone for the weekend!

Goddamn her. Meddling, conniving, pushy woman. She'd always said Renny should have fought for her marriage instead of rolling over and dying and Janie apparently decided to do something about it. Renny slammed the glass down on the counter and marched back toward the bedroom.

Well, if it was fireworks she wanted, Janie would get quite a show.

When she stepped back in the room, Renny had a plan. Nicholas jumped a bit when she slammed into the room. His dark eyes widened when he gazed into hers.

"Renny?"

“Tell me the truth. Did you start going to sex clubs before or after we separated?” she snapped.

His face blanched. “How did you find out about that?”

“That’s not an answer.” She picked up the bat and poked him in the shoulder. “Before or after?”

She held her breath, dreading his answer would be something she *didn’t* want to hear at all.

“After, baby. I never cheated on you.”

Renny stared into his soul for what seemed like an hour before she accepted his answer. Thank God. The last thing she needed was to be the other woman.

“Who told you about it?” Nicholas asked quietly.

She tossed the bat into the corner and picked up the scissors from the top of the dresser. “Doesn’t matter. What matters is that you went there for something you didn’t get from our marriage bed. That bothers me.”

He apparently had no answer for that, although his mouth opened and closed, keeping an eye on the scissors closely.

“I’m not the same person I was when we were married. I’d like to think I learned a lot in the last year about who I am and what I want in my life. Plain, ordinary vanilla is out, hot and spicy are in.”

“I could tell that the second I saw those panties, Renny ... I ... uh, they were hot.” He shifted on the floor.

“Hot?”

He licked his lips and Renny’s stomach jumped. “Yeah, hot.”

She stood over him and straddled his chest, giving him a clear view of her pussy. “How hot?”

His hungry gaze centered on her and she immediately grew damp, a small trickle of moisture on her nether lips. She didn't remember ever being so turned on by her husband in the ten years they were married. And here she was, nearly naked, and him tied up and all she could think about was fucking his brains out. She knew Nicky's body. It was hard and delicious, and from the look of him, he'd kept up the workouts.

She squatted down so she hovered right over his hip with her back to him, the heat from their bodies nearly connecting. After setting the scissors on the floor, she reached for the rope and noticed her hands shaking again, dammit.

Control, Renny, control.

"What's it called?" She fumbled with the carabiner. After she released it, he straightened his legs with a groan, lightly brushing his jeans against her inner thighs. A shot of pure adrenaline slammed through her. Thank God she couldn't see his face.

"What?"

She kneeled and put her heat directly on his outer leg, hissing at the contact. He jerked and Renny closed her eyes, trying to get hold of her runaway arousal.

"The sex club. What was it called?" She picked at the knots, feeling the delicious rasp of his jeans on her heated core.

"Called?" his voice had grown huskier. "Um, Nirvana. It's called Nirvana."

She got his feet untied and flipped around to face him, shocked to see naked longing instead of his usually controlled expression.

"Did you find it there?"

"Find what?" he choked as she leaned forward, giving him a clear view of her breasts in the gaping opening of the robe.

If her nipples got any harder, they might poke a hole in the damn thing.

"Nirvana. It's heaven, right? Or something like that?" She slowly unwound the knot around his hands, enjoying the way he simply lay there, letting her keep control.

“No, I didn’t find it there.”

She nodded as if she expected his response, which was far from the truth.

“Tell me what you did there.” Her heart pounded in her chest as the last of the knots came loose. She untied him because she wanted to, because she knew Nicky didn’t want to hurt her or scare her.

Because she wanted to see exactly what would happen when he wasn’t tied up at her mercy. Would he still want her to be in charge? The thought made her even wetter.

A surge of excitement danced across Nicholas’ skin. Renny was different ... stronger, firmer, more in control. Something he hadn’t even known he needed until he visited Nirvana. Now he knew he was a sub by nature. A sub in need of a Dom and he hoped like hell Renny was open to the idea. He wouldn’t give her too much detail up front, just enough to have a taste of what could be between them.

She picked up the scissors and to his utter surprise, started cutting his clothes off. Now that was something he’d never expected. The cold steel of the scissors slowly slid up his overheated skin and he shuddered with longing. Who knew his mousy ex-wife would end up being the woman he wanted so badly his teeth ached? His heart had known all along, had refused to give up on her. Perhaps it wasn’t too late.

“What are you doing?”

Renny glanced at him. “Making you naked.”

“Why don’t you just take my clothes off instead of cutting them off?” His breath caught on the last word when the scissors flicked one nipple.

She stopped immediately. “Did I hurt you?”

“No.” He was in danger of blowing a load in his pants though.

She pulled the remnants of his shirt off, then leaned down and bit his hardened nipples. “Mmm, much better.”

Nicholas let out a shaky breath, hoping like hell this wasn't just punishment. He wanted so much more, one of the reasons he came to her house that night. He needed *more*.

Shifting down his body, Renny let her breasts press into his thigh. He couldn't stop the moan from escaping. He swore he heard her chuckle.

The scissors started again on his pants and he didn't stop her. Didn't say a damn word or even move. Instead he lay there, getting harder by the minute.

Snip, snip, snip.

Working her way up his pant legs, Renny nibbled and scraped her teeth on the exposed skin. It was the weirdest, yet most sensual experience of his life. By the time she'd shredded his pants, he shook with need. Her eyebrows shot up when she discovered he'd gone commando.

"No panties, Nicky?" she mocked him.

A slow flush crept up his cheeks. "It's more comfortable."

She stared at his erection and licked her lips. "I like it." As she settled her heat against his cock, he hissed along with her. After a moment of the skin against skin sizzle, she placed her hands against his chest, and stared into his eyes. "Tell me what you did. Don't make me tie you up again."

One eyebrow rose. "Maybe later."

A flash of surprise preceded a vixenish grin. "Is that something you learned at Nirvana?"

"Yes."

She leaned closer and her newly cropped hair brushed his jaw. "What else did you learn?"

"May I touch you?"

She blinked then nodded. "You may."

He reached up to cup her ample breasts, the nipples diamond hard against his hands. His mouth longed to pleasure them, but one step at a time. One small step at a time, even if it killed him.

"That feels good," she breathed. "Pinch them."

His heart skipped a beat at the command. God, to hear the love of his life speaking in that tone of voice was a dream come true. Nicholas parted the folds of the bathrobe and placed his hands on her heated skin. He couldn't stop the shiver that traveled straight down his arms to his balls. Rolling the nipples between his fingers, he gently thrust his hips upward against her mons.

She caught his rhythm and pushed down against him. When Nicky flicked one nipple with his nails, she slapped his hand.

"No. Naughty boy!" She wagged her finger at him.

He was surprised yet pleased she reacted as she did. Renny definitely showed signs of being a natural dominant.

"May I lick them?"

"No, you may not."

A test. Definitely a test. He continued pinching and teasing her, never stopping or changing his position. Renny was definitely catching on. Thank God.

"I'm not sure I quite understand what's happening, but it damn sure feels good." She said huskily.

Nicholas smiled. "You're taking control. Do you like it?"

She pushed her breasts against his hands and looked down into his eyes. "The question is, do you?"

A million questions flew through his mind, followed by a one answer.

"Yes."

Renny felt like she was in a different dimension, one where she and Nicholas had never separated, never gone to bed without kissing each other good night, and never ended their relationship with a whimper.

Surges of pure Grade-A arousal raced through her, making every hair on her body stand at attention. Her heart thumped hard and fast, like a jackrabbit. This wasn't the languid arousal that affected her when she used her new sex toys. It was more like turning music on really loud and shocking your body and brain into action at once.

Hard and heavy, unlike anything she'd ever experienced. It had to do with the way Nicholas was giving her control, letting her *tell* him what to do. She felt powerful, sexy, and incredibly feminine. At the same time, she felt out of control because she didn't know what to do. She followed her instincts and his gentle prodding.

As it was, she was on the verge of an orgasm from simply having him touch her breasts.

"What's next ... Mistress?"

The name skipped across her skin like a caress. *Mistress*.

"Why did you call me that?" She sat back, almost painfully removing her breasts from his amazing hands.

He stared hard at her ripe nipples before meeting her gaze. "I wanted to. Do you think you can be a Mistress?"

"What does it mean to be a Mistress?" She definitely liked the sound of it, the sound of power turned her on like she couldn't believe. Curiosity, arousal, and downright naughtiness swirled around inside her.

His hands twitched on her legs, as if he couldn't sit still, as if he wanted to put them back on her breasts but didn't want to without permission.

"It means you tell me what to do, what to feel, how to pleasure you. And I obey."

Obey.

“You do what I tell you to do?”

“Yes.”

“You do nothing without me telling you to do it?”

“Yes.”

“I am Mistress.”

“I am yours.”

A shiver worked its way down her body to land squarely in her pussy, which throbbed and clenched with excitement. She'd never known the very thought of having a man be at her command would engender the most intense feelings of longing she'd ever had.

“Good. Then you may touch my breasts again and this time, use your mouth.”

The eagerness in his eyes almost undid her. He pulled the robe off her shoulders, a soft caress of silk on her overheated body. Fingertips lightly traced a path down her arms to circle her nipples. She held her breath until she grew lightheaded. When his fingers finally reached the sensitive tips, she moaned.

“Does that feel good, Mistress?”

“Mmmmm, yes.” She leaned forward, eager for the next step.

He didn't disappoint her. The first touch of his hot tongue felt like fire on her skin. Wicked laving, followed by sucking that echoed through her body. Sweet, wet pleasure. She wanted more though. Much more.

“Bite them.”

His teeth closed over one nipple, nibbling and bringing her to hardened peaks that she'd never achieved before.

“God yes, harder.”

A sharp snap of pain joined the pleasure and she slid her wetness back and forth slightly on his erection. Renny hadn't known his tongue was so double jointed or that he

could give such amazing sensual ecstasy. Before she even realized she was close to coming, an orgasm ripped through her, leaving behind a shuddering wake of tingles that even made her toes shake.

He continued to pleasure her nipples, back and forth until Renny thought she'd lose her mind.

"Stop."

He released her immediately and she was able to take a deep breath. The throbbing in her pussy reminded her that although she'd had an orgasm, she was nowhere near finished. The pulsing cock between her legs told her he was as horny as she was.

His harsh breathing echoed through the room, nearly as loud as Renny's heart beat. Her mind contemplated the possibilities of the twists their relationship had taken. She wasn't quite sure yet what it all meant, but it didn't really matter. Her instincts were speaking loudly and she listened carefully.

Nicholas had trouble catching his breath. When Renny climbed off and crawled over toward the bed, he watched with avid curiosity. His body hummed with the most powerful arousal he'd experienced. Even the wild experiences he'd had at Nirvana hadn't brought him to this point. Only Renny could do that.

Only Renny taking over could do that.

She sipped some of the water from the cup on the nightstand. It was the same cup she'd used on him for his headache, the headache that seemed long gone and forgotten. Both of them needed a break, a chance to regroup and think before continuing. Up until that point, it had been all play, testing each other, finding limits and trying new things. There hadn't been intercourse, no actual fucking, so there was still time to go back. He could leave. Well, after he found something to wear besides his birthday suit.

Who was he kidding? He couldn't leave unless she literally threw him out the door. His heart had always belonged to Renny, there just had been something missing in their physical relationship. He hadn't even known what it was until they'd parted, until he went with a friend to Nirvana and discovered what he truly was.

Sharing it with Renny was a dream come true. Now he just had to have the courage to explain to her why he really came to her house. Would she understand? Would she still want him to stay? Obviously cutting his clothes to shreds was an indication that she didn't want him to leave. She could have called the cops or simply dragged him outside and left him to rot.

To his delight, she hadn't done either. Instead, she'd decided to explore her own fantasies. God help him, he hoped she had more because he wasn't done yet. Not by a long shot. His gaze ran up and down her peach-tinted skin, glistening with the aftermath of their play. Gorgeous curves, enough to fill his hands and give him the knowledge that he had a woman. A real woman.

His woman if he had any say in it. He'd missed Renny a lot, more than a lot. Trying to fill the gap with other women had just left him feeling emptier. He had to come up with just the right words to convince her that he still loved her, that he hadn't meant to hurt her, and that he'd do anything for a second chance.

She drained the glass and let out a breath. Her gaze returned to his and she winked. "You thirsty?"

"Uh, sure. I could use a drink."

She stood and walked over to him. Looking up at her made him dizzy with longing. He wanted to grab her, throw her on the bed and fuck her until one of them passed out, but he didn't. Instead, he clenched his hands and controlled his urges. After all, a sub always controlled himself.

"A drink or a real drink?" She held out her hand.

He took hold of her soft fingers and smiled. "Surprise me."

One blonde eyebrow rose. "Okay, you stay right here."

"Yes, ma'am."

"You know I want to lay on top you and kiss you breathless, but I'm afraid I won't make it to the kitchen if I do that." She winked and strolled from the bedroom naked.

Yet another thing that was different about Renny. She *never* walked around naked when they were married. Hell, she didn't even walk about in panties and a bra. Her body was always covered. He could tell she'd been dieting a bit and it looked like she'd been exercising too. None of it meant anything to him -- her body had always turned him on because she was natural in her skin. Unlike a lot of the plastic dolls that called themselves women.

Renny was back within a few minutes, surprise on her face when she noticed he still lay on the floor in the exact same spot.

"I didn't mean you couldn't move, Nicky. Geez, you must be cold on the floor." She headed for the bed.

He sat up and watched her. "Well, I'm pretty warm; actually I'm hot."

Her laugh tinkled. "Yep, I'd agree with you there." She sat on the edge of the bed. "Join me here."

"As you wish."

"Oh, that's dirty pool. You know *Princess Bride* is one of my favorite movies." She had two glasses in her hands, a clear liquid with ice. One held a spoon.

He walked toward her, every nerve ending singing with the knowledge that she covered him from head to toe with her gaze -- a visual caress that set his small hairs rising and his cock twitching.

"God, Nicky, you look good enough to eat." She took a sip of the drink without the spoon.

Nicholas wondered if she knew how much her words thrilled him. Perhaps she did, judging by the way she said it. He sat next to her and took a deep breath of her scent, a mixture of woman, arousal, and something flowery, a heady combination.

She handed him the glass she'd drunk from and waited. Nicholas had always had a problem with sharing food and drink -- a phobia really, that he'd developed as a child. His mother was always obsessive about germs and bacteria so his upbringing had given him a phobia. Kissing had taken some time to get over that phobia. Renny knew she was testing him by forcing him to drink from the same glass.

Nicholas had worked hard to allow himself to give someone else control over him, to the point where he'd control the situation, just not the actions. Without hesitation, he took the glass and brought it to his lips. The smell of vodka preceded the ice cold liquid sliding down his tongue and into his throat. He swallowed and took another gulp, eager to quench his thirst and please his Mistress.

She watched him drink, then took the glass back and deliberately put her mouth on the same spot and licked it. His entire body jerked at the sight of her tongue. After taking a gulp, she set the glass on the nightstand. He wanted to know the purpose of the spoon but figured he'd find out soon enough.

Sliding to the carpet, she kneeled between his legs and grinned wickedly. Taking the spoon from the glass, she pressed the wet, cold metal to his right testicle. He hissed and closed his eyes. The spoon clinked in the glass, stirring rapidly. A second later, the spoon landed on his left testicle. This time, a groan popped from his mouth.

"Feel good?"

"God yes."

She chuckled softly. "Good. Now let's see what other mischief I can think of."

A clank followed by a slurp, then the thump of the glass on the nightstand all had him vibrating with anticipation. When her lips closed around the head of his cock, he almost

came. She'd put an ice cube in her mouth. The wicked cold and the heat of her tongue felt incredible. More than that, it felt like heaven.

He clutched the bedspread and wondered how he'd been married to her for ten years and never knew her mouth was so talented. She bobbed up and down slowly on him, sucking and licking with each stroke of her mouth. One hand clutched the base of his staff, and the other cupped and fondled his balls. Her thumb made slow circles at the base, sending tingles up and down.

She lifted her head and looked into his eyes, her hands continuing to stroke him.

"I can taste your pre-cum. You're holding back aren't you?" She licked him, gently nibbling the sensitive tip.

He grunted, unable to speak.

"I like that. Do you want to come?"

Nicholas didn't know how to answer that question. He sure as hell wanted to come, at the same time, he wasn't ready to. It felt too damn good.

"Well, you can't. Not until I say so." She released him and stood. "Since I'm Mistress, I say when you come, right?"

"Yes, ma'am," he gasped out, aching for her mouth to return.

She tapped her chin with one finger. "Then we're going to continue to pleasure each other until I say we're ready. Is that clear, Nicky boy?"

He wanted to say no and yes, and everything in between. Renny had him, literally, in the palm of her hand. All he could do was what she commanded. And he loved every second of it.

Chapter Five

Renny felt like she was flying, soaring through the clouds on the wings of sensual pleasure. Her body seemed to have taken control of her mind, instinctively knowing what to do with Nicky, her new slave. Or sub. That's what they were called. Submissives.

My sub.

She liked the thought of that. Hers once again, only this time for keeps. If they decided to try again, she knew this time it would be forever or never. She couldn't handle another break-up with him. Shaking her head, she vowed to leave the relationship questions for later. Now was all about physical pleasures.

An incredibly naughty idea raced through her mind and the very idea made her nearly weep with arousal. He sat on the edge of the bed, with a hard-on that could likely hammer nails, waiting for her. The sight of him could drive her to her knees if she wasn't careful.

"Lay on your stomach in the middle of the bed," she commanded.

He crawled up on the bed, his incredibly sexy ass now available for her viewing pleasure. A small groan escaped when his erection hit the satin sheets. She grinned, knowing how the soft material caressed bare skin. Renny opened the nightstand drawer and took out her small five inch vibrator. It was one of her favorites because it had the texture of a real

penis, with veins and ribs. It also fit nicely in her purse for some daily pleasure when she was particularly horny.

She wondered if Nicky would stop her. He watched her carefully, noting the small vibrator and the lube she put in her other hand. With a grin, she turned it on and touched it to her tongue. His body visibly tightened and his pupils grew so wide, his eyes looked black.

"I'm going to fuck you with this, Nicky. You're going to lay there and let me." She climbed onto the bed. "Spread your legs, lover."

He spread his legs slowly, as if his mind obeyed, but his body didn't want to. His puckered hole winked at her, no doubt a virgin hole. She wanted to see just how far Nicky would allow her to go. This had to be the most outrageous thing she could think of. At the same time, it excited her to the point where she wanted to use the damn thing on herself.

She opened the bottle of lube and put a small amount on her finger. When she touched him, he started. "Easy, baby, easy."

Renny spread the lube all around with one finger, lightly teasing the hole. He shivered and she took it as a sign of pleasure. She pushed her finger tip in a half an inch or so, just enough to feel the muscles tighten.

"I won't hurt you."

He let out a loud breath as if he was ready for her to continue. So she did. She teased him until she noticed his balls getting tight, a sure sign of his arousal. It was time to really push his envelope.

With a flick, she turned the vibrator on, the low hum filling the room. Renny caressed his firm ass with it, slowly moving down toward her ultimate goal. She skimmed it down between his legs, brushing against his sensitive inner thighs, then lightly against his balls. He groaned and buried his face in the pillow, the muscles in his back tight as a bow string.

"If you don't want me to do this, tell me to stop."

Nicholas didn't respond other than a quick shake of his head. A thrill shot through her at the power she had over him. He literally was open to whatever she did or said.

After squirting a bit of lube on the vibrator, she placed it at the entrance. After making a circle to warm it up, she slid it in half an inch then stopped. Her other hand gently massaged around, loosening him, pleasuring him. Another inch and she again stopped. The ring of muscles prevented her from going any further.

When she turned the vibrations up a notch, he opened his legs slightly farther. With a smile, she pushed and slid until at least three inches were inside him. Unable to control herself, one hand slid to her pussy, flicking her clit lightly with the rhythm of the vibrator.

"Do you like it?"

He croaked an answer.

"I can't hear you, Nicky."

His voice was muffled by the pillow. "Yes, Mistress."

Renny continued to fuck her husband while she got herself off, the passion building slowly but surely. A delicious coil deep down inside her that pulsed and throbbed. She leaned down and bit his cheek, then licked the bite in apology. He started pushing against the vibrator, fucking it, pulling it deeper into his body.

With something like regret, she pulled it out when she saw his balls tighten up, signaling his release.

"You want me to put it back in? You'll need to beg."

"Please, ma'am, please." He sounded desperate. "Please."

She scraped her finger nails from his balls to the top of his ass. He shivered and pushed against her, needy and hungry. Renny slid the vibrator back in and moved fast and hard.

"Do you want to come?"

"Yes, p-please."

“Beg me, baby.”

“I’m begging you. G-god, b-begging.”

She fucked him, teased him for another few moments before she relented. “You may come now.”

He came within seconds, groaning and clenching while she watched. The sheer joy of knowing what she’d done raced through her, like a victory, a sweet, sweet victory.

Nicholas gulped in a much needed breath and attempted to steady his nerves. It just wasn’t working. He’d just had the most sensual experience of his life and he couldn’t believe it. His wife had fucked him silly. Okay, ex-wife. He had trouble remembering the ex part.

He’d had notions of same sex experimentation, but nothing ever came of it. There hadn’t been another man he found particularly attractive. Now he knew what it felt like, at least on a smaller scale, and knew he’d never want to experience it with anyone but Renny. It was she who had made the entire thing so incredible.

“Roll over.”

He did as he was bade and stared up at her. The lightning outside lit up the room, bathing her in a silver glow, giving her an aura like a Valkyrie of old. A warrior woman who took what she wanted and took no prisoners.

Well, except one.

The perspiration reflected like a sheen of heat that he wanted to lick off drop by drop. She was exquisite and for the night, she was his. Or vice versa. It didn’t matter. They were together.

Renny smiled. “Now I’m going to park myself over you, and you, dear Nicky, are going to give me a sweet tongue bath.”

The combination of arousal and excitement gave a husky tone to her voice that sent skitters up his spine. Lord, he could listen to that all night and never grow tired of it. She

shifted forward, gripping the headboard until her pussy was positioned directly over him. He ran his hands up and down her soft inner thighs, loving the quiver that echoed his touch.

Nicholas nuzzled her, inhaling her musky arousal. After trailing soft kisses all along the outside, he licked Renny from her ass all the way to her clit. One long lick that made her gasp. Unbelievably, his well sated cock twitched on his leg from the sound.

Spreading her with his fingers, he feasted on the pink banquet in front of him, licking, nibbling, and sucking. While he tasted, his thumbs slid in and out, just enough to keep her on edge, clenching against the intrusion while trying to pull him in deeper at the same time.

Her hot button grew plumper under his ministrations. When he bit it, she hissed and punched the headboard.

“God, Nicky, why didn’t you ever do that before now?”

He didn’t have an answer for that, so he simply continued to pleasure her. Her taste grew sweeter with each lick until he knew she was close to coming. Her thighs trembled and her groans were nearly constant. Nicholas put his mouth on her clit and sucked it like a little cock while his thumbs fucked her.

Within seconds, she screamed her orgasm, bucking against him, squeezing his head with her legs, but he held on. His mouth didn’t let up until she commanded him to.

“Enough.”

He let her hot flesh go with regret, licking his lips to get the last of her flavor, hoping like hell he’d get to do it again that night. It had to be close to three in the morning, but he’d never felt more alive in his life.

Renny climbed off him and lay on the bed with a heavy sigh. He noted her breath was choppy and uneven, and grinned into the semi-dark room. He didn’t think he’d ever made her lose her breath before.

“Damn, that was good.”

“I’m glad, Mistress. Can I do it again?”

She laughed.

Renny dozed, a sweet lazy feeling invading her from head to foot. Even the fact that Nicholas had broken into her house didn't upset her any more. Or did it? She really wanted to know why he'd done it, and he obviously didn't want to be too forthcoming about it. However, it seemed as if their relationship had started anew three hours ago when she smacked him on the head with a bat.

Apparently, his headache was gone or at least forgotten since he hadn't made a peep about it. Truth was, she felt a little bad for hitting him. Actually, more than a little, a lot. Then again, it was a catharsis of sorts for her, like aiming at a target and hitting a bulls eye. It gave her satisfaction of sorts.

"Nicky?"

"Yes, ma'am?"

She leaned up on one elbow and stared down at him.

"Why did you break into my house tonight?"

His eyes closed, but not before she saw something very interesting. Embarrassment. He sat up and leaned his forearms on his knees. His broad back rose and fell with a heavy sigh.

"Nicky?"

"Are you ordering me to tell you?"

The question struck her in the heart. He gave her the opportunity to control him to *make* him tell her the truth. If she forced him to tell her, would he resent her? Would she want to force him to? No, that's not the way she wanted it to be. In a relationship, information and feelings should be an open exchange. This situation didn't call for someone to be in charge. It called for honesty.

"No, I'm not." She knew she laid it all on the line.

"I ... I can't tell you. Not yet."

Disappointment snaked through her, piercing her heart that had just begun to beat again. Her hope fell so fast and so hard, it stole her breath.

“I’m sorry, Renny.”

She shook her head. “I don’t want sorry.”

If Nicholas wasn’t going to be honest with her, she wouldn’t force him to. But she sure as hell could make him sorry he wasn’t. Since he was hers to do with as she pleased, he’d earn his keep. Daylight lay at least three hours away and she’d savor every second of it.

“If you don’t want to tell me why you came, so be it.” She pushed at his back, the heat from his skin warming her hands in the cool air-conditioned room. “Get up.”

He stood and she was face to fanny with him. Too tempting to resist, she bit his right cheek, then bit the left, leaving a nice circle of teeth marks. With a grin, she slapped the nicely rounded ass.

“You’re going to fuck me like you mean it, Nicky. So get yourself ready. Turn around.”

His eyes smoldered with arousal, and his cock already stood straight and proud.

“Touch it.”

One large hand wrapped around his staff, sliding up and down, squeezing the tip before dropping back to the base. She’d never seen anything so arousing in her life. After two minutes, she was too wet to watch anymore. Renny rolled onto her knees and spread her legs wide.

“Lick me and make sure I’m good and wet,” she ordered.

Nicholas’s talented tongue again gave her half-dozen licks that had her inner thighs quivering and her pulse throbbing.

“Now let’s see what you can do with that.” She wiggled her ass and mentally prepared herself. Of course, it had been a year since a man had been between her thighs, actually only one man had ever been there, and he’d returned. A different man to be sure, but the same person. She had to stop analyzing everything and simply let go for once.

His hands skimmed across her ass, followed by his lips. Sweet kisses that sent shivers down her legs and made her toes tingle. He swept down her inner thighs and breathed softly against her pussy. She had to remind herself that she was punishing him.

“Do you want me to fuck you, Renny?”

“Yessss,” she hissed, pushing her ass even farther up. “Now.”

“As you wish.”

The head of his cock pushed against her, hard and demanding. She closed her eyes and reveled in the way her body stretched to accommodate him. It had been so long, so long, since she'd been intimate with him. And this, this felt different from anything they'd ever done..

Nicholas entered her an inch, then pulled out, then two inches, then three, until Renny lost track and let the gentle teasing pull her deeper into the world where only sensations lived. Soon he touched her womb as he buried himself to the hilt inside her. For one endless moment, he stopped and laid his head on her back.

“Let's go. Faster,” she ordered, a combination of anger and arousal making her feel dangerous.

She'd give him points for doing what she told him to do. As soon as the words left her mouth, his pace picked up and he was fucking her in earnest. The sheer perfection of having him there with her, with his body joined with her rolled through her. She held her breath and clenched around him. He moaned and tightened his hands on her hips. Renny finally knew the power of her sensuality. It wasn't about pleasing him, it was about experiencing everything to the fullest and that meant trying what she'd never tried before.

“Nicky, stop.”

He stopped immediately and she felt the loss of his motion, almost telling him to start again. Instead she took a deep breath, stepped off the cliff of normalcy and spread her wings.

“I want you to fuck me in the ass. Nice and easy at first. You know as well as anyone that I’m a virgin down there ... so if I tell you to stop, you stop.”

“Yes, ma’am.” The quiver in Nicholas’s voice told her volumes about how he felt about her commands.

Perhaps it was because she’d just discovered his weakness for back door loving, or perhaps he’d always wanted to. With her or any woman. Renny mentally pinched herself to again stop thinking. She knew why it had happened again -- because she was nervous.

The whole thought of anal sex had teased her with its naughtiness, but she’d never thought it would just happen because she told her ex-husband to do it. Now here she was, at the brink of finding out if the reality was as good as the hype.

He started by circling her hole, spreading some lube he’d apparently picked up while she was over-thinking. The touch of his finger made her tighten with a zing of arousal. After a slow sweep, he sank in just a bit, perhaps to the first knuckle, then gently finger-fucked her until he had two fingers in at least in three inches.

Renny felt completely shocked at how marvelously amazing it felt. It was as if he’d waved a magic wand and send tingles straight up her ass. Soon, he pulled out his fingers and she tried not to moan. He spread her cheeks wide and positioned himself at her entrance.

“Are you ready, Mistress?” He sounded out of breath.

“Nicky, are you all right?”

“Mm, yes. I’m ... just anxious.”

Her stomach jumped at the thought of him being anxious to fuck her. Yes, oh, yes, it had definitely been the right decision.

“Okay then, I’m ready.” Not really, but what the hell? The night was a dream made in hot sex heaven and she was along for the ride.

His cock had grown to large proportions and Renny had a moment where she wondered if it would fit at all. But he’d lubed her up and stretched her enough that the head

slid past the first set of muscles easily. She nearly choked on her own tongue when the tingles turned into bolts.

Ever so slowly, he pushed in and out, never increasing his pace. Sweet, sweet heaven. Within minutes, she had to beat back a peak that threatened. It was too good to simply throw away that fast.

“Does it feel good?”

“God, yes. Can you go deeper?”

Nicholas didn’t need to be asked, but she asked anyway. He responded by sinking in deeper, past the second set of muscles until he was firmly sheathed inside her. He thrust in deeply exactly four times. A tidal wave of orgasm came at her like a tsunami sweeping through and wiping out everything in its path. She howled along with him as they both found a place amongst the stars.

What she missed the most was being joined with him, whether physically or emotionally. Just one moment gave her back a piece of her heart.

Chapter Six

Renny slept deeply, without dreams. It seemed that she'd just fallen asleep when she woke with the sun bathing her face with morning heat. The night's activities, surprises, and amazing sex came back to her in an instant. She could tell by the sounds in the room and the feel of the bed that Nicholas was there. Awake.

She played possum for a few minutes while she reviewed all of the things he could possibly say to her, and all the things she could say to him. In the bright light of the day, she cringed, just a tad, over all the things they'd done the night before. She'd had no idea a wild, crazy woman had hidden inside her.

Of course, she had to deal with the consequences of what she'd done, what they'd done. First off, her body screamed with soreness she'd never felt. Oh, boy. Yep, muscles never used made themselves quite known. A groan threatened, but she swallowed it back with effort. She wasn't quite ready to speak to Nicholas yet.

The room still smelled of sex, although judging by the position of the sun, it had to be late morning, maybe even noon. They'd fallen asleep quickly without cuddling or kissing, as if they were only connected through the sex. Renny didn't even realize she was disappointed

until that moment. Yes, they'd walked the thin line between lovers and fuck buddies. She wanted to believe it had been more than fuck buddies, but why?

A year had gone by since Nicholas had left and she still didn't know why he'd broken into her house. Too many unanswered questions to simply accept the fact that they'd become lovers again. Too much hurt had occurred to dismiss everything after one incredible night.

"Renny?"

Shit. He'd always been incredibly intuitive and he must have sensed she was awake.

"Hmmm?"

"Can I talk to you, sweetie?"

That nickname never failed to melt her like butter in a skillet. She gritted her teeth and rolled over to face the music.

Nicholas shook with the force of his feelings. He wanted to snatch her up and blubber like an idiot until she took him back. The rest of his life hinged on the next five minutes of his life. God knew he'd spent enough time fucking it up. Hopefully he wouldn't do that again.

Renny looked beautiful, sleep-rumpled with lips round and full from kissing. One sweet shoulder peeked out of the sheet sporting a bit of whisker burn. He'd forgotten how delicious her skin was. Of course, the taste was so much sweeter since she'd thrown off the cloak of uptightness that shrouded her most of her life. And since he'd discovered how exciting being a sub could be. Renny would be perfect as his Dom -- she'd proven that the night before.

Now he had to convince her to give his heart a chance.

"Renny ... I need to talk to you and I'd like to ask you to hear everything until you say anything. Okay?"

“Okay.” She sat up against the headboard, pulling the sheet up around her like a protective shroud. Her beautiful green eyes looked wary yet attentive.

She hadn’t kicked him out yet, which was a good sign. At least he thought it was. He took a deep breath and opened his heart.

“Let me start by saying I’m sorry. I can’t tell you how much Renny. I knew when I left that I would hurt you ... my only excuse was that I was so desperately unhappy that I couldn’t see straight.” He picked at the blanket beneath his hand. “I’ve hidden for the last year, knowing what a mess I’d left and being too cowardly to face it.”

Now that really hurt, admitting what a fuck up he was. He felt tears prick the back of his eyes and he blinked rapidly to keep them back where they belonged.

“I know it’s going to take a lot of time to convince you that I’m truly sorry, not to mention forgive me. The only thing I don’t regret is the changes in you. I see the woman you were meant to be. An incredibly amazing, sexy, beautiful creature that I’d never met before.”

He reached out and cupped her soft cheek. She didn’t pull away, but she didn’t lean into his touch either. Rubbing his thumb across the creamy skin, he had to physically restrain himself from kissing her. Their experiences the night before had left him gasping for more, and more.

“I know you wanted to know why I came to your house tonight. I ... I didn’t want to tell you because I was sort of embarrassed. You see,” he swallowed, hard. “I did come for the bat -- “

She drew back away from him with a hiss. “Get out.”

“Let me finish, please.”

He could almost see her shaking with anger and hurt. Her eyes were shuttered and cold.

“Fine, then you’ve got one more minute before I call 911.”

“Thank you. I did come for the bat, but it wasn’t why you think. This isn’t the bat that Mark McGuire used to break the homerun record. I just told the divorce attorney that so it wouldn’t look like I was an idiot in the divorce settlement asking for a stupid forty-five dollar bat.”

Standing, he gestured for her to wait. He’d already spotted the bat in the corner and knew that’s what she’d beamed him with. Actually, he was proud of her for doing that. Most women wouldn’t have had the courage. He picked it up and walked toward her, unscrewing the bottom. She frowned and watched his hands closely.

“You see, this bat is special because of what it holds, not who held it.” He finally unscrewed the bottom and pulled out a soft blue cloth. After unwrapping it carefully, he held it out in his palm so you could see. A perfect gold circle winked in the sunlight.

“Your wedding ring? You stopped wearing that five years ago because it interfered at work.” She reached out and touched it with one hesitant finger. “It was in the bat?”

He tried to find some moisture to swallow, but his mouth was as dry as cotton. “I didn’t want it to ever get stolen so I hollowed out the bat and put it in there.” He shrugged. “I didn’t remember that I’d left the bat behind until I’d already left. That’s why I asked for it in the divorce settlement. I ... I couldn’t leave it behind.”

Nicholas closed the cloth and tucked it back into the bat. After screwing the bottom back on the bat, he leaned it up against the nightstand.

“I’m going to leave the bat for you -- looks like any intruders will get their ass kicked. Thank God you didn’t use that taser on me. I’ll take off and let you get some sleep. I ... I’m yours if you want me Renny.” He picked up her hand and kissed the back of it. “I love you and I always will.”

Nicholas picked up the pieces of his heart, borrowed a pair of sweatpants, and left before he resorted to begging. He could only hope that Renny would take him back into her life and her heart.

Renny sat in stunned silence for a while, how long she had no idea. Time had no meaning since the night before when Nicholas broke into her house. The entire episode had felt like a dream, something she might have seen on television, not experienced first hand.

Nicholas had completely surprised her. No more than that, he'd knocked her for a complete loop. Renny barely remembered what day it was or what she had to do that day. All that was unimportant. What was important was that bat and Nicholas' confession.

She had a lot to think about, like how she'd spend the rest of her life and whether or not she was ready to take her ex-husband back. Heavy thoughts.

Climbing out of bed, she nearly tripped on the bat. Strangely enough, the bat had been at the focal point during the divorce proceedings, and here it was again, in the middle of their ... whatever it was they were doing.

Renny headed for the bathroom and a shower. Aside from the need to be refreshed, she felt sore and sticky and in desperate need of hot water. As she walked to the bathroom, she realized that while married, she'd never walked around naked. The thought struck her as funny and she started laughing like a lunatic, gut-busting guffaws her body dredged up from somewhere near her toes.

By the time she actually reached the faucet on the tub, her stomach hurt and her eyes leaked. What had started as laughter quickly turned to tears. The hilarity melted away and she could no more stop the tears than she could the laughs. Climbing into the shower, Renny gave herself permission to cry. A good, cleansing cry that helped her release the many ugly emotions flying through her, tearing her up.

Down the drain went the stress, tension, anger, and anxiety that had plagued her for a year. She planted her hands on the tiles and let the hot water wash over her. Time had no meaning for her until the hot water turned warm and then cool. Before it got too cold, she turned off the faucet.

Stepping out of the tub, she pressed a fluffy purple towel to her face until she caught her breath. She had the day to think about what she wanted to do with the rest of her life. Well, more than the day. Nicholas hadn't given her a deadline or pressured her into deciding anything. He'd simply handed her his heart.

She dried off quickly and ran a brush through her wet hair. Her stomach yowled noisily, reminding her it was after one o'clock. One of her favorite Saturday activities was having lunch at Petra's Café downtown, followed by some shopping. No need to break with tradition. Instead, she decided to invite Janie along to get some information out of that sneaky friend of hers.

Chapter Seven

“What are you talking about?”

Janie tried to look innocent, but Renny could see past the redhead’s innocent looking blue-eyed expression.

“You’re full of shit and you know it, Janie! You set us up. Go ahead and deny it.” Renny took a bite of her chicken Caesar wrap and frowned.

Toying with her salad, Janie shrugged. “Okay, I admit it. I set you up.”

Even though Renny knew her friend had interfered, hearing it said out loud was a blow. She’d trusted Janie since seventh grade when they’d been the last kids picked for teams in gym class. Now apparently the trust had been misplaced. The betrayal felt pretty damn real.

“Janie ... I can’t believe it.” Renny couldn’t hide the hurt in her voice. She had to swallow twice to even speak.

Janie reached across and put her hand over Renny’s. “Oh, babe, I’m sorry if you got hurt. I never meant for you to be hurt.”

Renny used her napkin to wipe the corner of her eyes. She wasn't about to allow a flood of tears to happen again. She'd had enough of that. "I know you would never deliberately hurt me, but ... God, why did you do it?"

Janie sighed. "It sounds stupid and corny, but I've always felt you and Nicholas belonged together. You were such a wreck when he left and I was really pissed at him. Enough to kick his ass when I saw him ... which is what I tried to do six weeks ago."

"What?" Renny could hardly fathom her five foot tall friend kicking anyone's ass, much less that of her six foot two inch husband. Ex-husband.

"I was at the market down on sixth street, looking at the produce when I look up and see him standing in front of me. I just saw red and started throwing oranges at him. One of the boys that works there tried to stop me, but Nicholas just stood there and let me whip fruit at him."

Renny felt a laugh bubble at the image of Nicholas getting pelted by oranges. Janie would be the one to do that, crazy girl.

Janie shook her head, one red curl bobbing on her cheek. "Like he wanted me to punish him. Anyway, after I hit him with about six, I felt guilty, so I stopped. He only said one thing."

"What? What did he say?"

"He said, 'Is she okay?' and I about fell on out. I mean, here he was this big strong guy that dumped his fabulous wife and he asked me if you were okay. So I told him, hell no, you weren't okay. He looked kind of stricken, like I'd slapped him or something." She shrugged. "After that I saw him three more times at the market. He didn't speak to me again, but the expression in his eyes ... it was kind of haunting, ya know?"

Renny nodded; the look was unmistakably Nicky. She'd seen it herself that morning when he'd left her bed.

“Anyway, I was at that club I told you about with my date, Brian, who by the way turned out to be a total jerk. I saw Nicholas, just like I told you, being some woman’s bitch. I saw red again and this time I didn’t throw oranges.”

“What, no oranges at the sex club?” Renny asked dryly.

“No, instead I threw my drink in his face. He never said a peep. I just didn’t get it. I mean, this was not the man I had known for ten years. He’d changed so much and that got me to thinking about you. Not only had he changed, but you have too.” Janie reached over and squeezed Renny’s hand. “Not that I didn’t love you before, but you’ve become so ... so confident, outgoing, and just so damn amazing. I had this idea, sorta like a light bulb going off.”

Renny knew all about Janie’s ideas. Some of those ideas landed both of them in hot water more than once. This time was no exception to the rule that Janie’s harebrained schemes always ended up as twisted as a pretzel.

“What was the idea?” She didn’t really want to know, but Renny couldn’t help herself from asking. She knew Janie never meant to hurt her.

“Well ... my idea was that you two broke up, well okay he left you, because you were in a rut. Your marriage was boring, right? Zero excitement, and you two never did anything together. Geez, we went to more movies together than you and he ever did. Anyhoo, so I think to myself, Renny is different and Nicholas is damn sure different, maybe all they really needed was time apart. I know the divorce just became final two weeks ago, but you know sometimes in life we only get one shot at happiness ... maybe you’re lucky enough to get two.”

Janie picked up her diet soda with shaking hands. Renny hadn’t even realized her friend was upset since she’d just been babbling on in true Janie fashion. Renny knew then she’d never stay mad at Janie for anything she’d done, especially since she’d always followed her heart.

“I thought maybe all you needed was a push ... something to reignite the flame so to speak. When I saw Nicholas at the market last week, I told him that you were seeing another man. His face went white as a sheet and I swear to God I thought he was going to faint if you can believe it. I ... I told him you were going away on a romantic weekend with this new man.” She took a big gulp of her soda. “I kind of figured something would happen. So, did it?”

Renny didn’t know if she wanted to tell Janie all the details, but she at least deserved to know a bit. “Yes, something happened, quite a few things actually. I, uh, knocked him out cold with his baseball bat.”

Janie’s eyes went wide. “You what? The bat he asked for in the settlement?”

“The very one. Then I tied him up.”

The laugh that burst from Janie could have echoed for miles. “Oh my ... God ... I can’t be-believe it!”

“Believe it. And I did it only wearing my panties and T-shirt.”

“Okay, okay, stop. L-let me catch my breath.” Janie took some deep breaths, a few giggles popping out as she tried to get control of her laughter. “What happened when he woke up?”

Renny thought long and hard about how she’d answer her friend. Privacy between her ex-husband and herself was important, yet without Janie’s interference, they’d never have discovered how much they enjoyed a very different kind of sex.

“We talked very honestly about everything. It was the most open conversation we’ve ever had. For the first time I actually saw Nicholas cry. I ... I am glad you tricked us Janie.”

“Is that it? Nothing else happened?” Janie looked so anxious, Renny almost laughed at the expression on her face.

“I didn’t say that. The important thing is that Nicholas and I finally knocked down the wall between us and saw each other for who we really were.”

That was exactly it. Renny hadn't realized it until that very moment. Finally, *finally* she knew her husband. Now it was up to her what she'd do with that precious bit of epiphany.

"No sex?" Janie groused.

Renny laughed and leaned over to kiss her friend on the cheek. "I didn't say that. Truth is, I've never had such a spectacular night of sex."

With that, Renny left her friend at the table and headed out to make a decision about the rest of her life.

The snick of the front door was unmistakable. Renny had a feeling he would come back that night. Her body craved his most of the day, the touch, the pleasure, the scent. Everything reminded her of Nicholas. She'd already made the decision to call him when the noise pulled her out of a doze. It was near midnight and the skies had been clear all day. No thunder and lightning disturbed the blackness of the night.

She debated waiting for him, but that would be cowardly. She had to show Nicholas that he just couldn't break into her house whenever he felt like it. Fortunately she had left her robe on the end of the bed. Snagging it, she slipped it on and immediately reached for the bat he'd left next to the bed.

She didn't want to smack him with it again, but dammit, he couldn't keep doing this. With a determined stride, she opened the bedroom door and headed out into the hallway. When she saw two shadows in the kitchen instead of one, a bolt of pure, unadulterated fear slid through her like a knife.

Whoever was in her house, it wasn't Nicholas. She stepped back into the bedroom as quietly as possible and shut the door without a sound. Her fingers shook on the lock and it took her three times before she could secure it. When Renny became light-headed, she

realized she'd been holding her breath. After getting some much needed oxygen in her system, she took her cell phone off the nightstand and went into the closet.

In the darkness, surrounded by her clothes, she felt a little better, not much, but enough to allow her to call for help. Strangely enough instead of calling the police, she called Nicholas's cell phone. He picked up on the first ring.

"Renny?"

"Nicky, someone's in my house," she whispered. "Two people."

"Jesus Christ! Where are you?"

"In the bedroom closet. I'm sorry I called you, I just --"

"I'm glad you did. I'm on my way right now." She heard the ignition of his car, and tires squealing. "You need to call the police. Do a three-way, baby so I can hear your voice."

Renny nodded as if he could see her, then initiated the three-way call and dialed nine-one-one. When the operator answered, Renny heard her bedroom door handle jiggle. She couldn't speak, could barely catch her breath.

"My wife is at home alone and someone's broken into the house. The address is 425 Bickett Street," Nicholas spoke directly to the operator. "I'm on my way, but it will be at least five minutes before I get there."

"Is your wife on the line, sir?"

"Yes, but she's hiding and I think she doesn't want to make any noise right now."

God bless him for understanding. "Yes, I'm here," she whispered. "Nicky, they're at the bedroom door."

Her heart hammered in her chest so hard, the phone actually vibrated from the force of it. She hadn't been this scared when Nicholas broke in. For some reason, the thought that two strangers were in her house truly frightened her. Perhaps because she'd had more time to think about it. It didn't matter, what mattered was that she was afraid for her life.

"Renny, hang on. I'm coming."

“Ma’am, we’ve dispatched a unit that’s two minutes away from you. Stay on the line with me until they arrive and get the situation under control, do you understand?”

“Yes.” Renny forced the word out through frozen lips.

Two minutes seemed like a lifetime, particularly when she heard the bedroom door get kicked in.

“Nicky, they’re in the bedroom.”

“Fuck, fuck, fuck! Hold on, the cops are almost there. Please, baby. You can be strong. You beat the hell out of me with a bat.”

“What?”

He’d forgotten the operator was on the line.

“Nothing. It’s a private joke. Renny, are you still there? God, please say something.” Nicholas sounded a bit desperate.

She dared not speak for fear whoever was tromping around in her bedroom located her hiding place too quickly. She needed at least another minute for the police to arrive. Instead, she mentally sent him a message and tapped the phone lightly.

Renny couldn’t help but wonder how she might have reacted to the burglars if Nicholas hadn’t broken in the night before. She might have confronted them head on, foolishly putting herself in serious danger.

Life had never been dangerous with Nicholas, sometimes boring, sometimes sweet, but she’d never felt scared. Not like this. What did it all mean? Renny had felt so powerful the night before and now, she felt like a helpless girl.

“I love you, Renny. Please be safe.”

Nicholas spoke the words so sweetly, and with such heartfelt emotion, Renny knew he’d meant it. It brought tears to her eyes that perhaps it might be the last time she heard it, and she couldn’t see his face and kiss him, nor hug him. God wouldn’t be so cruel as to separate them when they just came together again.

When the closet door handle turned, Renny made a decision. She wouldn't go down without a fight. No way, no how. If there was anything she'd learned, it was to stand up for herself.

"I love you too, Nicky," she whispered into the phone then set it on the ground next to her.

"Renny?" his frantic voice came from far away.

She stood, gripping the bat tightly and waiting for the door to open, standing between her slacks and summer blouses. She wiped each hand on her robe and waited. When the door opened, she screamed like a banshee and started swinging like a World Series batter. Whoever he was, he clearly wasn't expecting a bat wielding Amazon to come out of the closet. He yelped like a whipped dog at the first hit, then the second brought a satisfying crack. A small pinch on her arm was the only clue she had that he was armed too. Everything became a blur in the semi-darkness, the light of the moon shining into the room, illuminating the battle between them.

When a second figure ran into the bedroom, Renny knew she wouldn't live to see Nicholas's face again. With a snarl, she turned to confront both of them.

Chapter Eight

“Renny, can you hear me? Goddammit!” Nicholas heard the sounds of a struggle and a woman’s screeching that made the hairs on his arms stand up. He cursed the fact that he hadn’t called her that afternoon, even though his conscience told him to. Dammit to hell. Now she was dealing with burglars without him, possibly being killed while he was driving like a maniac to get to her.

When he heard what he thought were two gunshots through the phone, his heart stopped beating. Renny couldn’t possibly be dead. It would be too cruel a trick. He almost rolled his car on a curve, and nearly took out a van, but he made up a few precious seconds.

“Are the cops there?”

“I don’t know, sir. Hold on ... Yes, they’re inside the house.”

“And what happened? What?” Nicholas gripped the phone so tightly he’d probably have tattoos of it on his skin.

“Please be patient and let them do their jobs, sir.”

“I know this is your job, but please have a heart. This is my wife. God, I love her and she can’t ... she just can’t.” His voice broke on a sob.

"I'll inform you as soon as I have information." The woman sounded so frigging calm, he wanted to reach through the phone and smack her.

"That's not good enough." He threw the phone on the passenger seat, and slammed his foot down on the gas pedal, heedless of what would happen to him. It didn't matter. Nothing mattered but getting to Renny.

By the time he came to a screaming halt in her driveway, the five minutes had felt like five hours. He barely put the car in park, ignoring the police cars and everything else around him. Nicholas ran for the front door, ready to do battle and kill anyone who dared threaten his woman.

Nicholas heard someone shout, but kept on going until he reached Renny's bedroom. He burst in, startling two cops. One stood over two men in handcuffs lying on the floor. The other held a pad of paper and pen, apparently taking Renny's statement as she sat calmly on the edge of the bed. A bandage covered one arm and a spatter of blood smeared down the purple silk of her robe.

His heart started beating again as he dropped to his knees in front of her. He never knew the sight of blood made him sick until that moment. His stomach roiled and rolled, reminding him what he'd eaten for dinner.

"I'm okay," she said as she cupped his cheek.

"Thank God," was all he could get out before his head found its way to her lap. That's when the shaking started. He shook so hard, his teeth chattered, almost as if he was in shock instead of Renny. She stroked his head while he desperately tried to catch his breath and make his brain function again.

"Is this your husband?" one of the cops asked.

A brief hesitation. "Yes, this is Nicholas."

"But he doesn't live here?"

"We've been separated but -- "

“Any reason to think he may have hired someone to break into your house, ma’am?”

“Nicholas would never do such a thing.” Renny sounded as completely surprised as Nicholas by the question.

“Are you sure?”

Nicholas raised his head and stared into her eyes. Her green gaze searched his and then nodded.

“Positive.”

He kissed her palm and inhaled her scent. He took the knowledge that she believed in him again and hugged it close to his heart. Renny trusted him.

The shock from the break-in didn’t hit until after the cops left. Nicholas stayed close but didn’t smother or hover. She appreciated that more than he knew. He was like a comforting presence supporting her without taking control of the situation. Renny realized their relationship had truly changed, and not just in the bedroom.

She stood at the door, watching the police cars drive away with a cramped stomach and tight throat. Nicholas appeared beside her.

“Renny, do you want me to stay?”

That was a tougher question than she expected. Did she want him to stay? The old Renny would have said yes immediately. The new Renny decided it would be better to face the night alone. Strength came from inside oneself first, then from others.

“No, that’s okay. I’ll be okay.”

He put his hands on her shoulders and kissed her neck softly. “I can wait outside in my car if you want.”

“No, but it’s sweet of you to offer.”

Nicholas snorted a half-laugh, half-sob. “It’s more of self-preservation for my sanity.”

“Liar.”

He turned her around and kissed her, his lips warm and firm. “Call me if you need me.”

His dark eyes brimmed with concern and love. Renny wanted to grab him and tell him to stay, but she didn’t. She had to know if she could stand on her own two feet for good. This was the final exam.

“Thank you for coming to my rescue, Nicky.”

“Anytime, baby.” One more kiss and he was gone.

Renny locked the front door, then pushed a chair under the handle for good measure. Odds were in her favor that no one would break into her house again for a very long time, but she didn’t want to take any chances. A quick stiff shot of vodka quelled a lot of the quivers that attacked her body. The quiet in the house was only broken by the ticking of the clock on the mantel, a wedding gift from her uncle.

It used to be weekends were as boring as boring could be. This weekend spun her life out of control, fast enough to make her head spin. The question running around in her brain remained the same. Did she want Nicholas back in her life?

She knew she wouldn’t sleep for a long time and had plenty of time to think. And apparently think was what she wanted to do. She headed for the bookcase in the living room, and took out a photo album. Settling onto the couch, she opened it and prepared to dive into the past. Into the life she’d led for the last eleven years, to help her decide what to do for the next fifty.

Nicholas stared at the phone, willing it to ring. It was almost as hard to leave Renny alone as it was to know she had been in danger. Every part of him screamed in protest when he heard the door shut behind him, but if he wanted her back, he knew he had to let her set the rules.

One of them was apparently allowing her to take care of herself. His heart had stopped and his vision blurred when he'd found out she'd not only knocked one of them out with the damn bat, she had been cut by the lousy son of a bitch. It was a surface cut that didn't need stitches, but still, she'd been wounded, defending herself. God, he knew he was a sub, but it was like some kind of caveman instinct that roared inside him when he'd known she was in danger. He knew she was strong, capable, with a razor sharp brain, but he needed to feel as if there was room in her life for him.

There had to be room in more than just the bed anyway. Funny, their problems before had started in the bedroom, unable to communicate and find common ground. Now their problems originated with him giving her the room to be who she was, and not trying to make her fit into what he wanted her to be. It was all so damn confusing and frustrating.

Truth was, he would have slept on her doorstep if he hadn't thought it would ruin any chance he had with her. Instead, he left and came home to an empty, cold apartment to wait. Wait like a goddamn idiot for her to make up her mind.

Until she did, he didn't think he'd sleep very much.

Nicholas turned on the television and flipped the channels until he found an old movie to watch, something with Cary Grant. He hardly remembered time passing, and yet it felt like it crawled with all the speed of a snail in molasses. He needed her, and not just for the night. He needed her forever.

After an excruciating night of bad TV, a few beers and stale nachos, the pink light of the dawn snuck through the curtains to remind him that Renny hadn't called or come by. With a sigh, he dragged his sorry ass off the couch and went to take a shower. He couldn't spend one minute longer waiting for her to call. Instead, he'd wash off the grime, then go get some breakfast.

Renny woke with a stiff neck on the black leather couch. She'd spent hours pouring over memories, reliving the ups and downs she'd had with Nicholas. After a significant amount of soul searching, she'd finally decided what she wanted to do. Now she had to tell him.

It took about half an hour to get ready and head over to his apartment. She stopped to get coffee and muffins, her stomach jumping with a load of butterflies, moths, and grasshoppers. When she pulled up, she realized his car wasn't there. A keen sense of disappointment hit.

Kind of a let down, really. Her cell phone rang just as she started to pull out of the parking lot. It was Janie looking for an update on the weekend's activities.

"Where are you?"

"Nicholas's apartment, but he isn't home."

"Aren't you going to wait? It's Sunday morning, he probably went for the paper and coffee," Janie encouraged.

"I don't want to just sit here and stalk him." Renny had the awful notion that his neighbors would call the cops. Wouldn't it be interesting if the same ones showed up?

"Then go inside."

"I don't have a key. We are divorced you know."

Janie tsked. "Renny, sweetie, just break in. He did."

Holy shit. She hadn't considered that. If Nicholas was like her, he had a spare key under his front mat. Would she go that far? Why not?

"I'll call you later, Janie."

Her friend's laughter echoed through the phone's speaker as Renny pressed the end key. Time to find her way into her husband's abode. With a grin and a spark of naughtiness, she got out of the car with the coffee and muffins, looking for all the world as if she belonged

there. When she got to the door, she used her toe to pull up the mat, and right there, stuck to the bottom, was a key.

After she opened the door, she set the food inside, then went back to the car for everything else. Renny grinned to the empty apartment and set to work getting everything ready. Twenty minutes later, she heard the key in the lock and hurried to get into position and wait for Nicky.

The door closed and then there was a long pregnant pause. He must have seen the muffins and coffee.

“Renny?”

She didn’t answer. A whisper of anticipation danced across her skin. Her pulse started pounding and the promise of delights to come made other body parts hungry. The bedroom door slowly opened and Renny tightened her grip.

“Renny?”

She aimed the bat at the center of his back and poked him. “Walk toward the bed.”

He tried to speak, but she pushed him to cut off his words. Stumbling, he righted himself and complied. She smiled, confident in her decision.

“Now turn around.”

When he turned, she turned the bat around and handed it to him. “This belongs to you.”

His eyes widened and he glanced at the bat, the object that had kept them apart and brought them back together.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, I’m sure. Now take it back, then strip. I brought some new toys.”

“May I kiss you first?” He swallowed hard.

She nodded. “You may and make it a good one.”

“Your wish is my command.”

The kiss would rank right up there with the most powerful experiences of her life. It started as a light brushing of the lips, just a tease, then the heat settled in. Tongues slid and rasped, dancing the timeless ballet of delicious delight. His arms came around her and they fit together like a key in a lock. Perfect match.

When the kiss finally broke, her pussy throbbed with arousal and her nipples begged for attention.

“Strip.”

He complied immediately, displaying his amazingly hard body for her inspection. Gloriously muscle-strapped man topped by bronzed sun-worshipped flesh. Her mouth watered in anticipation. When Renny took off her robe, his eyes drank in her nakedness, marked only by a pair of black heels and a pair of handcuffs dangling from her finger.

“Interested?”

“Yes, Mistress.”

He was definitely interested. His cock already stood at attention, pulsing with an erection that rivaled the bat at his feet. She pointed to the bed and he lay down, like a buffet of delicious man flesh all for the taking, or tasting.

“Arms up.”

After he raised his arms, she wrapped the silver cuffs around his wrists and secured him to the headboard. As the locks snicked closed, her pussy plumped in primed eagerness, and his staff jumped, slapping his stomach. She grinned and climbed onto the bed.

“Now you’re mine, right?”

“Yes, Mistress.”

“I’m going to suck you, and you may not come in my mouth, no matter what I do. Is that understood?”

He grunted his agreement, so she pinched his leg. No use letting the peasants run the castle.

“Yes, M-mistress.”

“Good answer.”

She ran her fingernails up and down his abdomen, lightly scratching his nipples until they were tiny hard points begging for her touch. She licked and sucked them as he trembled beneath her touch. One hand reached down to cup and fondle his balls, already tight with need.

Making her way down his chest, she kissed, licked and nibbled, reveling in the feel of his heated skin. She circled his cock without taking him in her mouth, teasing and tantalizing him until a drop of cum leaked from the tip. Renny lapped it up, the salty taste coating her tongue. Never one to swallow, she found the experience to be thrilling and incredibly naughty.

When her mouth closed around the head, he groaned and pulled against the handcuffs. The sound of the metal straining echoed in the quiet room. She continued to tease his balls while she slowly slid down inch by inch, alternately pulling him out, then swallowing more of him. By the time she'd almost made it to the base, he quivered with barely restrained energy. Every muscle in his body felt taut as a bowstring.

The sheer power that she commanded zinged through her like an arrow. He was hers, truly and completely. Without her consent, he would endure the sweet torture of her mouth without coming. She knew at that moment her decision had been the right one. It took them more than ten years, but she and Nicholas had finally found the right place where they both belonged.

She squeezed the base of his cock, then gently bit him and she actually felt blood hardening him further, if that were possible. Renny pulled back just as slowly as she'd gone down on him, until they were both panting with need. It was time.

“That’s a mighty nice hard-on you’ve got there. Good enough to eat and to fuck. Would you like me to fuck you, Nicky baby?” She straddled his legs, the heat from his staff and her pussy mingling to create steam and the scent of animal arousal.

“Yes, Mistress.” He undulated his hips, pushing upwards, reaching just slightly for her.

She leaned back. “You must not touch. Only I can touch. Is that clear?”

“Oh God, yes.”

“Nope, not God, just your goddess.”

“Sweet Jesus,” he breathed, his hands gripped the headboard so tightly his knuckles were white. The tendons in his neck strained against the flesh, every square inch of Nicholas’s body waited for her, in her control.

Heady, heady stuff.

She knelt over him and positioned the head of his cock at her hungry entrance. The keenness of the moment wasn’t lost on her. She almost didn’t want to start for fear the end would arrive too soon. As it was, Renny had never been so aroused in her life. Two strokes and she’d probably come her brains out.

Ah, well, it was morning. The rest of the day awaited them, more than enough time to explore the pleasures of the flesh and the ecstasy to be found when there was love, trust, and acceptance.

As Renny slid down his flesh, they both cried out with equal amounts of joy. Embedded deep within her, Nicholas pulsed and her answering clench made their pulses thunder even harder.

“You feel so good, so hard. God, Nicky, I can’t believe we’ve been missing out on all this for so long.”

He tried to laugh, but it was more of a croak.

“I’m gonna ride you now, baby, and you’re going to pleasure my tits while I do.”

“With my mouth or my teeth?” he gasped as she slid up and down an inch.

“Both.”

Renny leaned forward and his wonderful mouth closed around her breasts, sending bolts of sheer delight straight to her nether lips. As his teeth closed around a nipple, she closed her eyes and reveled in the amazing experience of being with Nicholas.

Her rhythm increased as her body urged her on, closer and closer to finding that peak, that place in time and space where nothing existed but desire and gratification. He switched nipples, biting and licking her with mad abandon. She slammed down on him, tightening around him, close, so close.

With a mighty wave of nearly blinding proportions, Renny’s orgasm started near her toes and worked its way up through her body. Stars sparkled behind her eyes, her nails dug into his shoulders as he plunged deep, deep, deep within her. Flying, soaring through the purple passion that gripped her in its talons.

Renny collapsed, rolling off him to lie on the bed trying desperately to catch her breath.

“Holy shit.”

“Yep, that’s for damn sure.” She sucked in a lungful of air.

“What does it mean, Renny?”

Through the buzzing in her head, she focused on his question. “What does what mean?”

“This. You coming here and bringing me the bat with my ring in it. What does it mean?”

Her eyes pricked with tears as she turned to face him, his dark eyes full of hope, worry, and anticipation, but most of all, love.

“Hi, my name is Renny and I’m pleased to meet you. Are you busy for the rest of your life?”

His face broke out in a wide grin and he kissed her fast and hard.

“Nope, not busy at all. I’m yours.”

She swallowed the lump in her throat as she unlocked the handcuffs. “Good. I wouldn’t want any other women finding out how amazing you are and trying to steal you away.” Renny tucked her head on his shoulder and his arm closed around her.

“Not a chance. I won’t make the same mistakes twice, I promise. I love you, Renny.”

She kissed his shoulder and closed her eyes against a tear that tried to leak out. Now wasn’t the time to cry, now was the time to start on their journey together. Again.

“I love you too, Nicky. Now about those handcuffs ... what do you think about getting another set?”

THE END

Beth Williamson

Beth Williamson lives just outside of Raleigh, North Carolina, with her husband and two sons. Born and raised in New York, she holds a B.F.A. in writing from New York University. Beth has worked as a newspaper reporter, a poet, a novelist, and a technical writer.

Beth loves cowboys (long, hard, and packing), and anything from the Old West. She writes historical as well as contemporary erotic romance and romance. Look for strong women who know their minds and are not afraid to show it. No wimpy, whining, weeping heroines within a thousand miles! She professes a weakness, however, for alpha men and their controlling personalities. You can learn more about her work on her website at <http://www.bethwilliamson.com>.