

Til Death Do Us Part



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'Til Death Do Us Part

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Also By Ruby Christine:

[Protecting Angel](#)

*Til Death Do Us
Part*

Chapter One

Ten years, ten long years of life with an abusive man. Three thousand, six hundred and sixty-five days of being told how worthless I was, how fat and how ugly I was to look at.

One hundred and twenty months of living in fear, scared to sleep, scared to talk to my friends and deathly afraid to live.

Why, you ask? What makes a woman so weak, so insecure and so damned stupid? If I'd known the answer to that, then maybe I wouldn't have lived eighty thousand, six hundred and forty hours with a man who lived to make my life hell.

Just the other day, I told my sponsor that I knew there was a heaven because I had lived my life in hell.

When I stood in front of the justice of the peace, he said 'til death do you part, and who would have ever guessed that simple sentence, those five little words, would have landed me here in the Texas State Correctional Facility.

I'm telling you my story in hopes that you will have the courage to leave, if you're like I was. Don't wait 'til the devil takes control and you're left feeling numb and full of hatred. Don't do like I did. Don't wait 'til you think there's nothing left to do.

Do I regret it? No. Do I wish things had been

different? Yes. Do I still have nightmares? Yes. Would I do it again? *Yes!*

Yes, I would have still killed him.

I, Becca Francine King, was born on a cold December night in nineteen-eighty. For almost one year, I have been prisoner number 1005161623. I'm no longer a person, but a number. No longer front-page news, just a convict trying to get an appeal. Twelve of my peers convicted me of murder, premeditated murder.

Had I thought of killing him before? Hell, yeah! Every time that bastard came home smelling of Jack Daniels' and stale cigars, I dreamt of killing him. Every time he touched me, rolling me over, having his way, not caring if I hurt from the day before when he threw me down, kicking me.

Yes, I wanted him dead.

They said, "Why didn't you just leave him? Why kill him?"

I remember the smug-looking TV reporter condemning me, talking about all the 'help' women like me have available to them. Screw them all. How dare they judge me and tell me what I could have done? Nobody knew the hell I went through. Nobody!

Services available to me? I couldn't even leave the house. If I went grocery shopping, he wrote down the mileage. If I went over, I got beat. If I didn't go exactly like he'd measured, I got beat. There were no 'available services'. It was Mick's way, or no way.

I am sure there is someone out there shaking their

head and rolling their eyes as they read this, thinking there is always a way out. Go to the police.

Yeah, our private heroes that are paid to protect and serve. A neighbor called them one time. I'm sure the old lady heard me screaming. When they arrived, Mick gave them my falling-down story and even though I stood there with a black eye and a busted lip, they walked away. I wanted to scream at those assholes, "Look at my face," but I remained silent as Mick glared at me. I knew if I said anything, he would kill me. He told me on numerous occasions that he would gladly die before a cunt like me ever made him look stupid. He wasn't lying. I knew he would do it.

The next question would be, how could you marry a guy like that?

Mick was a charmer. He had to have taken one look at me and known I was insecure, lonely and needed to feel loved. I was a sap; a poor, pitiful young woman ridiculed her whole life for being chunky. School is a horrible place to be when you're young, fat and poor. I can remember just a few of the names I was called; porker, fat ass, fatty fatty two-by-four, couldn't get through the bathroom door.

My favorite was when I got a Christmas card from a little boy that I liked in third grade. It said I hope Santa brings you diet pills, because you're going to die, being that fat. I cried all the way home.

* * * * *

The lights turned off and I had to put the pen down.

The lights turned off at ten o'clock every night. I don't know why I started writing everything down, but it sure made me feel good. I didn't want to forget what happened. So many women try and block their past, but for me, I wanted to remember. I wanted to remember every hour; every minute and every second of the hell that man put me through. If one thing that happened to me could save some poor woman from abuse, then I would relive it every night for the rest of my life.

Nighttime was the worst, being locked up. It's not like television. It's real. These are real women who made stupid mistakes. Most of the women on my cellblock were in for drugs or some white-collar crime. Sure there were lesbians; a woman gets lonely. There were fights, but what you see in the movies is far from the truth. My days were the same, over and over. I got up, I ate, I worked, then I wrote in my journal. That was it for me.

The nightmares had stopped. These days, I dreamt of being free. I longed for the day I could do simple things; grocery shop, ride in a car with the windows rolled down and walk down the streets in the rain. I just wanted freedom. Sadly, even being locked up was more freedom than I had living with Mick.

* * * * *

The night we were married, Mick rented a room at a Motel 6. He said we needed to save money, so there wouldn't be anything fancy. I was so young and in

love, I didn't care. I was nineteen years old, and thought he walked on water.

He took me to Gim's for dinner. I ordered a chicken-fried steak with fries. He told the waitress to bring me a chef salad. I remember looking at him, and he just smiled and said, "Honey, it wouldn't hurt if you lost a little weight."

It did hurt; I felt a deep twinge in my gut. But I would do anything to make Mick happy, so I ate my salad while he scarfed down the chicken-fried steak and fries.

As we were leaving the restaurant, a man held the door open for me. I smiled and thanked him.

On the drive back to the hotel, I tried to cuddle up to Mick, but he pushed me away. I scooted over near the door, and we finished the drive in silence.

Once back at the hotel, instead of him carrying me across the threshold, he grabbed me by the back of the hair and threw me in the room. He began screaming at me, accusing me of sleeping with the kind stranger. I got up to leave, but one punch in the face and I was out.

I woke up naked in the bed, my body aching, my eye swollen. He had taken me while I was out cold. There was no telling what he had done to my body. I felt sick to my stomach and rushed to the bathroom.

That was the beginning of the abuse, the rape, the life I had to live.

After a while, your body becomes numb. He would get on top of me and pant like a dog, huffing and puffing, trying to shove his little dick inside me. I felt

nothing; I was emotionless. He'd come, then roll over and fall asleep.

Those were the good times. The sex I had come to hate was what I called the macho sex. He'd come in, knock me around, beat on his chest, then tie me to the bed and do whatever he felt like doing. Usually he used some toys or heaven forbid, whatever item he could find near the bed.

I hated him with every ounce of being I had left. I still don't know how I kept alive for ten years. I can only thank God I never became pregnant. The last thing I would have allowed was his demon seed to grow inside me.

Oh, he let me know over and over how I wasn't a woman because I couldn't conceive. I was worthless. I was stupid. I was fat. I would never be anything. I couldn't cook. I couldn't clean right. I stank. My fat rolls disgusted him. I was only around so he could bust a nut.

Yes, these are the things he told me.

Chapter Two

King!"

I closed my book and looked at the guard. "Yes, ma'am?" You had to show them respect, or your life would be hell.

"You have a visitor."

I followed her, stuffing my journal into my pocket. "In there."

I walked into a small room. Sitting at the table was a blonde lady a little older than myself. She wore a fancy suit and wrote on one of those Palm Pilot things.

When she saw me come in, she stood, extending her hand to me. "Miss King, my name is Laverne Cagle. I am your court-appointed attorney."

I took her hand and softly shook it. "What happened to Mr. Leaverman?"

"Well, he was assigned another case. Miss King, our office feels he wasn't exactly fair with you. He left out some extenuating evidence. To be honest, your case was not a priority on his list. In his eyes, you were just another pissed-off wife who offed her husband. I have won an appeal, and your case will be tried again."

I could have kissed her. I'd been sitting in jail for almost a year waiting to hear something, anything.

Mr. Leaverman never returned my calls or letters. I had almost given up. "When is it?"

"Well, we have thirty days. I need for you to start telling me everything. I want names of people who saw him beat you. I want witnesses. I need police reports."

"Mrs. Cagle, I never filed on him."

"Did anyone ever witness him beat you?"

"He was a smart man. He never did it in front of people."

She sat down, closed her eyes and let out a deep breath. "Mr. Leaverman had in his possession a letter from a neighbor stating that she heard the screams from you as well as him. She told them of the bruises, the fresh welts on your face. It is a legal document, and we can use it. All I need to do is find this lady and hope she will testify in your behalf. There are a lot of women's groups who will back you up and believe your statement. I believe you."

Tears trickled down my face. "Do you have any idea how hard it is to know that nobody cares?"

She laid her hand on top of mine and in a calm, soothing voice replied, "Becca, I care, and I will get you out of here."

"Why do you care?"

"Because it is my goal in life to help those ladies who are powerless over men's hatred."

"Why?"

"My mother died, Becca, because she was too afraid to fight back. No, I don't believe you should kill them, but damn it, when choosing between your

life and his, I say blow the bastard away."

I laughed. I hadn't laughed in God knows how long. I laughed so hard tears fell from my eyes. For once in a long time, I had hope. I really had hope.

* * * * *

Thirty-two days later I was found innocent by reason of temporary insanity. I had wanted him dead, but that day, oh, that day I hadn't planned on killing him. It was years of anger built up inside. The night of his death, Mick had lost his job. He liked to drink, and the drinking finally did him in. Well, of course it was my fault. Everything was my fault.

I'd been cleaning the kitchen floor, not with a mop, but on my hands and knees with a scouring pad. Yes, my husband would literally get on his hands and knees and run his finger across the baseboards to assure I'd cleaned his castle correctly. After many, many broken ribs, I finally mastered the art of cleaning the floors.

I'd just finished when I heard the door on his F150 slam. You learn the sounds. The way their footsteps sound on the hardwood floors, the way they shut the refrigerator door, and the way they breathe lying next to you.

As soon as he entered the house, I felt that old familiar fear enter my gut. I quickly punched the start button on the microwave. In two minutes I could have his dinner on the table. He had called earlier in the day, telling me he wanted a baked potato with a

lot of butter, mild cheddar – nothing else would do – and of course, tons of salt and pepper. His steak had to be medium rare, and his salad crisp. It was done. The beeping of the microwave caused me to jump. Where was he? I hadn't heard the toilet flush, or his keys hit the stand by the door. Something was different.

I had all his food together. I placed it on a tray and started towards the dining room. A hard smack across the back of my head almost made me drop the tray. Mick was standing by the door, glaring at me. In his hand he held a fifth of Jack Daniels'. "Bitch, why isn't my dinner on the table?"

Stay calm, over and over in my mind. I tried to keep myself cool. His temperament was different, his eyes filled with rage. "I was making sure it was nice and warm for you. Would you like something else?"

"Put it down."

I set the food on the table and began to walk back into the kitchen. He grabbed my wrist, stopping me. "I called today...where were you?"

"I was here, I was here all day. I didn't hear the phone, and your number doesn't show on the caller ID."

Smack!

"You fat-ass bitch, are you calling me a liar?"

The taste of blood was instantly in my mouth. "No, Mick, I was just telling you that I hadn't heard."

Smack!

This time I fell to the floor.

"Who are you fucking when I'm at work?" He

pulled me up by the hair on the top of my head. I knew better than to fight him. It only made it worse. "Who is it?"

"Mick, nobody comes here. You are my husband, I love you. I would never sleep with another man."

Smack! Smack!

"You lying bitch. I watched him leave today."

He was crazy; something was different from the other times. I was scared. I didn't know what to say. There was no arguing with him.

"Nobody has been here all day but me."

He threw me to the ground and sat down to eat.

I didn't move. If I moved it meant more beatings, and my face was already swelling up. I could still taste the blood in my mouth. I watched him reach for his silverware to cut the steak.

Fear leapt in my gut. I had put the fork on the wrong side of the knife. Silly, yeah, but he would notice.

He threw the table across the room and started to chase me. Never before had I seen my death in his eyes but that night, there it was. He caught me as I neared the bedroom. I screamed, but his hands on my throat muffled any noise.

"I could stand here and watch you die, you stupid lardass bitch. It wouldn't hurt me at all to see such a lazy piece of shit go to hell."

I was losing consciousness. I gasped for air, trying to remove his fingers from my throat. His evil, demonic laugh spread throughout the apartment. He let go, and I fell to my knees.

Mick began to unzip his pants. "Suck me."

I began to stroke him with my tongue. I wanted to puke. He smelt of urine and feces. More than likely, he was too drunk to wipe his own ass. He shoved his hips hard against my body, banging my head into the wall. He kept trying to cum, to keep an erection, but he was so drunk that his 'little buddy' wasn't working correctly.

"See, you can't even get me hard. You're so repulsive. No man should ever have to sleep with someone as disgusting as you. I only married you because I felt sorry for your obese ass. No man would ever want you, so I took you in to be my maid, my slut and my property. Do you know how many women I have fucked, real women that know how to make a man happy? Becca, you are a nothing. You will die a nothing, and your life meant nothing. I feel sorry for you." He hurled me to the bed. "I've decided to give you something special tonight."

I was then tied to the bed facedown, where he attempted to sodomize me, but his manhood was not going to stand at attention. His anger was mounting, and I could sense his hatred growing.

The last thing I remember before blacking out was the most excruciating pain. He rammed something inside me over and over. I felt myself tear and the pain...I can't even explain. Before going unconscious, I heard him laugh.

When I woke up, he was lying beside me. The ropes were cut free from my wrists. My wrists were bleeding and raw. My body hurt like never before.

The pain was so real and so horrible, I wanted to die. I felt blood trickling out of my rectum. As I tried to move, pain shot through me. Tears fell from my eyes. I wanted to die, it hurt so badly.

It was as if I'd lost my mind. The years of abuse, hatred, and rape overwhelmed me. I would never allow him to do that to me again.

I don't even remember getting his pistol out of his nightstand. I just remember the shots and his body lying there, covered in blood.

I remember the cops arriving and taking me away in an ambulance. Even though it was apparent I'd been raped and beaten, I was still found guilty of murder.

But now I was free.

Chapter Three

When you haven't been able to sit in the sun and breathe in fresh air, it's a priority on your list. I must have sat there for an hour with my eyes closed, just taking in the pureness of being free. It just wasn't from prison, but from Mick. I had to report to a halfway house. I didn't really understand the mumbo jumbo, but it was part of my deal. That, and counseling. I was to remain at the halfway house until my counselor believed I was okay enough to live on my own.

Okay enough. Would I ever really be okay? Would anything ever really be okay again? I was already labeled a killer. Sure, it was temporary insanity, but prison was already on my record. What kind of job could I get?

Calm down, Becca, you'll be okay. Mick is gone, you're free. You can do it.

* * * * *

I wanted to live in another town, so they sent me to a little town in the outskirts of San Antonio called LaVernia.

When the cab pulled up to an old doublewide trailer, I didn't know what I was getting into. A couple of women were sitting on the front porch,

smoking cigarettes and talking.

"You must be Becca." An elderly lady, probably around sixty, rose off her chair and extended her hand to me.

I gently shook it. "Yes, ma'am, I'm Becca King. I'm looking for Daisy."

"Well, young lady, I would be Daisy, and this is Angie. Angie, could you show Becca her room while I get all her paperwork in order?"

Angie looked old. Not old from age, but from life. Her face had pits in it, and her eyes had large bags underneath them. She must have been a looker years before, with a girlish figure and small, perky breasts. She wore her long brown hair in a simple ponytail.

Daisy was one of those country women. She had the Texas accent, used 'Ya'll' a lot and wore jeans with men's shirts. Her white hair was cut short around her pudgy face. Her eyes were the greenest I'd ever seen, and they warmed my soul from the start. I felt safe with Daisy, something I hadn't felt in a very long time.

My room was small. It held a twin bed, a dresser and a desk by the window. Nothing fancy, but it was mine. The walls were painted white, and a picture hung on the wall in front of my bed of an old shack on a country road filled with bluebonnets. On the side wall, there was a full length mirror.

I sat down, removed my shoes and took a deep breath. What was I going to do now? It seemed that all my adult life I had someone telling me what to do, where to go, how to get there, what to do when I got

there. What did I want to do? The dreams I held as a young girl were long taken from my soul and replaced with a bitterness that raged inside me for so long. While the rage was now gone, a loneliness crept over me. Maybe Mick had been right. Who could ever love me?

I stood up and looked at myself in the mirror. I'd lost a little weight in prison. I would always be big-boned. I was a big woman; it was nothing to be ashamed of. I just wished I was different.

My hair had a tint of gray in it. My face was pale from being behind prison walls. Even my eyes looked black.

I was a sight from hell, but then again, it's where I'd been for a long time, and it was up to me to either piss or get off the pot. Meaning I could live the rest of my life saying 'poor poor me', or do something with myself and for once, be happy.

I chose to be happy.

* * * * *

There were four of us that lived with Daisy. Angie was thirty-two and out of prison for the second time. It seemed that Angie liked meth. She was an ex-stripper with three kids that lived with her parents. The next time would be her last time.

Frankie was a young black woman from San Antonio. She was very sweet, and it was hard to believe that she had been in the joint for armed robbery. But like she told me, when you have four

starving children and nobody will help, you will do just about anything to feed them babies.

Nina was a loose cannon. She was always cussing and talking about how everyone owed her something. Frankie told me that Nina was in for prostitution. It seems her daddy sold her to his friends as a young girl, and the career just stuck. I felt sorry for her, but Nina didn't want any friends, so I stayed away.

It was not bad living with Daisy. She was an awesome cook. She made the best Texas-fried meals covered with homemade gravy, and fresh bread. We all took turns doing chores around the house and even in the barn.

Daisy had a small farm of animals on her three-acre property. I learned to milk a cow, collect eggs, feed pigs and even how to clean chicken coops. I didn't mind it at all; I found it rather soothing to be around the animals. Soon I traded jobs with the other girls, so all my time was spent out in the barns.

My favorite animal was Duke. Duke was a retired German shepherd from a K-9 Unit in San Antonio. He had a sweet nature to him, and I just loved him.

I'd been sitting on the front porch with Duke when a black Ford truck pulled up. Duke ran from my side and jumped up at the door of the truck, barking. "Duke, get down right now."

He wouldn't listen to me. I got louder. "Duke, get down."

Daisy came running out with flour on her face and hands. "What in tarnation is wrong?"

I pointed to the truck. "Duke won't let that person

out."

She giggled. "Oh, honey, that person is probably on his cell phone and Duke just wants his attention."

Daisy went back inside, rambling on about her bread burning. The truck door opened and a tall, well-built man got out, petting Duke.

I couldn't move. I'd honestly never in my life seen a man as good-looking as this one was. I know you hear that all the time and think how cheesy it sounds, but he was perfect.

His hair was black and his eyes green; he had a broad chest and a farmer's tan. His jeans were snug but not tight, and his shirt was unbuttoned just enough for me to see curly black chest hair.

As he got closer, my heart sank. Attached to his belt was a badge.

"Good morning, you must be Becca." His smile was breathtaking. He had perfect teeth. Why was I thinking of his teeth? Oh, he was so handsome.

"Yes, I'm Becca, and you are, officer?"

"I'm Tex."

"Tex? Your name is Tex, or is that your nickname?"

"No, my name is Tex. My mother loves Texas and she thought it would be cute to name me Tex."

What was I thinking? That was so rude of me to ask him that. "I'm sorry, that was really none of my business. So what did I do now?"

He bit his bottom lip. It was actually very sexy. "Have you done anything I should worry about?"

"Tex Bradley Drake, you leave that girl alone right now."

We both turned to see Daisy coming out of the house with her arms extended.

Tex wrapped his large arms around her. "But, Mom, I didn't do anything."

She playfully hit him in the belly. "Now, Becca, don't let him flash that badge around at you."

Oh, great, he was Daisy's son. No wonder Duke liked him so much.

"Becca, this is my baby boy, Tex."

He blushed, and I thought it was the cutest thing I'd ever seen, a grown man blushing at his gloating mother.

"Are you hungry, baby?"

He rubbed his belly. "I'm always hungry, Mother."

She took his arm and they walked back towards the house. I stood there gawking like a sex-crazed teenager. Tex was definitely someone I would like to get to know.

* * * * *

One good thing about having a bunch of women living together was the gossip.

Angie said that Tex had never been married and didn't have any children. He was very protective of his mother and came out at least once a week, sometimes more. He didn't have a girlfriend because nobody would put up with his job. He'd been working with the K-9 unit for ten years. Duke started out with him, but had to retire after he got shot in the shoulder and almost died. Tex had a new dog named

Boz.

Tex liked country music and Miller Lite longnecks, he didn't like girls that smoked, he liked redheads, he didn't like fake tits and he had a bubble butt. He was his mama's baby, and she adored him. He did have an older brother named Tommy, but Tommy died in the line of duty.

Tex was very anti-drugs and overall, he was a nice guy.

I was curious about him. Okay, I was *very* curious about him. I found myself thinking of him all week. I couldn't wait for him to come back and see his mama. I tried to make idle conversation with Daisy about him, but she didn't take my bait. For him being her baby, she sure didn't talk much about him.

I started counseling. It wasn't bad. I found myself telling Mr. Davis things I didn't even remember happening. Isn't it funny how one day you don't remember a damned thing, then it all comes flooding back?

So I had posttraumatic stress disorder. I looked up the meaning in the dictionary and it just said 'an extremely traumatic event that involves injury, or threat to a child.' I laughed all the way back to the house on that one. Nothing had happened to me as a child. Well, nothing I could remember.

I grew up in a small Texas town. Mom worked in a little juke joint, and she was always on one side of the bar, either drinking or serving beer. My dad lived in another state, and I never saw him much. Mom hated him, and Dad didn't care too much for her either. I

spent a lot of time alone, a lot of time staring at walls and making up an imaginary world where I was happy, skinny, rich and everybody loved me.

Boy, was I pathetic.

Mr. Davis started telling me bad things that happened to me as a child made out my future. It made no sense to me. But maybe that was why I was going to see him. I even started talking about Tex. Afterwards I was scared he would tell Daisy, but he promised me anything I said to him was confidential. I didn't leave feeling too trusting, but I had to start somewhere.

* * * * *

I was out by the barn playing ball with Duke when Tex showed up again. He was in uniform this time.

He got out of his patrol truck and went inside. I heard some arguing inside, then he came out with Nina in cuffs.

I quickly walked over to the group. Nina was cussing at Daisy, "You old bitch, I didn't steal from you."

Tex opened the back door. "Get in."

Nina kicked at him. "I didn't steal any fucking money from your mommy, you dumbass hick."

He shoved her in and shut the door behind him. He was pissed, I could sense it. "Mom, when are you going to learn? Once a convict, always a convict?"

Ouch, that hurt. He might as well have slapped me across the face.

Frankie turned and walked inside, slamming the door behind her. I followed her, my heart feeling as if it had been crushed. I stood at the door, watching Daisy and Tex. Maybe Angie was wrong...maybe Tex wasn't such a nice guy.

Hey, I sure knew how to pick them.

Chapter Four

*M*y sessions with Mr. Davis were going great. It was hard and there were times I would leave in tears, but the pain that I had was disappearing little by little. Working in the yard was therapy for me, too. Daisy taught me to prune bushes, gather vegetables from the garden and listen to nature talking to me. Poor Duke always got to listen to me talk. He would lie next to me as I sat in the garden talking, complaining or just bitching. He was truly my only friend. He would arch those ears up, and it actually seemed as if he was taking in everything I said.

* * * * *

I'd been with Daisy a month when a new girl came, a young blonde fresh out of prison for drugs and prostitution. I didn't like her; she was loud, rude and vulgar. After having to hear for the umpteenth time about her blowing guards, I left the table in a huff.

Outside Duke followed me. I sat down on a bench near the garden. Duke came up with his tennis ball in his mouth.

"No, Duke, I don't want to play today."

He groaned and dropped the ball at my feet. He pushed it towards me with his nose.

"Duke, I said no. I'm not in a good mood. You have no idea what it's like having to live with these people sometimes. Oh, and the new slut is just disgusting. I hate her. I really hate her. She's the type of woman that Mick was with. I knew he cheated on me, and I just thank God he didn't bring home any diseases."

Duke laid his head in my lap.

I smiled and scratched behind his ears. "I love you, Duke."

He began panting.

I picked up the ball and threw it. "You're just like a man, Duke. You come loving up on me only so I'll play with your balls."

A snicker caught me off-guard, and I quickly turned to see Tex standing against a tree. "Mom said I'd find him with you."

He'd heard everything I'd said. Oh, God. "Yeah, I think he likes me."

Duke came back with the ball and immediately dropped it as he ran to Tex. He jumped up on Tex, and Tex began to play with him.

"Why don't you take him home with you? He adores you," I said.

"An officer must keep his partner with him. I have Boz now, and I'm afraid that it would only remind Duke of what he can no longer do."

"That's too bad."

"Oh, Duke is happy here. He loves my mom, and I feel safer knowing that he will protect her. He used to not allow anyone near him." Tex playfully pushed Duke away. "You always were a sucker for the pretty

ladies, weren't you?"

Duke growled playfully, and Tex pushed him again. "You've turned into an old sap, haven't you, boy?"

Duke finally lay down with the ball beside him.

"He lets me near him," I said.

Tex smiled and I almost forgot what he had said about convicts, but the words still were etched in my heart.

"I was talking about you, Becca. Mom said that you spoiled my damn dog."

"I haven't done anything to him except talk to him and play ball, and sometimes I give him scraps."

He just sat there with a shit-eating grin on his face.

"Okay, I spoiled him, but he deserves it. He listens to me and doesn't charge for it."

Tex laughed, and I found myself laughing too. "When we used to work together, he always listened to me. It's funny, because I swear he —"

"Talks back?"

"Yes, it seems like he always knows what to say, and he doesn't even talk."

It was my turn to laugh. "I guess I'm not the only nut around here."

"You know, my mother is an excellent listener, too."

"Your mom doesn't like me. I mean, she's cordial, but she rarely talks to me."

"It's because you don't need her like the others do. She likes you, Becca. It's just that you remind her a lot of herself when she was young."

"I find that hard to believe."

He stretched his legs out and removed his hat. "My mother married my father right out of high school. She was young, and so deeply in love. They married, and a year later, Tommy was born. Then three years later, I was born.

"My dad was a real son of a bitch that loved his Jim Beam more than his family. My dad beat my mom until one day Tommy was old enough to fight back. My dad turned on Tommy and beat the hell out of him, and when I tried to help my big brother, he beat me too.

"Mom woke us up during the night. We left on foot carrying suitcases. I remember the police stopped us, and my mom told them what happened. Can you believe they drove us back to the house and told Mom she needed to be a better wife?

"We left a week later to live with my grandma, right here on this property. Her old shack was torn down and now Mom has a mobile home, but I remember what it was like living in fear, and so does Mom. She never remarried, never went out with another man. She was too afraid to start over. Afraid that she would get beat again. Tommy and I chose to become policemen because we swore we would never allow a woman and her kids to be treated the way we were that night. So, Becca, my mom knows what you went through."

"You know about Mick?"

"Becca, anyone that comes out to this place first goes through me. I know all about him; his death, the

trial, you doing time, what the lawyers did and your appeal."

I got up, wiping dirt from my jeans. "Well, you know what they say. Once a convict, always a convict."

I started to walk away, but he rose up and caught me by the elbow. "I didn't mean that. I was angry that Nina had stolen from my mom."

"Yeah, well, you said it. I got to go inside and help with the dishes."

"Why do you seem so upset with me?"

"Because I am."

Wiping his brow on his sleeve, he put his hat back on his head. "Becca, why? Why are you mad at my little comment?"

"Because I liked you 'til you said that. I found out everything I could about you, but it was all lies. You're not a nice guy, you're judgmental and pompous."

"Woo, lady, what do you mean, pompous?"

"Nothing. I have to go."

He wouldn't let me go. "You asked about me? Hot damn, Mom was right."

"What do you mean, your mom was right?"

"Oh, Mom said you had the hots for me. She is always trying to get me hooked up with someone." He began to laugh.

It only angered me more. "Yeah, that's really funny, isn't it? Ha ha ha, a convict thinks you're cute. Well, go ahead and laugh. We have no feelings, do we? We're just pieces of shit, right?"

He let me go. "Becca, I never said that. I've never judged you, but you sure in the hell have me figured out. See ya later." He climbed in his truck and peeled out.

Everything had happened so fast. Where had it all come from? What in the hell was I doing? I sat back down and had myself a good cry. Duke lay down in front of me, and soon his snoring had me laughing.

"You know, a few years after I left Tex and Tommy's father, I met a man." Daisy appeared, sitting next to me, and I jumped. "He was a good man, someone that I loved, but I let him go, Becca, because I was more afraid of being hurt than I was in love. I don't know what happened with you and Tex. I must admit, I did listen to your conversation. I've been wondering why he's coming out more and more. Believe me, he is a loyal son, but he never came out this much. I knew you liked him, I heard you tell Duke one time in the garden. I don't know what's going on, and honestly, it's none of my business. But Becca, don't be more afraid of getting hurt than being in love. Tex is a good man, I did a good job with him."

"Daisy, with all due respect, you're talking love and all that mumbo jumbo. I don't even know him. I mean, sure, I think he's cute and sexy and I like him, but I don't know him enough to love him."

Daisy softly touched my hand, patting it. "You have never experienced love, my dear, so how do you know that it's not love? Sometimes it hits you like a bolt of lightning. You don't even know what

happened or when, it just did."

We sat there in silence for a couple minutes. I didn't know what to say. She was right. I honestly didn't know what love was. I mean, sure, I had ideas, but being with Mick was not love. Was love constantly thinking of someone? Wishing to be near them? Wanting to touch them? Counting the days 'til you saw them again? Well, if it was, then yeah, I was in love with Tex. But the question was, could he ever love someone like me?

* * * * *

Laverne Cagle was waiting for me when I got home from my session with Mr. Davis. I sat on the porch swing as she began pulling out papers from her briefcase. "I have spoken with the judge and he has given you your freedom. It seems that Mr. Davis agrees you are ready to be out on your own."

I was scared. I mean, I'd never lived on my own. While I was excited that I was really free, I had a deep sorrow inside, because this place felt like home to me. "When do I have to leave?"

"Well, Becca, you have three days."

"I have no money, Mrs. Cagle. How can I get a place?"

She pulled out some papers from her briefcase. "You have three thousand dollars in your savings account."

"You have it wrong. See, I have never had a bank account."

"Well, it seems your deceased husband opened it in your name about three years ago. It's yours, it's more than enough to get you started."

Mick had to have been hiding it from someone. He would never have put money in my name. But then again, I was so stupid, I wouldn't have known. Funny how it backfired in his face. Stupid son of a bitch took my life from me, and now he was giving it back.

Daisy came out and sat next to me as soon as my lawyer left. "So you're leaving me?"

I softly patted her hand. "I guess I am."

"Well, you know, I talked to a friend of mine. He's a vet. I told him of your love for animals, and he told me to send you over there. It's a good job, and not too far from here. My friend Gertrude has a small mobile home for rent, and I know you could get in there."

"You're so good to me, Daisy."

She kissed me on the cheek. "Let me go make some calls."

Chapter Five

Life was great. I had a job, my own place and I was my own boss. I could walk around the place naked; leave it dirty, stay up all night watching television. For the first two weeks, it was great.

Then I got lonely.

I took up reading. Hell, if I couldn't have romance, I sure could read about it.

I was sitting on my deck reading a good Harlequin romance when I felt my toes get warm and damp.

I jumped up. There sat Duke.

"Duke!" He must have known I was excited, because he started panting and jumped up on the chair with me. "Oh, I have missed you so much. How did you get here?"

He licked my face in answer.

"He came with me." Tex walked up the steps and leaned against the deck. "Mom says he's just been plain miserable without you."

"Oh, I've missed him too."

Duke jumped down and began sniffing around.

"How's everything with you?"

Tex sat down in the chair beside me. "I'm doing good. How about you?"

"Well, work is great. I love all the animals."

It felt weird, like we were teenagers making small

talk. My heart was beating fast and my palms were clammy. Oh, this man just drove me nuts.

"I just wanted to bring Duke over to see you."

"I appreciate it. I go see your mom when I can. I just hate leaving, because he gives me that sad look."

Tex got up and yelled for Duke. Duke ran up and sat next to his feet. "Becca, Mom wants to know if you can keep Duke. It seems he got spoiled, and she can't deal with him anymore."

"I would love to have him, but he's yours."

"We could have joint custody."

There it went again, my heart beating faster-faster-faster. Damn him.

"Does that mean you would be coming over here to see him?"

"Yes and no."

"What do you mean, yes and no?"

"I would come see you too, if that was okay."

Oh, yes, it was. I wanted to kiss him. I wanted him to touch me. Faster-faster-faster...my heart was going wild.

"I would love for you to come see me, Tex."

He leaned in and softly, oh so softly, kissed my lips.

Pure chills ran down my spine. We kissed for the longest time. I didn't want it to stop. I leaned in closer, hoping he would touch me. My God, I wanted him to touch my breasts. I wanted, I needed for him to make love to me.

He let me go. "Becca, I have to go."

"Okay, if you must."

"I don't want to, but I'm afraid if I don't, I'll never leave."

"Then don't."

He cupped my face in his palm. "Do you know what you're saying? Baby, once I make love to you, you're mine."

"Oh, Tex, I want to be yours."

He picked me up and carried me inside. "Where's your bedroom?"

I giggled and pointed down the hall.

He threw me on the bed and removed his shirt. It was as if it couldn't happen fast enough. We were like two sex-starved maniacs tearing at each other's clothes.

There was no foreplay, but I was wet and when he entered me, my body went into a fit of convulsions.

Never had I imagined sex could be so good, so satisfying, yet so emotional. If I didn't love him before, I did now. We hit climax together, our hearts beating simultaneously. We lay there in each other's arms for the longest time, not saying a word. I knew the past was gone, the future looked bright and in my heart, my soul, and in the dreams that would come, Mick was now really gone.

Look for the Texas T series by Ruby Christine... Coming soon to Mojocastle Press!

Ruby Christine

A nurse by day, a writer by night and a mom of three boys 24-7, I live in Texas and love it here. Writing is therapy for me, takes me places I've been, wish I'd been or someday want to be. I'm a storyteller...may not be the best, but I love what I do and if my writing has touched just one person, then it's all worth it. As always, if God brings you to it, then God will get you through it.