



Butterfly Kisses

Ann Cory © 2006

[www.cobblestone-press.com](http://www.cobblestone-press.com)

## **Butterfly Kisses**

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

## **Butterfly Kisses**

Copyright© 2006 Ann Cory

ISBN: 1-60088-023-1

Cover Artist: Sable Grey

Editor: Melanie Noto

Excerpt from Breaking in Levi by Ann Cory

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced electronically or in print without written permission, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in reviews.

Cobblestone Press, LLC

[www.cobblestone-press.com](http://www.cobblestone-press.com)

**Ann Cory**

In dedication to my husband for his sensual butterfly kisses that inspired this story.

## Butterfly Kisses

### Chapter One

The glow from the morning sun reflected along Bryan's bronzed body and invited Charlene's hands to touch him. His right leg was exposed and the sheet bunched around his torso, giving her incentive to snuggle close. In all her nervousness over her upcoming swim competition, she hadn't slept well and her body was running on pure adrenaline. He would be the perfect distraction.

Charlene pulled down the sheets to uncover her white silk panties and matching camisole. Lacy stockings traveled up her leg to mid-thigh, where they were attached with garters. Bryan loved it when she wore sexy lingerie.

She ran her fingertips over his arm until the hairs bristled.

"Mm. Is it morning?" His baritone voice vibrated within the small bedroom they shared.

"It's almost seven." She couldn't erase the sleepiness from her voice.

"That body clock of yours refuses to let you sleep in."

True. Always afraid to miss out on a day, she'd never been one to sleep in for long.

He looked at her sweetly from behind a fringe of disheveled toffee colored hair. His smile warmed her from the inside out. A hint of light stubble framed his full lips. She gazed at his rich hazel eyes, which had a glint of gold inside their irises. His mouth curved up in appreciation.

## Ann Cory

"I see someone has some extra energy to spare today."

Charlene grinned. Morning was her favorite time to be intimate.

"Do you know how good it is to wake up to you?"

She couldn't help her girlish giggle. "Maybe you could show me just how good it is."

He turned over and the sheet slid sideways, baring his solid erection and prompting a sigh from her lips. Immediately, her primitive side was ready to pounce. She growled inside.

Bryan smiled. He knew she was within her element, because inside their nightstands weren't the usual books, reading glasses, or knickknacks; instead, the drawers were filled with lotions, ropes, a blindfold, and an array of naughty toys. While Charlene didn't shun the beautiful art of lovemaking with its passionate caresses and gentle whispers, she preferred a little domination to tame her wicked ways. Her everyday life was all about order.

Except when it came to sex.

Her silk camisole showed off her full breasts. At one time she'd hated them for getting in her way when she swam, but Bryan's compliments and raised eyebrows made her feel comfortable flaunting her assets. He loved to buy her sexy clothing that showed off her breasts and accentuated her long, toned legs.

His hand ran along the smooth line of her stomach and brushed over her silken panties. Charlene forced herself to bite back a surge of laughter. She was more ticklish than she cared to admit, especially on her feet.

His fingers lingered, daring her to plead for more. "I have a feeling you're *very* wet underneath here." The vibration in his voice sent her head spinning.

Charlene bit her lower lip and braced herself at the thought of him finding out for sure. When he didn't, she silently cursed. He continued trailing his fingers down her thigh, outlining the lace etchings of her stockings, and then he slowly removed her garters. The musky smell of his shampoo lingered from his late night shower, making her dizzy.

## Butterfly Kisses

"You turn me on, woman." Once the garters were removed he stared at her with those gorgeous eyes that held her gaze whenever she orgasmed.

His thumbs fondled the stocking's lacy trim and he rolled it down, unraveling it across her thigh and over her knee in quiet foreplay. Inside, her body burned. Why did he have to take so long? She knew why, of course. The wait was part of his decadent torture.

He slipped the stocking over her foot and kissed each pink-painted toenail before moving on to the next. This time he moved with a little more speed, and she sensed his growing anxiety. Her eyes watched his hard cock leave a thin stain along the sheets. And again he kissed her toes and ran his hands along the arches of her feet.

Her body shifted as he pressed different points across her feet and ankles. Then he slinked up between her thighs, his tongue paving the way along her skin.

"I think it's time for your favorite morning ritual."

Charlene held her breath. She knew what was coming.

*Butterfly kisses.*

His eyelashes wisped along her inner thighs, making them tremble and shudder. She clenched her muscles tight and gripped the sheets, her head thrown back on the pillow. Her moans echoed inside the room and she was certain her panties were fully soaked by now.

"I can smell how much you want me to fuck you. Tell me you want me."

"I want you to fuck me!" Her voice rang out like she was possessed.

"Ah, I think you forgot something."

He slipped his fingers beneath her panties and shoved two fingers inside her, fast. She sucked in her breath and corrected herself. "I want you to fuck me, master."

"Very good. Or should I say, very bad. You've been naughty lately and I need to teach you a lesson."

## Ann Cory

Charlene smiled. She loved their role-playing. They had found a beautiful combination of pain and pleasure, all within a realm of trust and respect for one another.

His cock throbbed against her thigh, but she knew better than to beg for it. At least, not yet. He dragged his nose over her drenched mound and up along her stomach until he came to the hem of her camisole.

*Rip it off*, she pled inside. She wanted his hands to pinch her nipples and his mouth to devour their hardened peaks. Right now, though, it was all about what *he* wanted, and the more she tried to get him to do something, the more he'd resist. He was her master.

Bryan stood up and rummaged inside one of the drawers. The delicious sound of Velcro being peeled back sent her pussy into convulsions. She wanted him so much.

"To remind you who is in control, I'm going to bind your hands."

His voice suggested authority, but his eyes sparkled with mischief. He pulled off her camisole and fastened her wrists to one another. She felt so vulnerable.

The rays of sunlight bathed across his nude body. God, how she loved him.

He took one wrist and then the other, wrapping them with the soft bonds and attaching them to their headboard. Their fantasy bed had paid off. She couldn't imagine living without one. Bars and hooks galore were fixed to the bed, giving them many ways to explore, experiment, and get off in every position possible.

His lips devoured her breasts, giving extra attention to each raised nipple. Her legs beat against the bed as he moved. He knew she could barely take having them played with so intently. Charlene could feel the wetness between her legs spill onto the sheets, dripping while she silently begged for more. She arched her back and drew herself up for him to savor.

"Don't offer yourself to me," he said. "I'll take what I want when I'm ready. I always take what I want."

She only caught a glimpse of what he held in his hands before he rolled her over. *SNAP* went the whip across her bottom. She felt its divine

## Butterfly Kisses

sting, followed by a heightened sense of arousal. The way the cool leather strap played against her flesh made her beg for more.

Again, *SNAP!* The whip slashed through the air, accompanied by a melodic echo.

"You must remember that I take what I want. Do not beg, or you will feel my wrath."

His wrath was exactly what she was looking for. She craved his power and strength over her ever-willing body.

"Turn onto your back!"

His orders were all she could hear. All her previous nervousness faded. Her senses were too heightened to focus on anything but Bryan. She caught a glimpse of his roguish grin before he placed the blindfold over her eyes.

His fingers took their sweet time traveling along her skin, stopping at her legs where his warm breath sent shivers everywhere. Again he tortured her with butterfly kisses and brushed his fingers against her panties.

"You're drenched. When I'm ready, my cock is going to fill you up."

He pulled off her silken undergarment with wicked force.

Charlene swallowed, hard. The room was warm, thanks to his heated words and the sun. He kissed her thighs as his fingers kneaded her tingling skin. When he reached her ankles, he fastened Velcro bonds to them like he had her wrists.

"This will leave you wide open for whatever I decide to do."

There was a brief pause, during which he grew quiet. She didn't know what was next. All she knew was that her pussy was on fire, and she wouldn't have it any other way.

Moments later, a series of soft ticklish delights start around her thighs and worked their way towards her heated core. She writhed about, her arms and legs going in all directions at once.

"Tell me I am your master," he demanded.

She laughed as the feathers danced across her stomach.

"Tell me," he insisted again.



## Ann Cory

"I can't! Not until you stop tickling me," she cried.

The feather stopped and his finger delved between her thighs for just a second, enough to make her gasp with pleasure.

"I said, address me as *master*." He probed his fingers inside her, reaching her womb. She rolled her head and arched up her back, wanting to feel him deep inside. At that moment, she would say anything to get his cock shoved up into her.

"You are my master."

"Tell me you are my slave."

"Yes, master. I am your slave," she moaned.

"Ah, that's better. Now you are beginning to behave. I think you've earned a reward."

His tongue traced her nipples, sending currents of heat racing through her body. His intense suckling sent waves of pleasure from her toes up. Strong pinches followed his tongue, and she knew he'd placed nipple clamps on her breasts. The cool metal against her sensitive nibs had her groaning up a storm.

"You will not make a sound unless I give you permission. I hope you are sorry."

Charlene bit her lip. She longed for more of his so called *lessons*, because they brought stimulation to her in a way she'd never thought was possible. She wanted to be a bad girl who required simultaneous spanking and pleasure.

"I'm not sorry, master." She couldn't believe the words had come out of her mouth!

"Oh, really? We'll see about that."

She heard a low humming sound, and her body convulsed again. The vibrator! Oh God, how that machine could work its magic. Charlene spread her legs wide and strained against the bonds. Dripping wet and impatient for more, she willed Bryan to plunge the big battery-operated tool inside her.

Yet he only maneuvered the vibrator around the outsides of her legs. Her body burned like a flame, heat engulfing her insides the burning heat needing relief from her inner juices.

"I want to hear you beg me to use this."

## Butterfly Kisses

"Master, please get me off," she cried. "I'll do anything."

"Tell me how much you love to feel this hummer enter deep inside your folds."

"I do. I love to feel it deep inside, humming and vibrating until I can't take it anymore!"

He was in charge and she was merely his naked pupil. She'd tell him anything, do absolutely anything he wanted. He knew that.

"Do you like the vibrator better than my hard cock?"

"No, master."

"That's a good slave. You've earned a moment of pleasure." He placed the tip of the vibrator against her clit, and warmth coated her abdomen as if a spotlight were focused on the area where her pleasure was confined. She moaned with ecstasy and tears filled her eyes; it felt so good. She was soaking wet and felt her release coming.

He shoved the vibrator inside her and fingered her clit. Oh God! When would he let her come? She needed to let go.

"Now, if you can be a good girl, I'll untie you," he whispered.

Charlene waited for him to undo her ankles before she moved for his cock, but she was no match for his brute strength. He picked her up and tossed her over—face down.

"You just don't learn, do you?"

SMACK went his bare hand across her ass. It was better than the whip. He rubbed her smooth skin and spanked her hard again.

"Do you want more?"

"Yes, I want more," Charlene cried, surprised at the intensity of her words. She was so worked up.

"Yes, what?" he prompted.

"Yes, master. I want more. Please give me more."

Her imagination was working over time. She wanted him to restrain her against the door and shove his cock into every orifice he could find. Suspend her from the ceiling and make her come like never before. Cover her in whipped cream and lick every succulent inch. This was the man, her master, who made all her secret fantasies come true. She wasn't about to be a good girl until she was well punished.

## Ann Cory

"Get on your knees with your ass up in the air."

She did, and a cold liquid gel was spread around her anal hole. She shivered. She loved getting fucked back there, and he knew it.

"I am going to tame you once and for all," he challenged.

She smiled. As far as she was concerned, it paid to be a wicked girl.

When she was good and lubricated, his warm thighs nestled close behind her, ready for the plunge.

Breathless with anticipation, she shook. And in a split second he entered her. Every ridge and inch of him slid inside. She gasped at the intensity as his strong hands gripped her hips and he thrust in and out of her with slow, meaningful pumps.

Charlene couldn't wait. She slammed back against him hard, and his balls slapped her bottom. The deeper he went, the more friction he made, exciting every nerve in her body. Then he slipped the vibrator inside her pussy and turned it on to maximum speed.

The feel of his cock sliding in and out of her ass as he thrust faster, deeper, harder, was almost too much. She moaned and yelled, her body writhing under his controlling ways.

He pulled off her blindfold and drove into her faster. "Tell me what you want right now."

"Master, make me come," she begged.

Her body shook and bucked. Her pulse raced. She was ready to explode, and she knew she couldn't hold back much longer.

"Please let me come. I'm going crazy."

Finally, she heard the magic words.

"Yes. Come now!"

She was barely aware of anything else as she climaxed uncontrollably for what seemed like hours. Her spasms continued as his thrusts gradually slowed. Her thighs quivered.

Spent, he lay down and wrapped her in a loving embrace. His fingers stroked her sweat-soaked hair. "I can see by the twinkle in your eyes that you enjoyed yourself, my slave. We are going to have to work more on your attitude and listening skills, though."

She giggled freely. "Yes, master. I'm a naughty girl, and I have so much to learn."

## Butterfly Kisses

Snuggled in his arms, Charlene felt alive and wholly satisfied. Their bedroom was a sacred playground where they were free to play, discover, and explore. She enjoyed calling her love *master*, for he most certainly knew how to rule over her body. While she wanted to stay with him for the rest of the morning, this was a special day and she had to get moving.

“Five more minutes, lover. Then I have to start getting ready.”

He snuggled close and rested his head on her breasts. “Ah, yes. Today you get to spend time doing your other great love. Swimming.”

## Ann Cory

### Chapter Two

Charlene turned on the shower and waited for the water to reach the right temperature. She smiled to herself. No one, not even her closest friends, would believe the wild sex that went on behind her bedroom door. Her old high school friends knew her as the serious one, and that was a label she couldn't seem to shake. She had always been focused and driven, and usually the last one asked to come out and let loose. Her reputation had no doubt kept her out of trouble, but sometimes she was lonely. Part of her wanted her to hit the party circuit and drink her cares away, but doing without parties was a sacrifice she had to make if she was going to swim. She'd made her mind up early on to put her career first.

The number of guys she'd had sex with could be counted on one hand. Not because she didn't like the way sex felt, but it conflicted with her rigorous swim schedule. Beneath the sheets she was mostly reserved and didn't let the guys do much in the way of exploring. Until Bryan came into her life. Then her view of sex changed completely. His interest was in making her fantasies a reality, and it didn't take him long to act them out.

She shook her head. *No more thoughts of sex! Or at least for the moment.* All her energies needed to be focused on the upcoming swim competition.

With the water temperature just right, she got into the shower and started her pre-competition ritual. She'd found a system that worked for her and had so far proven successful. Everything from the way she dried her body after her shower, to the dark blue hair band she used to pull her

## Butterfly Kisses

long blonde hair into a ponytail, to the color of polish she put on her toes. It raised her confidence and, in her opinion, was what had kept her in first place for the last two years.

She'd always liked a certain amount of order and organization in her life, although she wasn't anal. In the first few months after Bryan moved in with her, she'd had a hard time learning to deal with someone else and sharing her space. It didn't take her long to figure out she could lighten up a little. But not when it came to competition. Losing wasn't an option.

She drenched her hair in apple-scented shampoo and whipped it into a frothy lather. The sweet scent tickled her nose and reminded her of the last trip to an apple orchard with Bryan. It had been the most fun she'd ever had picking apples. Her favorite part was when he got her off behind a bushel of apples, where anyone could have caught them.

The foamy shampoo ran down her body as she tilted her head back, rinsing her hair until the water ran clear. She turned the knob and stepped out into the steamy bathroom. A few swipes against the mirror with her towel and she saw a plain looking woman with wet hair staring back at her, wearing her usual determined face. She had a strong physique, with slightly broader shoulders than she liked, and a tapered waist. She was a powerhouse in strength. Her arms and legs were toned without being bulky, and her bottom was nice and curved.

She slipped on her signature royal blue one-piece bathing suit, which was a little snug around her breasts. The back of the suit was a little chaffed, from the times she'd perched at the edge of the pool with her feet dunked in, having a conversation of sorts with the water. She needed to get a new suit. If only the nagging voice inside her head didn't insist that change was a bad thing for her right now.

Charlene pulled on a pair of loose-fitting, navy blue sweats and a matching hooded jacket. Then she stepped into the bedroom, and her jaw dropped. Bryan's handsomeness never ceased to amaze her. He was a gentleman outside of the bedroom, with a classic look she liked to term, GQ. Dressed in the forest green shirt she'd bought him for his thirty-fifth

## Ann Cory

birthday, which brought out the color in his eyes, and a pair of snug pair of dark denim jeans, he was a dream.

"Wow."

He grinned at her and winked. "You don't look so bad yourself, hot stuff."

She glanced down at her very frumpy attire and chuckled.

"Please."

"Oops, sorry. I was imagining you naked again." His sly look was a good indication where his mind had been. "Are you ready to go?"

Her smile waned and she circled her toe along the carpet. "I'm never ready."

"We'd better go." He held up his watch and tapped it. "Either that, or I'll have to carry you there on my shoulders."

"Okay, let's go." Charlene grabbed up her duffle with her towel, goggles and extra clothing, and walked out to the car. A strange thought went through her mind. One that made her both excited and sick.

"Do you realize that if I win this one, I'm in the running for the Olympics?"

"So there's no pressure." He opened the car door and waited for her to get in.

She laughed and swung the duffle bag at him. "None at all."

The seatbelt tightened across her chest as he closed the door. She took a deep breath. As they drove, the road disappeared, and all she saw was a single lane of the swimming pool with buoys on both sides, bobbling slightly. She smelled the chlorine and felt all eyes on her. The sound of the crowd cheering her on grew loud in the background. Her heart started pounding. *Stay calm. You'll win this one. You're prepared, and in the best shape of your life!*

She shut her eyes tight, and then opened them. The road was back and Bryan was at the wheel, keeping silent, giving her all the support she needed just by being there. Her dream was close to becoming a reality.

Yet when they pulled into the parking lot and she saw her strongest competition, Julia Newman, she felt a wave of doubt.

Bryan squeezed her hand, and she turned to him.

## Butterfly Kisses

"Just go out there and do your best," he said. "What more can you ask of yourself?"

She puffed out her chest and imagined a gold medal hanging around her neck. "To go out there and *be* the best."



**Ann Cory**

### **Chapter Three**

Bryan watched Charlene go into the women's locker room. Her face was set with steely, cool confidence. He, on the other hand, carried enough tension for both of them. She didn't often discuss her insecurities about swimming with him, and he supported her every step of the way.

When he'd first met her, she appeared shy and didn't talk much without prompting. He'd just won tickets to a swimming competition through a drawing at work. It was a sport he watched on television during the Olympics, but otherwise he'd never thought of going. With nothing better to do on a late Saturday morning, he went and couldn't believe the knockout walking up to the pool.

Her entire being was lit up like some beacon, and she held his attention. She looked stunning in her blue suit, with her nipples peeking out from under the nylon material. Blue-rimmed goggles perched on top of her head like a crown, her long blonde hair hung down her back in a loose ponytail, and she had a serene look in her eyes. She oozed confidence. For a brief moment, their eyes met, and images of her lying naked and writhing beneath him flashed through his mind.

A gunshot snapped him out of his fantasy and he watched her luminous form dive into the water, only to come back up with graceful butterfly strokes. She was fast, beating the other women to the wall in an

## Butterfly Kisses

amazing time. He'd held his breath, his muscles tense, his fists clenched, as he'd waited for her to hit the wall and finish first. In and out of the water her arms soared, skimming the water like a giant butterfly. In the water, she was a force to be reckoned with. When she hit the wall first and the flag rose, he jumped up to cheer and nearly passed out from holding his breath for so long.

After asking around, he learned she worked out weekday mornings at the Bachman pool. Poised with a bag of tea and freshly-baked scones, he waited patiently the next day until she was through with her drills and then casually approached her. Her timid smile and brilliant blue eyes served as her voice when he asked her questions. When she did finally speak, her voice was an expert mix of strong and soft tones. They'd been inseparable ever since.

Bryan entered the spectator area and climbed the bleachers until he found a good spot. As long as he sat somewhere in the center about mid-way down, she could find his face in the crowd. She liked it best when he gave her the thumbs up sign.

The announcer came on over the loud speaker and Bryan applauded when Charlene's name was announced first. God, she was a beautiful woman. Her sleek form was straight and she held her head high. He could only imagine the thoughts going on inside her head right now. To win would put her in record standing. Bryan leaned his elbows on his knees and watched. He would wait on pins and needles until she was in her diving pose.

Ann Cory

## Chapter Four

Charlene was the first one to walk out, and she could feel the burn in her back from her competitors' gazes. Julia had been in second place to her for as long as she'd been competing. It didn't bother her to be hated, but she would have liked to get to know Julia and find out what drove her to swimming as a sport.

Water was Charlene's first love. Baths as a child were her most joyful times. Dolls raced against each other from one length of the tub to the other. Her favorite movie was *The Little Mermaid*, and she had often wished she could turn into one. She felt free in water. Capable of anything. It was where she found her inner strength, and it had helped her deal with the early loss of her parents. All the counselors in the world couldn't offer the kind of support an hour-long session in the pool did. Swimming offered her time to work out her differences with herself and the world, and time for reflection. No one could touch her. She didn't need anyone else to help her and for once, she belonged.

She walked to the starting point and glanced into the crowd. Right away she saw Bryan and his infamous two thumbs. She sure loved him, and couldn't wait to be his wife. Her beautiful engagement ring sat in its blue velvet box inside her duffle bag for when the competition was over.

"Ladies, into start position, please!"

The voice over the loudspeaker was sharp and emotionless. Charlene pulled her goggles down over her eyes and adjusted their side straps. Deep breaths in and out steadied her adrenaline. *She had this.*

## Butterfly Kisses

Charlene Traiger, record holder of the women's butterfly stroke, and soon to be Olympic gold medallist, if she had her way about it.

She lowered her body, eyes intent on the water. At the bottom of the pool, she could see the colored tiles that always looked closer than they were. Her future was in there. Her future was also sitting up in the stands rooting her on as her biggest fan and supporter. In six months, she would be married to the man of her dreams. She needed his love more than any trophy or win, but she really wanted both. A million thoughts went through her mind at once and she tried to regain her focus. Now wasn't the time to mess up.

The announcer finished introducing the fourteen names she was up against and the race was about to begin.

"Get ready..."

Her body tensed.

"Get set..."

Charlene's fingers pointed toward the water, her knees bent and her feet waited to push off the cement.

"Go!"

A loud gunshot rang out and she pushed with her feet, diving into the water and coming up quickly into a butterfly stroke. Her arms rounded and water splashed against her goggles, immediately rendering her blind. Shouts from people went from loud to silent every few seconds as she went underwater and came back up again. Bryan always cheered the loudest. There was no mistaking his voice. She moved her body fast, gliding along the water with sheer determination. Today she felt strong. All the mornings of practice would pay off once she finished and heard her name announced as the first place winner.

She neared the wall where she'd do a somersault at just the right time and push off with her feet to start back to the other side. Charlene had it timed to precisely when she needed to start her forward roll. In her head she did a personal countdown until she reached the number *one*.

As she tucked her body and dove into the somersault, she felt a sharp crack against her skull. A dull pain followed, and a faint white light glittered above. The surface of the water got further away and images

## **Ann Cory**

blurred as she slowly sank to the bottom of the pool. She swallowed a mouthful of water, the chemical taste of chlorine too harsh in her mouth. Her legs wouldn't move the way she wanted and the bottom tiles grew near. Then all at once the white light went out, and a welcoming darkness ushered her forward.

## Butterfly Kisses

### Chapter Five

Charlene opened her eyes. A bright light over her head glared into her face and made her nauseous. She tried to turn her head, but something around her neck reduced the movement. In a chair next to the bed she saw Bryan, a worried crease in his forehead, his hands on top of hers.

"I'm here, baby. I've been waiting for you to wake up."

She'd never seen him so upset. Dazed, she looked down at her body, lying beneath a stark white sheet. A body that for some strange reason didn't look or feel like hers.

"Wh-where am I?"

Her throat was sore and her lips, dry.

"You're in the hospital, sweetheart. You hit your head pretty hard on the wall when you did your underwater turn."

"I did?"

She reached up with shaky arms and felt a big thick bandage on her head that was wrapped all around. "Did I at least look graceful?"

He didn't really say anything. Instead he gave her a forced smile.

"Damn. So, I suppose that means Julia won."

"That doesn't matter right now. Are you in a lot of pain?"

Who cared about pain? "Of course that matters! She's my biggest competitor. How can you say something so half-assed? If I just handed her the top spot, I have a right to know."

His sad look and sigh said it all. "Yes, Julia won."

## Ann Cory

Tears welled in Charlene's eyes. "I can't believe it." Her hopes and dreams had vanished in a flash of a moment she couldn't even remember. The prize was *hers*. Who had she pissed off so much to cause her to lose out on the one thing she had in the bag? Gone was her Olympic spot.

Bryan ran his hands through his hair. He looked like he'd been through hell and back.

"Sweetheart, talk to me. How do you feel?"

His question seemed strange and unimportant. She tried to move, but it was like she was watching herself from above, detached somehow, unable to feel her toes or legs. "I don't know. Everything feels...numb."

Behind him, she saw a table filled with bouquets, cards, and balloons.

"What are those for?"

"You. They're from well wishers, your fans, people who wanted to do something to raise your spirits."

"Ah, tokens for the loser. So they pity me."

"No." He shook his head. "They care about you. Most of them were visibly worried about you."

Charlene didn't want anyone to care about her. She wanted to grieve the loss of a win she'd been visualizing for six months. Nothing could have prepared her to lose to the likes of Julia Newman. Now she was glad to not know the woman. She hated her with every fiber of her being.

A throb in her head interrupted her thoughts. "I think my head is starting to hurt. Feels like a dull hammer banging away in the background."

"It's to be expected. I should ring the nurse. I'm just glad you're awake."

His eyes were hiding something, she could tell.

Before he pressed the intercom button, she tried to reach out and stop him. Her arm felt like rubber. She couldn't even feel his skin when she pressed her fingers against his hand.

"Wait."

"What is it?"

"How long have I been here?"

## Butterfly Kisses

"Three days."

Charlene couldn't believe she'd been asleep for that long. "You aren't telling me something. Please...if there's something wrong—"

She wanted to sit up, but her legs felt like lead. Then she remembered the confining thing around her neck. Panic rolled in. The most frightening thought she'd ever had crashed down around her. "Tell me right now, Bryan. What's the matter with me?"



Ann Cory

## Chapter Six

Bryan's emotions were torn and twisted into tiny pieces, clogging his ability to speak or think clearly. He was the last one who wanted to tell Charlene she might never walk again. The words were on the tip of his tongue, but he couldn't bring himself to say them. Her whole world was about the water. How could he tell her that dream of the Olympics may never come to fruition? She didn't deserve this.

He leaned over and kissed her cheek. "I-I don't know how."

Her eyes were glossy with tears. He swallowed back a lump of agony.

"Baby, you might not—"

The door swung open and a tall man with noticeable graying hair strode in with a clipboard, his white overcoat billowing behind him.

"I see our famous patient is awake. That is a good sign. I'm Doctor Tolliver. How are you feeling?"

He shined a small penlight in both her eyes and wrote something down on his chart.

"Right now, I'm feeling irritated. My fiancé won't tell me what's wrong, so maybe you will."

Bryan grimaced at the way she said *fiancé* with an unfamiliar harsh bite. He was grateful the doctor had saved him the trouble of being the bearer of bad news.

"We're still trying to assess that. Do you want the good news, the bad news, or the middle news first?"

"Whichever one tells me what's wrong."

## Butterfly Kisses

The doctor stood in front of her, his face devoid of emotion. "You gave yourself a nasty bump on the head. You're fortunate the concussion didn't cause bleeding in your brain. There's been some cervical trauma, but to what degree it's too early to tell. I see you can move your arms around, which is excellent news. We can rule out quadriplegia. Are you able to move your legs?"

"No. I can't even feel them."

"I was afraid of that. A loss of motor function from a head injury can go several different ways. We could be looking at a transient spinal cord injury, which would mean the paralysis is temporary, or we could be looking at paraplegia. In which case, you'll need to understand there's a chance you'll never walk again."

Charlene's face screwed up in pain. Bryan paced around the room wringing his hands while the doctor continued. Dr. Tolliver went over to the wall and turned on a light. Grainy photos showed the actual fracture line in her cervical vertebrae.

"These are the x-rays of your injury." The doctor took out a pen and traced a thin grayish line from her head and down her spine.

"There's a slim chance you'll regain your ability to walk. We have a facility nearby that does excellent physical therapy and rehabilitation in the comfort of a swimming pool. So you don't have to worry about losing the muscle tone you've worked so hard to get."

"You're saying I may never walk again. If I can't use my legs, I can't swim."

Bryan tried to take her hand for added support, but she snatched it away and gave him a dark look.

"Ms. Traiger, at some point you'll be able to swim and get around in a pool. Maybe not the way you're used to, but you won't have to give up everything. There are great advancements in sports-related injuries and the ability to resume moderated physical activity."

She glared at the doctor. "I was going to have a shot at the Olympics. You have no idea how far I was going to go. For you to stand there and tell me that I can do things, just not the way I'm used to, is of very little consolation for me."

## Ann Cory

"He's only trying to help." Bryan's voice came out weak and tinny. The doctor had told him the details earlier, but seeing Charlene's reaction made it ten times worse.

Her voice softened. "I don't understand any of this."

The way she looked at him made his knees buckle. He slid into the chair and leaned forward, taking her hands in his. "I'm so sorry, baby."

The doctor cleared his throat nervously and stowed his clipboard under his arm.

"Head injuries have various affects. Sometimes they are noticeable right away, or they can appear years later. Along with your head injury, you swallowed a lot of water and it took some time to revive you. Your body suffered a lot of trauma all at once. Tomorrow, I'd like to do an MRI and see what else we find."

Her mouth opened wide and she looked toward him. "You didn't mention that I almost died."

"Ms. Traiger, the thing to remember is that you are still with us. You're a strong woman, and that is to your benefit. Patients who are in good shape bounce back quickly. I'll make sure you get a top physical therapist you can trust. In the meantime, you need to stay positive. Miracles happen everyday."

Bryan watched the doctor check over his clipboard, grab the x-rays, and walk out into the noisy hallway. When the door swung shut, everything was quiet again.

Charlene's breath caught, and her lower lip trembled. "What am I going to do?"

"Like the doctor said, you need to think positively. And you should get some rest. Close your eyes and let yourself drift. We'll talk when you've regained some strength."

"Yeah, my head feels a bit fuzzy. Are you going to come by later?"

"Baby, I'm not leaving you." He kissed her hand and tried his best to be brave. "I'll be right here by your side until it's time to take you home."

She seemed so small lying there with that lost-child look on her face. She'd used swimming to deal with the loss of her parents. What would give her the same satisfaction as her first passion?

## Butterfly Kisses

Bryan stroked her cheek until she closed her eyes and fell asleep. The tears he'd held back so he'd seem brave now spilled from his eyes. He would never forget the way she'd disappeared beneath the water, staying down far too long, even with her ability to hold her breath for a length of time. As the whispers grew around him, an inner alarm went off and he strode down the bleachers, screaming out her name. The winner had been announced, but no one moved. Even Julia Newman had looked around wide-eyed in shock.

When Charlene's body was pulled out of the water he knelt at her side, begging her to come back to him. Her pale body lay terribly still. He'd never been so scared in his entire life. It wasn't right how long she'd been without air. His own breath was held tight in his chest. Repeatedly he begged her to breathe, just breathe—to no avail. The look in the paramedic's eyes sparked more panic in him, the kind that made him want to run through the glass doors and into oncoming traffic. But then Charlene had moved and sputtered out a stream of water. He took a breath and sank to the ground. Relief spread through him like a wildfire, and he wanted everyone to leave them alone so he could hold her.

Bryan's body trembled, and he had to remind himself that she was safe and that was the important thing. She'd made it out alive and anything else would be something they would handle together. He leaned back and closed his eyes, wishing that when he opened them next he'd find her accident had only been a bad dream.

**Ann Cory**

## **Chapter Seven**

Charlene's eyes fluttered open and she blinked back the gray film to find herself still in the hospital. She didn't know how long she'd been out this time, but it was disheartening to be stuck in a bed she couldn't leave. Trapped like an animal, with cold steel machines and blank white walls surrounding her. Her stupid legs wouldn't do what she wanted. She was scared. Guilt-ridden and angry, too. A bevy of emotions rushed through her, making her pulse race. Staring down at her motionless body tore her up inside. If she had a hammer or some other blunt object she'd hit herself until she felt something. This wasn't the way her life was supposed to turn out! What good was she to anyone like this?

Beside her, Bryan had his head tilted back, his arms folded, and his eyes closed. He was snoring softly. She felt like she'd let him and everyone else down.

Everyone kept saying how strong she was, but she was weak. Only the weak lost. How could she have misjudged her turn by that much? It was a simple move she'd done a million times since she was a small child. Where had her head been? To lose focus like that was stupid and foolish. The last thing she remembered was hearing the sound of the gun being fired; after that, it was all a blur. She didn't even remember hitting the water. It hurt when she tried to recall it, like something was making her block out the entire event. The neck brace was uncomfortable and made her neck warm. Why couldn't she remember what happened?

## Butterfly Kisses

She pictured Julia holding up the first place trophy, all shiny and reflecting the hundreds of fluorescent lights of the arena, with a ribbon tied to the strap of her suit. She was now the next woman under consideration for the Olympics. Cameras would be aimed her way, flashbulbs blindingly going off left and right. News people and journalists would jump at the chance to interview her on every local radio and TV station. Charlene blinked back tears. Her name should have been on the headline of the local paper with her picture holding that first place cup.

She should have known something like this was going to happen. There were too many good things going on in her life, and she wasn't supposed to have things easy. She had a good man, a pending marriage, a possible spot on the Olympic team and endorsement deals. The future looked bright. Now it was tarnished, and Julia Newman would benefit from her accident.

Maybe it was a good thing Charlene would never swim again. It would save her from the humiliation of competing against Julie in the future, the woman who had bested her all because she'd cracked her head like a complete and total idiot. She would never live it down. There would be no more chances. She'd officially been defeated. It was over.

Bryan stirred and mumbled something so softly she couldn't make it out. She eyed those beautiful lips she loved to kiss. God, she loved the way those lips felt along her body. One touch and she was butter in his hands. Now she would never know what it was like to feel his butterfly kisses along her legs again. Anywhere else, and it wouldn't be the same. It had always been his truest sign of affection.

The first time he'd fluttered his eyelashes along her inner thighs, she'd almost broken his neck jerking her legs around him. It always tickled terribly, but it made her wet between her thighs, too. After he had her tied up and bound her to the point where she couldn't move her legs at all, he'd done it again and she instantly felt her juices run.

From that day on, she practically begged to be smothered with butterfly kisses. She craved Bryan's touch, which was somewhere between fiery and subtle, and she knew he would make sure she was well pleased. The first time she'd been tied up, it had freed her just the way

## Ann Cory

water had. Bondage was an erotic liberation during which she was placed on a pedestal and satisfied with every lurid fantasy she'd ever had. He had found a way to let her wild side roam free without shame or embarrassment. To see his eyes feast on her and feel the magnitude of his desire for her bursting between her inner thighs—it was a thought that even now stirred her.

A quiet gurgle from Bryan's stomach echoed inside the quiet tomblike room and she wondered when he'd last eaten. She didn't even want to think about food; her stomach was full of knots. His beautiful green shirt was wrinkled and he had dark stubble on his face. It wasn't good for him to stay with her day and night. The running joke around the dinner table was that the guys at his firm couldn't last beyond two days without him, or the whole business would go belly up. He was quickly climbing up to the top in stocks and bonds. His future was secure and financially sound.

Charlene didn't know what would happen now. She didn't want him to stay with her out of pity. They'd only been together for four years and had just become engaged, so it wasn't like they would fight over personal possessions. It would be hard to let go, but she hoped they could part as friends. No one else understood her the way he did.

She would likely lose her job, since it required her to meet with potential clients. Interior design was something that came to her naturally. Only the movers and shakers were in demand, and soon she wouldn't be one of them. Jobless, and with her increase in medical expenses, not to mention the improvements that would have to be made to the house, she would quickly use what she had in savings. Yet she couldn't let herself become a financial burden to Bryan.

Her tears started up again. She was going to have to give up all the things that mattered most to her. It wasn't fair, but she couldn't rob him of the way he loved and fucked.

Charlene made up her mind to break up with him when he woke up. The rocky road ahead of her was something she needed to face alone.

## Butterfly Kisses

### Chapter Eight

Charlene dozed off and on, not really knowing if it was day or night. Finally, a pretty nurse with dark hair came in and quietly poked and prodded her lifeless legs.

"Can I bring you anything to eat?" The woman looked her over with sad eyes like Bryan had. It was unnerving. "Blankets, maybe?"

"No, thank you."

"If you need anything at all, dear, just push the call button."

"Okay."

What she needed, no one could give her. All she could think about was the fact that she was useless. She'd ever been one to let other people do things for her, so this was going to be a tough change.

Bryan's head rolled to the side and he almost fell out of the chair. His eyes flashed open and settled on her. "Hey, sleeping beauty."

She tried to smile, but it took too much effort. "Who's the sleepyhead is now?"

"I'm so sorry. How thoughtless of me." He jumped to his feet, all apologetic-like, looking around for something he could do to help her.

"Do you need anything? Are you hungry? Thirsty?"

Charlene shook her head. "No. I'm just glad you're here."

"Always. How long have you been awake?"

"I don't think too long. I've just been drifting, really. The nurse was in here a few moments ago, I think. My brain goes fuzzy every few minutes."



## Ann Cory

He stroked her arm gently. "I'm sorry."

"What do you have to be sorry about?" She pursed her lips together. "I'm the one who's sorry. In a matter of seconds, I managed to fuck up our entire future."

"Don't say that."

"Why not? It's the truth. I've ruined everything! What the hell am I going to do if I never walk again? All the years of swim lessons, meets, morning practices, training. All of it for nothing."

"Not true. You need to be proud of what you've accomplished. Why ignore how far you've come?"

She didn't care about what she used to do. It wasn't her past that was in jeopardy. It was her future. Screw the medals, the trophies, and the ribbons. Where would they get her now? Bryan couldn't possibly understand. He was going somewhere.

"I had dreams. You know? I set goals. Made plans. I sacrificed so much to get where I am today."

"We'll make new dreams. Together."

"We?" Her throat felt like it was closing up. "You still want to marry me?"

"Why would that change?" He pulled a familiar looking velvet box from his pocket, and her heart fluttered. She loved his romantic side.

"I made sure to grab this from your duffle bag. Here, let me put it on your finger. Just like I did when I proposed."

He reached for her hand, but she balled it into a fist.

"Earth to Bryan. I won't even be able to walk down the aisle."

"Then we'll have a chariot carry you down the aisle. I'll even let half-naked men carry you. I don't care how you get to me. I still want you as my wife." He flashed her a big smile she knew was genuine, but it didn't even make a dent in the self-pitying barrier she'd flung up.

"I know you're trying to make me feel better, but it's not working. I don't expect you to stay with me. What guy wants his woman in a wheelchair? I'll be completely dependent on others to help me get around."

"First off, you're far too independent for that to ever happen. And second, I fell in love with you for more than a pair of gorgeous legs. My

## Butterfly Kisses

feelings for you aren't about to change." He worked her fist open with a gentle prodding. "We'll make this work for us. You can't give up on yourself. In the time I've met you, quitting has never been in your vocabulary. Don't start now."

Charlene let him slip the ring on her finger. It wasn't going to be easy asking him to leave. "You're making things difficult for me."

"And you're drowning in a pool of guilt. Where's your fight, woman?"

She choked back a sob. "This is different."

"You've dealt with traumas in your past, and you survived them. You'll survive this, too. There hasn't been any time for you to let this sink in. You're getting way ahead of yourself. You talk as if you've already given up."

"Why shouldn't I? My dreams are dead. If you find someone else, you won't have to let yours stall. You can do anything you want. I'll only hold you back."

"Quit trying to push me away." He frowned. "I'm not leaving you over this. I thought our love was strong enough to push through anything."

"I never counted on this."

"Then I say, fuck all our old plans. Let's make some new ones!"

In a shaky voice, she tried to reason with him. "I'm trying to break up with you."

"I won't make it easy for you."

Ann Cory

## Chapter Nine

Bryan wanted to take Charlene in his arms and hold her tight. To somehow help block out the thoughts threatening to destroy her strength and character. He also wanted to yell and throw things around in the room. Bust in some windows and go screaming down the hallways. Anything to keep from getting angry and frustrated with her. He'd attempted to build up her confidence, but she was slipping further into a depression that frightened him. He wanted to tell her how selfish she sounded and that what she thought he should feel wasn't anything close to his true feelings. It broke his heart the way she talked about herself.

"You don't have to believe me, but at least hear me," he said. "I didn't fall in love with you *because* you are a swimmer. I fell in love with you because you are a woman with intelligence, beauty, talent, a kind heart, and you radiate a genuine sense of love. You captured my heart, and I've never wanted it back. I know that with you it's in safe keeping."

She wouldn't even look at him. "Stop it."

"No. I won't." He choked back tears and got to his feet. "I know you love to swim. It's your passion, and you can still get in that water, you just won't be able to compete. It isn't all hopeless."

There were dark shadows behind her eyes. "My two greatest loves are over."

"You're wrong." Anger rose from the pit of his stomach. "Our future isn't over; it's just beginning. I'm not one to place expectations on people, but there are some things I hope you'll consider."

## Butterfly Kisses

Her head cocked to the side and she looked at him from beneath red, swollen eyelids. "Like what?"

"I want you to work with that physical therapist, and I mean work your sexy ass off. I want you to find a way around this obstacle using a positive mind and sheer determination. I want you to put all the fight and perseverance you've called on in all your competitions and use it to make your body strong. There are alternatives out there we can look at. You *will* walk again, my love. One way or another. But until then, I want you to let me carry you and your concerns."

"I hear you, honestly I do," she said. "But I don't see things the same way you do."

"Of course you don't." Bryan came to her side. "You're the one living it."

"There are other things I've always dreamed about. Those things are in jeopardy too."

He sank into the chair. "Tell me some of them."

"Well, I figured we'd have kids someday. I don't want to miss out on that experience."

"Wouldn't that be a special gift?" He did his best to not show any disappointment. The idea of children excited him, but there were other alternatives.

"Then there's our honeymoon. How can I go snorkeling in Hawaii? Or walk the beautiful beaches? I wanted to learn to hula dance at a luau."

"Don't you see? It doesn't matter where we go or what we do for our honeymoon. Our future consists of the two of us together. That isn't going to change. You're limiting everything to what you can and can't do, and you're using us as a crutch."

"That's easy for you to say. You're not in my position."

He swallowed down his frustration. "Would you leave me? If I got in a car accident and ended up in a wheelchair for the rest of my life, would you abandon me?"

She closed her eyes. "That isn't a fair question."

God, he wanted to shake her! "Why isn't it?"

## Ann Cory

"You know the answer to that already. I love you. Of course I wouldn't leave you. I'd tell you how crazy you were to think anything like that. It would only make me want to hang onto you that much harder."

Bryan smiled and wiped away a tear. "There you go."

"This is different."

"Why, because it's you? Because you think you deserve only the bad things in life? You've had some tough obstacles thrust at you, but they are what have made you the woman you are today."

"Yes. I'm pathetic and useless." She refused to look at him. "I hear the irritation in your tone. This is how I'll be for the rest of my life, so you should just walk away now."

He pressed his lips tight and let out air through his nose. "The more you try to push me away, the more determined I am to stay."

"Damn it, Bryan. Fine. What about sex?"

He opened his mouth and pretended to be shocked. "I love sex. And you?"

"Cut it out. You know what I mean. I know you like an adventurous sex life."

"Yes, and every day is an adventure with you."

He flashed her a sexy smile, and she giggled.

"I kind of like the fact you'll be completely submissive. I won't have to punish you so much."

Her eyes narrowed. "I like it when you punish me."

"I know you do."

"I'll miss that."

"Trust me, I'll find other ways to punish you." He grinned.

## Butterfly Kisses

### Chapter Ten

Charlene felt a tinge of guilt when she smiled, but it helped lessen the dark cloud hanging over her head. "You won't think I'm sexy anymore."

"Impossible."

"All the fun will disappear. You'll resent me. Sex will get dull, and you'll wish you had a young, energetic babe by your side."

He stuck his hands over his ears and hummed. "Not listening."

Charlene laughed. He was so stubborn. "All right. Tell me what could possibly turn you on with me like this."

He removed his hand and scooted his chair up close to the side of the bed.

"I'm thinking about sponge baths twice a day, with water trickling down your legs. A soft, warm sponge, rubbing gentle circles up your calves and knees, with water pooling along your inner thighs. I know you haven't lost feeling there."

She moved a little bit and felt something shift inside her body.

"There are plenty of water toys we can try. Hey, we could even get one of those sexy swings."

The image in her head was a distracting one. "Hmm. I like the idea of a swing."

Pressure in her lower back had somehow been alleviated.

## Ann Cory

Bryan pulled back the sheets and she stared down at her legs, which seemed like foreign entities to her now. His hands smoothed along her shins.

"See, I like that idea of a sponge bath with a twist. A little pampering for my lady." He lowered his voice until it was all deep and sexy. "We'll light candles, and you'll dress in a sexy, crotchless teddy. I'd spill a little champagne on the top of your thigh. It would be purely accidental, of course."

"Of course."

"The only way to clean it off would be with my tongue. 'I'd let the bubbly slip between your thighs and—"

"Stop!" She cut him off.

He gave her a sheepish look. "What's the matter?"

"Don't play innocent with me. We're in the hospital. Someone could walk in anytime."

"You didn't seem to mind it when we were behind the bushel of apples in the orchard. Or in the airplane a while back. Or even—"

"Okay!" She let out an exasperated sigh. "You got me there. Still, it isn't right. No more sex talk until we get home. Speaking of which, when do I get to leave this place?"

"I'm not sure. I hope sometime in the next few days."

A few days sounded like an eternity. "That's too long of a wait."

"We could pass the time by having sex."

His hand moved up her gown and slinked beneath her panties.

"Mmmm."

"Bryan!"

"Shhh." He brought his face close to her legs and brushed his eyelashes against her skin.

Charlene felt something. It had been brief. She held her breath, waiting for it to happen again. A glimmer of hope sent her heart pounding wildly in her chest. If only.

"Do that again!"

He raised his head. "What?"

"Do exactly what you were doing. I swear I could feel it!"

His eyebrows arched. "Are you sure?"

## Butterfly Kisses

Her heart pounded. "I swear. I felt a light tickle. Do it again!"

It had to be her imagination, but she wanted it so bad she could taste it.

He put his face against her thighs and right away she felt the faint sweeping of his lashes against her skin. Goose bumps spread across her legs.

"I did feel it!" Her toe twitched and all she could do was point, her mouth agape.

"Should I get the doctor?" His face flushed and he moved around the room so fast she felt dizzy.

"I don't know what to do. Honey, this might mean all our plans can still happen."

"This is fantastic news, but don't try and do too much. You're very fragile right now. Wait until the doctor gets here." He pushed the nurse's button.

The dark-haired nurse walked in with a tray of unappetizing looking food. "I figured you would get hungry soon, dear."

Bryan didn't even give Charlene a chance to reply. "Quick! Get the doctor! Charlene has feeling in her legs, and her toe twitched."

The nurse's mouth formed into a perfect O and she quickly ran out without bothering to set down the tray.

Charlene laughed. "I think she's as excited as we are."

Her heart pounded inside her chest. She didn't want to get her hopes up too high, but it was hard not to.

Doctor Tolliver thrust the door wide open and rubbed his hands together. "So, you're ready to walk on out of here, are you?"

"I hope so. My toe twitched."

"One thing to keep in mind is that the body can jerk and twitch on its own, and that may not have anything to do with feeling returning to your legs. But I want this as much as you two do. I'm going to press the bottoms of your feet, and I want you to tell me when you feel something."

Right away she felt his hand clamp around her foot. "I feel that."

He looked at her skeptically, his eyebrows lifted. "How about now?"



## Ann Cory

With his hands he manipulated her foot to the side.

"Yes!" She clapped her hands together and wished she could jump around for joy. Tears gathered at the corners of her eyes as she realized her dreams were far from over. It was even better than holding a trophy.

"Well, little lady, I'd say you are on the road to recovery." He grinned. "My initial hope was you were only suffering from a temporary paralysis brought on by the head injury. I'd say swimming is in your future."

Bryan rushed over and gave her a gentle hug. "I'm so happy for you, love."

"Me, too." She smiled up at the doctor. "When can I go home?"

"I've scheduled you for an MRI in the morning. I want to make sure everything is okay. I'll let you go afterwards if you make me some promises."

"Anything. You name it." Her whole body shook with excitement. Her dream was still alive.

"You have to promise to take it easy for several weeks. I'll be giving you a card with the name and address of a wonderful physical therapist named Amy. She'll help you make sure you don't injure yourself all over again by doing the wrong moves, and she'll keep tabs on your progress. You're going to have to put a hold on swimming for say...four to six months, minimum. If Amy says you're good to swim after that, then I trust her."

Charlene grinned at Bryan, and then looked back at the doctor. "It's a deal. We have to put swimming on hold anyhow. We're getting married and will soon be off to enjoy eight amazing days in Hawaii."

"Ah, congratulations. You have an excellent reason for a speedy recovery. Sometimes a person has to remember that it's a good incentive to live for each other."

Charlene wanted to add that hot sex was another one, but decided against it.

"Let's get you all checked out so I can get you two back home where you belong."

\* \* \* \*

## Butterfly Kisses

The MRI was kind of scary. While inside the machine, Charlene recalled bits and pieces of being in the water and the darkness that had surrounded her, but even that was strained. The technician kept reminding her to breathe and telling her she was going to be fine.

When she was wheeled back to her room, Bryan was inside, pacing. He was always so adorable when he was nervous.

The nurse wheeled her over to the window. "The doctor will need a few minutes to go over your tests. Your fiancé can fill out your release forms while you wait." She took a card out of her pocket. "Here's the physical therapist's phone number and address. She'll be expecting to hear from you no later than tomorrow to set up an appointment. The sooner you start physical therapy, the sooner you'll be back in the pool playing mermaid."

Charlene liked the sound of that. "Thank you. Don't worry. I have a great guy who will make sure I do exactly what I'm supposed to. Trust me."

"I believe it. With the way he's stayed by your side, I'd say he's a keeper." The nurse smiled. "I'll leave you two alone."

Charlene sat in the wheelchair watching her handsome guy fill out the paperwork. What had she been thinking trying to break up with him? In her time of darkness, he had been her light. He swiped his bangs out of his face and looked up at her.

"Okay, I've got all the forms signed. I can't wait to get you home."

She broke into a smile. "Me, either."

Doctor Tolliver waltzed in the room waving some papers.

*Please let there be good news.* Charlene crossed her fingers, hoping for the best.

"You're good to go home, but I want to see you back here at the end of the week. I would normally want to keep you here for another couple of days for observation, but I know better than to argue with athletes. You need to take it very easy. Your legs are weak, so I need you to practice patience. If you experience any unexplained nausea, any

## Ann Cory

intolerable pain that isn't being helped by your prescription, or anything else, please get in touch with me immediately."

"I will."

"You'll heal, but sometimes the body does funny things. Since I know you plan to go back to swimming, you must follow up with me on a regular basis."

"I understand."

"Then I'll see you later in the week. Take it easy, and call Amy."

Charlene saluted him and waited for him to leave.

Then she turned to Bryan. "Okay honey, please take me home."

He wheeled her to the car and helped her in. "My lady, your chariot awaits."

"That reminds me. About my being carried down the aisle by naked men—"

"Half-naked is what I said. And I've changed my mind."

Charlene shook her head and grinned. "Well, that's good. I won't need them now."

Out on the road, she rested her head back and watched the scenery. She hoped Julia Newman enjoyed her six months of fame, because Charlene planned to reclaim her title.

## Butterfly Kisses

### Chapter Eleven

Bryan carried Charlene from the car all the way into the bedroom.

She sat propped up against the pillows and took a moment to savor the feel of her comfortable bed. "You know, I think I'll enjoy taking it easy. Pamper away."

"Call me your twenty-four hour love slave." He gestured with his hand and then bowed like royalty.

Charlene clapped her hands. "Oh, I like that even more."

"Now, don't you go anywhere, I'll be right back." Bryan wagged his finger, prompting her to laugh harder.

She wondered what he was up to. It was bound to be good. The bed was more comfortable than she remembered. She couldn't wait to get back into the groove of their naughty lifestyle.

He returned shirtless a few minutes later with a bottle of champagne and two glasses.

"Hope you didn't miss me too much."

"Hubba hubba. What's all this?"

"I'd say a toast is in order to my lovely fiancée." His eyes crinkled in the corners as he smiled.

"For what?"

"Your remarkable recovery." He set everything down on the nightstand and closed up the blinds. "Let me create a little mood around here."

## Ann Cory

Warmth spread inside her body. She was alone with him at last. Love was the perfect prescription to help her feel better. "Oh, I'm definitely in the mood. But I'm feeling a smidge weak so you'll have to go easy on me."

She watched as he bustled around the room lighting tiny votive candles. Her heart beat faster to see him care so much about the little touches.

"I love it when you get all romantic."

With a careful hand he undressed her, and then poured them each a glass of champagne.

He handed one to her and she watched the tiny bubbles float to the top.

"To my beautiful butterfly, both in and out of the water."

Her eyes watered, and she swallowed a sob. "You always know the right thing to say." They clinked glasses, and she started to drink. Then she remembered her prescription.

"I probably shouldn't have any, since I'm taking medication."

"Don't worry." His eyes lit up bright. "It's sparkling apple cider."

He truly was amazing. "You think of everything."

Bryan cocked his head to the side and looked into her eyes. "How are you feeling?"

"Good. I'm fine. Honest." Charlene said confidently. She watched his face relax.

"I'm glad to hear that. Is there anything you need?"

She motioned with her finger for him to come closer, and she whispered, "Just you."

He chuckled. "Besides that."

"I'd love to have a bath."

"I think I have the perfect thing. Wait right here." He jumped up from the bed so quick she almost spilled some of her drink.

She watched him disappear into the bathroom and then she heard the sound of water running. "What are you doing in there?"

"Patience, patience." His voice grew louder as he came back into the room with a bowl of water and a cloth. "I'm thinking a sponge bath is in order."

## Butterfly Kisses

He had read her mind. Charlene took a sip of the mock bubbly and set down her glass.

"I made sure it wasn't too hot or too cold." He plunged the cloth into the water and squeezed out the excess liquid between his fingers. Then he pressed it against her. Its warmth against her skin was a feeling she would never take for granted again. "Mmmm. The temperature is just right."

He made small circles along her thigh, nearing her pussy a little at a time. She was thrilled to be able to feel each gentle motion against her skin. His fingers edged closer toward her heat until she thought she'd cry out. The soft brush of the cloth along her clit made her nipples tingle and her sex throb.

"Tonight it's all about you, my love."

"But I want to feel your long, hard length inside me."

"There's plenty of time for that. I don't want to do anything that might put you at risk."

She frowned, and he put his finger over her lips. "Don't you worry that pretty head of yours. I'll have you bound and will be spanking your ass with a leather crop in no time."

"I hope it's sooner rather than later."

He tossed back his head and laughed heartily. "Now, where was I? Ah, yes. Making you wet."

"Yes," she groaned. "You were doing that very well."

Again he soaked the cloth and smoothed it against her clit. The movement ignited a fire in her belly and she grew moist with her juices and the water. He circled the cotton texture around her clit until she could hardly stand it.

"Please," she begged. "Get me off."

He carefully parted her thighs and lowered his face to her pussy. His hot breath on her naked sex made her body convulse. His tongue urgently licked at her slit while he massaged her clit between his thumb and forefinger. Her breath became erratic and she wanted to grip his head and force him further into her. Instead, she laced her fingers in his hair and closed her eyes, afraid she would become dizzy.

## Ann Cory

"Yes, there. Fill me up, Bryan."

In answer to her plea, he sank three fingers into her watery core and stretched her wide.

"You just pretend this is my cock shoved deep inside you."

"Oh, yes." She didn't dare arch her back, so she was at the mercy of his lips, his fingers, and his tongue.

"I want to hear you scream when you come. You're still my slave, so I'm not letting you off easy."

"Yes."

All at once, he stopped everything he was doing. "Yes, what?"

She flashed open her eyes and smiled. "Yes, master."

"Now keep those pretty eyes open, so I can watch you orgasm."

It wasn't going to take much more. Her inner muscles clung to his fingers, not wanting to let go. He continued shoving them into her while his other hand rubbed feverishly against her clit.

"That's it, baby," she cried, her fingers getting tangled up in his hair. "Oh my god! I'm going to come. Now, now, now, now, now!"

A stream of relief barreled through her and she forced her eyes to stay open as he watched. She wanted so much to give him the same pleasure. The bulge in his pants let her know he was more than ready.

He didn't remove his fingers from her body until the spasms subsided.

"Let me get you off," she said.

"No, not tonight."

"Why not?"

"Seeing you just now brought me all the pleasure I need."

"Are you sure?"

His lips drew near hers until they touched. She smelled her sex on his upper lip.

"I'm very sure." Bryan grinned. He propped up his pillows and sat next to her, holding her hands in his.

It felt so good to be close to him again. The silky feel of his hair against her cheek was comforting.

"You know, I really thought it was all over for me," she said. "I swear it was you who helped me get better."

## Butterfly Kisses

"That's sweet of you to say, but it was all you." His baritone voice vibrated by her ear.

"Not true. You helped me stay afloat when I was sinking. I don't think I could have come up for air again."

"It's a good thing you're such a strong swimmer. All your hard work and preparation is what helped you recover."

"I'm only strong because I have your love."

"You'll always have that."

"Do you know what I feared most about the loss of feeling in my legs? Besides swimming, of course."

"Not having children?"

"No. I feared not being able to feel another one of your butterfly kisses. They are more important to me than trophies. They are tiny gifts of love that I cherish deep inside my heart."

"I think you like them for another reason." He stroked her hair and kissed the top of her head.

Charlene couldn't hold in her laughter. "Okay. They also make me horny as hell."

He laughed along with her and helped her snuggle into his hot embrace. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. When she had thought her dreams were over, Bryan had reminded her there was more to her life than swimming. Their plans didn't have to end and she didn't need to worry about going it alone. While swimming would always remain her passion, so was their love.

Everything she needed most was right here with her.



**Ann Cory**

### **Author Bio**

Erotic romance author Ann Cory invites you to sample her literary offerings in the hopes of leaving you with an acquired taste for sophisticated reading. Visit her website <http://www.anncory.com> to read her other Aphrodisiacs for the Mind.

## Butterfly Kisses

Also Available from Cobblestone Press, LLC

**Breaking in Levi by Ann Cory © 2006**

### Chapter One

“Damn.”

Victoria switched off the radio and resorted to humming to herself. All of the decent radio stations were crackling with static, and she hated the quiet.

With a brief glance up at the rearview mirror, she noted that no one was behind her. Since dinner at the rustic little café, she’d been the only one on the road, a fact that was strangely comforting and disturbing at the same time. Her only concern at the moment was finding a rest area. Three cups of coffee with her hot chicken and Swiss sandwich had proven too much for her bladder, and she was having a difficult time clenching her thighs together while driving. As a green sign loomed in the distance, she crossed her fingers. *Please, oh please.*

REST AREA 1 Mile

Victoria let out a sigh of relief and sat up straighter in the seat. She’d never been partial to going to the bathroom outside behind a bush. Especially alone. Remote or not, anyone could be out there, waiting for the opportune moment. She put on the blinker and slowed, taking it easy pulling into the rest area. The parking lot was empty. Not even the typical

## Ann Cory

row of truckers snatching up a catnap en route was present. It unsettled her to be the only person in the vacant lot. Parking under a dim street lamp, as close to the women's restrooms as the wide sidewalk allowed, she turned off the engine and drummed her fingertips on the steering wheel.

"Get a hold of yourself girl. You've watched one too many episodes of Unsolved Mysteries."

Only a sliver of a moon peeked through the dusky sky. The drab cement building loomed in front of her. Taunting her. She'd traveled miles to find this one, so waiting for the next rest stop might be unwise. Pee her pants or use the desolate looking toilet. She took a deep breath and decided she had no choice but to go in.

She threw open the car door and made like when she was a little girl needing to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night, knowing full well there were monsters under her bed. She didn't care if she looked like a scared little girl. She dashed for the restroom, fearful those same monsters loomed in the shadows and beneath the car.

Her uncomfortable heels pinched her toes as she sprinted into the foul smelling restroom. The first three stalls were backed up and looked unpleasant. Only the handicapped stall was usable. She crossed her fingers that some elderly woman in a wheelchair wasn't going to come in right then. Up went her skirt. Down went her black nylons and black silkies. Relief spread throughout her body.

In her haste to go, she'd forgotten to check one very important thing. No toilet paper. She sighed and reached for her purse, but remembered it was still in the car, safely tucked away from prying eyes beneath her jacket.

The sound of a car engine bothered her, but there were more pressing matters than another vehicle pulling into the rest stop. Like toilet paper. She rummaged inside the pocket of her skirt and came up with a crumpled tissue. It would have to do.

Victoria reached for her nylons and managed to make a sizable run in them. She pulled them off in frustration and shoved them in the metal box on the wall. The cruel edge of her shoes raked against the back of her ankles as she slipped them back on. Blisters were unavoidable. She got

## Butterfly Kisses

situated in her clothes, flushed the toilet and walked to the sink to wash her hands.

The reflection in the mirror displayed a tired, worn out looking woman in her late twenties, who was seriously deprived of any fun in her life. There was no reason to try and fix her smudged make-up, in another four hours she would be in a luxurious hotel running a warm bath.

Sick from the putrid odor of the unkempt facility, she hurried outside. Then her knees nearly buckled. A stranger on a motorcycle was parked where her car should be.

This can't be happening, she thought. Her car was *gone*!

She wasn't sure whether to approach the biker or not. In a black leather jacket, faded jeans with holes in the knees, and a look on his face that had trouble written all over it, he didn't exactly radiate a warm welcome. Men who rode bikes were bad news. At least that's what she'd always been told.

Anger took the place of her immediate concern and she marched up to him, propped her hands on her hips and pinned him with a glare. "Okay, asshole. Where the hell is my car?"

He pulled a cigarette from behind his ear and flipped open a silver lighter. The bright orange flame lit up the night, along with a pair of refined green eyes that studied her. Impatiently she watched him take a drag from the cigarette, then blow out the smoke from the corner of his stubble-framed lips.

"I hope you aren't referring to me. Most women give me at least five minutes of their time before labeling me an asshole."

She crossed her arms and cocked out her hip. A stab of pain shot up through her calves. The killer heels were going to be the death of her. They had looked comfortable enough, but appearances were deceiving. Much like the jerk-off in front of her. Gorgeous but most likely deadly. Still, she was mad and had every right to be.

"Do you see anyone else here? Of course I'm talking to you. My car was right here when I went into the restroom, and then I come out to find you. Where the hell is it?"

The stranger shrugged his shoulders and flicked the cigarette. Stray

## Ann Cory

bits of ash circled around his head before floating to the cement.

"I'd expect better manners from a fancy looking lady like yourself."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Why do you assume I'm involved?"

She didn't have time for twenty questions. "You know what? I don't owe you any explanations. My car was stolen. If you didn't have something to do with it, did you at least see anyone when you pulled up?"

He shook his head, the shaggy ends of his dark brown hair brushing against the shoulders of his jacket. "Nah. Place was deserted when I got here."

"That's impossible. I wasn't gone for more than a few minutes!"

"Then they couldn't have gotten very far. Want me to ride up a ways and see if I can catch them?"

"What, and leave me here all by myself?"

"Could you whine a little bit more? You're not in Kansas anymore, Dorothy. This is the real world and unfortunately in the real world, shit happens. Why don't you call the police and report it missing? There's a phone over there."

She turned her head in the direction he pointed and then smacked her hand to her forehead. "I can't, I left my purse in the car."

"You're a bit naïve. Why would you do something so stupid at a rest stop? Don't you watch TV?"

Victoria didn't care for his smart-ass tone. "I was only going to be gone for a few minutes. There was no one else here when I pulled up."

Using the bottom of his boot, he crushed out his cigarette and carelessly tossed the flattened butt to the ground. "I'm Levi, by the way. Since you haven't bothered to ask."

"Victoria."

With a half-snort, he shook his head.

She tapped her toe impatiently. "What?"

"I figured your name was something on the lines of Alexis, Claire, Barbie or Victoria."

"Meaning?"

"Forget it. I don't have all night to sit here and shoot the breeze."

Victoria looked over at the phone again. Her throat tightened up.

## Butterfly Kisses

"But...if you leave, I'll be all alone."

"So?"

"Could you wait until I at least make a call?"

"Nope. Sorry. Do what you need to do. You're a big enough girl that you can handle yourself." He handed her a quarter and positioned the bike upright. "I've gotta be off."

"What else can I do? Anything else you'd suggest?" She had to shout over the roar of his motorcycle engine. It was easy to see that he would rather be anywhere else than talking to her.

"I suppose I can take you into the nearest city if you want. I drive fast, so I don't want to hear you bitch about my speed."

She eyed his bike, her stomach already in knots. "I've never ridden one of those before." The thought was revolting and scary. She wouldn't touch him with a ten-foot pole. Well, under different circumstances she'd like to find out how long his pole might be.

"This is the only ride around for miles." Levi pushed his bike back from the curb.

"Wait!" Being stuck alone in the dark frightened her more than a fast ride. "Okay. If you could drop me off somewhere with a phone and people, I'd appreciate it."

"Climb aboard, princess. Can't get anywhere if you stand around talking all night."

"Fine." She tried to raise her leg up over the seat but the hem of her skirt restricted her movement.

"I can't. My skirt..."

An unmistakable look of irritation crossed his face. "Women."

He put the kickstand down and jerked his body off the seat.

Victoria couldn't help but notice his jeans fit his body like a second skin.

"Where were you headed, a wedding rehearsal?"

She looked down at her normal, everyday attire. "No. I was coming home from a business trip."

"And you got all dressed up just to drive?"

"I'm not dressed up at all. This is the kind of outfit I always wear. You've never seen a woman in a blouse and skirt?"

## Ann Cory

"Sure, but not that fancy. You have two options, princess. Hike your skirt up to your thighs or let me make a quick adjustment."

She had no idea what he was talking about. Adjust what? "I'm not pulling my skirt up to give you a cheap thrill."

"Not interested in what you're peddling, princess. Now stay calm, I'm going to help you." He took out a pocketknife. The blade reflected the dim lighting around the rest stop.

She opened her mouth to scream, but then watched in horror as he ripped a slit up the side of her skirt, tearing apart most of the threading. Then he did the same to the other side.

"There. All fixed."

Pissed wasn't even the right word. "You *animal*. You ruined a perfectly nice Christian Dior skirt, thank you very much."

He got on his bike and walked it close to her. "Is that someone I'm supposed to know?"

"Hello. Designer label."

"Oh. Then pardon my French, but I don't really give a shit. You have bigger problems than a couple slices in your precious skirt. Whoever has your car and purse knows exactly where you live and how to find you." He handed her a helmet and revved the engine. "Now get on."

This time she swung her leg and felt the cool seat beneath her bum.

"You're going to have to hold onto me. Like I said, I go fast."

"Whatever."

She rested her hands on his sides, but kept a good distance between their bodies. The musky scent of his leather jacket, mixed with his own masculine smell was a distraction she refused to acknowledge. He turned the bike toward the road and like a shot they were back on the highway, her hair flailing behind her head. Victoria screamed and slammed her body up against the stranger, hanging on for dear life. In that moment she was certain she'd made the biggest mistake of her life.