

THE GOOD MAN

by Carolyn Faulkner

Sometimes we have to look
far and wide to realize what
we had back home

*A
Carolyn Faulkner
Spanking Romance
Classic*


Backside of Love
com

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By Carolyn Faulkner

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Chapter I

O*h, the joys of summer*, Emily Robertson sighed, cursing the heat and blowing a long breath up her face trying to dislodge the bangs that were sticking determinedly to her forehead as she made a mad dash for the elevator. It was her annual pilgrimage to City Hall to register her car, and she had barely made it. The clerk had put up her closed sign right after he finished collecting an exorbitant amount of Emily's hard earned money – it was, after all, five o'clock in the afternoon. Heaven forbid he should have to stay late, and perish the thought that Riverside should actually decide to drag itself kicking and screaming into the twenty-first century and offer *online* registration – oh no, that would be waaaaay too convenient for residents of the sacred "County". Gotta see how many parking tickets we can issue when people give up fighting for the one available space within ninety miles of the building . . .

She was still mumbling angrily to herself, preoccupied with the trip down there that ate into the whole five seconds of vacation she got annually from the Bank as she stepped into the elevator, turned, and punched the button for the lobby.

It took her a few seconds to register that she was not alone, and to realize, to her horror, that she knew the other person who was standing just a scant few feet behind her, and he was the last person in the world that she wanted to be alone in an elevator with, even for the few seconds – well, with this building being the oldest

in town, more likely a few minutes – that it took to get to the ground floor.

Well, she thought, standing straighter than before, *I'll live through it and go on with my day*. Emily wasn't about to let running into Daniel "Mac" MacGregor spoil the rest of the day . . . Oh, but she could feel those baby blues boring into her back . . . at least, she hoped it was her back, anyway, frowning.

Emily was concentrating so hard on not letting him bother her while she single-handedly willed the elevator the strength to speed the twelve floors to the lobby in the blink of an eye, that she jumped when his familiar bass rumble caressed her ears.

"Shouldn't I be the one who's not talking to you?" Emily felt a familiar wrenching ache in her stomach at his dead-on comment. "Aren't you even going to say 'hi'?"

Reaching for an innocence that she never could pull off, especially not with him, Emily turned and feigned surprise. "Oh, Daniel. Hello, I didn't see you there." The perfect, cool tone. *Good going, girl!*

One bushy gray brow rose to practically cling to the bill of his ever-present baseball cap – this one advertised that he was an assistant-chief and volunteer fireman at the Gouger Hill Station in Powell, which was a rural settlement outside of town. His full mustache turned down at the corners, and his chin sank to his chest as he locked eyes with her. In that instant she knew that he knew that she had just out-and-out lied to him.

A shiver ran up Emily's spine at what that would have once meant: dire consequences for her bottom when they got home. Within seconds of entering his big rambling farmhouse, before she got more than two steps away from him, she'd've been upended over his lap, her panties would have been around her ankles with his hand lighting into her bare, vulnerable bottom like he meant business, and he always did. There was no escaping a determined man that size, darn it. Oh, he had always been exquisitely careful of

her; always very conscious of his own strength and the differences in their sizes. Mac had never, ever hurt her any other way but to spank her. That was quite enough for Emily, thank you very much! He always had her crying and begging within the first five strokes; and his damned hand was so big it covered her whole butt in one whack –

Another shiver she did her best to suppress - without much success - jerked her out of her reverie. "Hello, Em," he drawled, leaning back against the wall of the lift, one blue-jeaned leg bent so that the sole of his huge, construction-booted foot was flat on the wall, the other leg straight, with those huge arms crossed over an impressive chest, striking a typically masculine pose that indicated that he hadn't a care in the world.

Emily frowned at his habit of shortening her name, which Mac knew well and good that she hated – it made her sound like "Auntie Em" from *The Wizard of Oz*, and she wasn't anywhere near that old! He did it deliberately – not much came out of Mac any way other than slowly and deliberately, even in the bedroom – she stopped herself right there before her mind wandered a little too far down *that* dangerous trail.

Lacking anything else to say, and desperately not wanting to get into any kind of conversation with the hunk of seething testosterone that lurked casually behind her, Emily's eyes darted away from his to stare anywhere *but* at him. She noted that the carpeting needed to be vacuumed, that the paneling looked old and weary – surprise, surprise – and she ended up concentrating on the display of floors they were slowly creeping past. Ten . . . Nine . . . Eight –

Lurch! Jangle! Lur – Jangle!

Eight and three quarters . . . Eight and a half . . . Eight and a quarter . . .

The elevator stopped, dead in its tracks.

The unexpected turbulence threw Emily back against Mac and he reached out to catch her against him one-armed, letting her use him as a cushion to stop her fall as he used his other arm to steady himself. *And what a cushion . . .* Emily was thinking. He didn't have much more give to him than the wall did, hardbody that he was, and she blushed because she knew that *wasn't* a banana in his pocket; he'd always been quite happy to see her.

Mac, however, was thinking about how much he'd missed having her in his arms. Emily lay full against him, and probably realized that he was aroused, as always around her. It was a condition he'd learned to accept, once upon a time, back when he'd had the right to do something about it. Now it was just a nuisance reaction to the tantalizing memory of her softness, and that teasingly familiar floral scent of one of her multitude of perfumes. Mac remembered the first time he saw the her vanity in her room, the pink marble top covered with bottles and bottles of different sizes and shapes, each one a favorite perfume. She was like the Baskin-Robbins of perfume, he'd thought, only Emily probably had more than just thirty-one flavors. Maybe she was more like that famed "box of chocolates". When he'd pressed his mouth to that shivery spot on her neck, burying his nose just behind her ear and breathing deeply, he never knew what intoxicating fragrance he was gonna get.

Their ride started to rock in place a little, creaking so loudly that Emily let go of him and put her hands over her ears until she felt his foot hook around her calf, pressing firmly until he'd knocked her off her feet. She couldn't control the squeal of pure terror that escaped her mouth as she started to fall backwards, but then she realized that Mac was in complete control of their descent, following her down and making sure that she landed gently on a combination of him and the floor. Emily was all right with that, until he started to position himself on top of her.

"What the hell do you think you're doing, Daniel?" she fairly screamed at him, her hands pressing uselessly against his

chest while she tried to squirm away. It was like trying to scramble out from under a ton of bricks.

At first the only answer she got was a deeply satisfied male grin, but as her struggles became more panicked, Mac calmed her by saying, "We're on the floor because with all of this jarring we'll end up there anyway. Might's well get there unharmed. I'm on top of you so that if something – like the roof – of this thing comes down, it'll hit my back and not you."

Leave it to him to mangle being both practical and annoying at the same time, Emily thought nastily.

Mac adjusted himself a little, unabashedly taking advantage of the fact that during her struggles, her legs had naturally come open and the green and purple flowered jersey dress she was wearing had ridden up most conveniently. He settled himself more firmly into the natural cradle of her hips, feeling as if he had come home after a long absence.

Emily drew a startled breath when his zippered prominence made direct contact with her barely-there summer panties. "I don't care if the fucking world is coming to an end," came the angry hiss from between clenched teeth. "Get off me!"

"Watch your language, young lady," Mac warned automatically. There was a time when he would have done a lot more than just say something to her . . . A long second passed as he noted her flush – which was not all from anger – and the almost frightened look in her eyes. Her tone was just shy of hysterical, and it made him frown – she'd never been afraid of him before, why now, he wondered. As soon as he shouldered himself to one side, Emily was off and across the room – all of five feet away - gathering herself into a ball in the corner and hugging her knees to her chest.

Mac got up and went over to the panel that housed the numbers to push for each floor, and flipped open a compartment beneath them, revealing a phone. After a long moment, someone

answered that he apparently knew – of course - and he gave their status, letting the person on the other end know that they were physically all right. "Okay, well, get to us as soon as you can, buddy." After putting the phone back in its compartment, he took a seat leaning against the nearest wall, one leg drawn up with his wrist dangling over his knee, just watching her, which was a long-standing favorite pastime of his.

Emily didn't know why she'd reacted that way to Mac. It wasn't as if she thought he was going to rape her or anything. She knew he was too honorable a man to even contemplate doing something like that, and besides, she admitted ruthlessly to herself, it wouldn't have been rape regardless. And if it wasn't Mac she was afraid of, then the logical conclusion was that she was scared of herself – that she liked being beneath him with the proof that he was still attracted to her pressing against what she knew for a fact was a pair of rapidly dampening panties.

Crap, crap, crap! Of all the people to be trapped in friggin' elevator with, it was just her luck that it was the devastatingly sexy man she'd dumped two years go!

Chapter 2

Mac and Emily had grown up together. Their families' farms were side by side, and their parents were best friends, so they naturally grew up playing together – everything from football to pretend weddings. If play weddings counted, they'd been married since they were about six and four, respectively. Mac always knew exactly what he wanted to do with his life – he wanted to be a farmer, and he made no apologies about it. There would be no college for him; he didn't need it. His father would teach him everything he needed to know to be a successful farmer in Northern Maine. Why waste the money, when he could be banking it?

Mac was the only one of John, Sr. and his wife, Susan's children that showed any interest in farming. Although the rest of them didn't much want to leave "The County", they didn't want anything to do with farming. Allie, the oldest, went to the University of Maine at Presque Isle, got a degree in Elementary Education, had a job for one school year then got married to her high school sweetheart and was happily pregnant and unemployed by the end of the next year. J.R. – John Harrison MacGregor, Junior (or "Number two", as his older brother liked to call him teasingly) came next, and he became a fireman for the town of Riverside as soon as it was legal, which was, his father had hated to admit, another long standing family tradition. J.R. already knew most of the crew at the station he was joining – there were two

uncles, three cousins, and assorted other kin already working there. The youngest in the family was little Eileen, who was almost a decade younger than the rest of the children. It was Mac who latched onto the idea that she was an unexpected package – if much loved and doted on - and he insisted to this day on calling her "Surprise", much to her consternation.

Emily only had one sister, Tammy, who was married to a long-haul trucker. Although their family was small, they were very close, and Emily and her sister had stayed close even after their parents died. Despite her idyllic childhood, Emily had wanted out. She wanted to see more than Maine provided: broccoli and potato fields and black fly filled summers, and the inside of the house and fourteen-foot snow banks all winter. She wanted to travel and meet people and learn exotic things and get into trouble, which she did regularly enough right at home, anyway, but not the adventurous kind of trouble. No one around her but her Mother could understand her desperate need to get away from all of this smothering familiarity . . . most especially not Mac, who was all set to propose to her on the day she turned eighteen, until he had a long talk with Emily's father.

Charles Robertson was the only other man Mac had met that he respected as much as his father. He had built his family farm up into something to be proud of, honestly, with sweat and hard work and pure love of the land. But Charles also knew human nature, and he knew his daughter better than most. She had her mother's wanderlust. Oh, Diane had never and would never give him a cause to worry that she was going to up and leave him and skitter across the country in wild abandon. But he knew that she'd always had a hankering to do more and see more than she'd seen in her life, and she'd passed that insatiable curiosity for what was around the next corner in the road on to her youngest. Not that Diane was unhappy. Far from it. But he'd seen the travel ads she drooled over in the Sunday Monitor, although he never heard a peep from her about it.

So Charles had counseled the young man, whom he knew had an engagement ring burning a hole in his jeans pocket, to give his intended some room before pouncing on her with ring in hand. He knew that if Emily stayed here and got married to Mac right out of school, she might grow to resent him for not letting her go and do as much as she could, while she had the chance. Charles also knew that, deep down, home and family were as important to his little girl as it was to Mac, and he had no doubt that she'd be back, sooner than later, and Mac could pop the question then – to a more mature, contented, and well-traveled young woman.

So, with her parents' enthusiastic blessing and Mac's reluctant one, Emily had gone to college in Boston to study French and Spanish and any other language they would let her near. She'd always had an ear for languages, and graduated summa cum laude four years later, while Mac impatiently bided his time and monopolized hers every break from school.

But instead of coming home after graduation, which was what they had talked about, albeit as casually as Mac could put it, she got a grant and went to live in Paris for six months, then moved to Madrid for the same length of time, returning home almost a year later than Mac would have said she should have.

Now, Mac was usually a pretty affable person. Not verbose by any means, but generally easy going with a wickedly dry sense of humor. He was soft spoken and had excellent manners, and was most especially courteous to women, thanks to his Mom. But the affable side of his personality disappeared entirely during the time that Emily chose to be away from him and her family, doing nothing, as far as he was concerned, that had anything to do with getting an education. He was ornery as a bear with hemorrhoids; his normal good nature completely vanished until Emily rushed home from Spain when her Dad had a heart attack, and, despite her best intentions to the contrary, she ended up settling in and getting a teaching job at the local high school so she could be close enough to do her share of caretaking for her ailing parents.

Emily was miserable about having to move back, but resigned to her fate. She had tried to escape, but had been dragged back by the fickle finger of fate, and now it looked like she'd be here for a while. Mac, on the other hand, was over the moon, and instantaneously easy to live with again, which made his family heave a collective sigh of relief.

They picked right up again where they'd left off, with Mac monopolizing her time every moment that he could spare from the farm and she could spare from her parents and work. They generally went out Friday and Saturday nights, or stayed home together and watched movies, and he usually found some reason to see her mid-week. Mac would never be the type to give her cards or flowers unexpectedly, or to be overly affectionate, but he did remember her birthday and Valentine's Day without any prompting from her.

Emily and Tammy took turns taking care of their parents until they could no longer give them the care that they needed, and then they found the best nursing home they could. Mac helped as much as possible, growing more and more concerned as Emily became more and more worn down by the long jaunt back and forth every evening to see her parents after working a full day at school. He wanted to make things as easy as he could on her, so he suggested that she move in with him at the farm. His mom and dad had passed several years ago, and none of the other siblings wanted the family business, so he had bought them all out and now it was his alone. Mac's pride of ownership shown in the way everything was taken care of. A drill sergeant would have been proud of how clean the barns and silos were – heck, you could practically eat off the floor, if you really wanted to.

But the house was big, and Mac wanted a family to fill it – a wife and eventually some kids. When he thought of starting his own family, he always thought of Emily. He'd never considered that any other woman would be the mother of his children. It was

her or no one. And he was bound and determined that it would be her.

Together, they decided that she would come live with him, and Mac moved her in himself, in between his own chores. Emily helped by boxing up as much stuff as she could, but she staunchly refused to touch anything that was her parents, as if she expected them to get better and return to the house that they had built and filled full of love for so many years. He found her there one afternoon when he returned from running a truckload of things over to his place – she was kneeling in the middle of the living room, a photo album from better times open on her lap, her head buried in her hands. Mac hadn't hesitated a second, hunkering down and wrapping his big body around her, holding her tight and rocking her as she cried.

That was enough for him. He had let her stay in the house until the very last moment, but this was it. She was with him now, from that day on, as far as he was concerned. When they brought the last load of the day over to the farm, he helped her out of the truck and into the big open kitchen, where he had a big pot of chowdah going, knowing she wouldn't want anything too heavy. Hell, she'd barely been eating anything lately, she was so depressed. Mac ladled a couple of scoops into a small bowl for her, then got a bigger bowl and filled it for himself. There was bread on the table as well as Diet Coke for her and iced tea for him.

Emily only took a couple of bites before pushing the bowl away, even though she adored his thick, creamy clam chowdah.

Nothing much got by him, especially anything that concerned her. He didn't want to jump all over her, but she needed to eat. Tempering his tone so that it was a cajoling growl, he said, "You've got to eat more than that."

"No, I don't." Her pouting lip was visible a half a mile away.

Well, her parents might have put up with that – not often, but to more of an extent than Mac ever would – but he wasn't going to have any of it, and now was as good a time as any for her to realize that fact.

"Emily." The cajoling note was gone, and only the warning was left.

Although she was pretty much numb, Emily was still smart enough not to push him. Daniel MacGregor on a tear was as dangerous as a bull moose in rut, and when he wanted something he got it, one way or another – not by making a fuss or yelling or screaming, simply by force of personality . . . and the fact that she knew he had a hard palm he wasn't in the least afraid of applying to her bottom at the slightest provocation. Being the older of the two of them, he'd been in charge of riding herd over her for so long that he'd grown up spanking her occasionally, and her parents had never questioned his judgment – Mac had always been disgustingly level-headed and mature for his age. Practical. Responsible. Downright stodgy, even.

Unbidden, tears flooded her eyes and rolled down her cheeks, breaking his heart in half but not his will. "Just eat a couple of more spoonfuls, baby. Then I'll put you to bed."

Emily snuffled and blew her nose on a paper napkin, reluctantly taking a very small spoonful of the thick soup until he cleared his throat and she brought up a healthier helping. "You can't put me to bed until you take me home, Mac."

"You *are* home, darlin'. I made sure I brought over your nighties and undies and some clothes for school tomorrow and some jeans and t-shirts and your toiletries. You're staying here from now on, where you belong." He'd cleaned his own bowl and got up to get another helping, the matter settled in the best manner possible, as far as he was concerned.

Truthfully, Emily was too tired to argue the point . . . now. That's how Mac knew how really wiped she was. If she had been

her normal self, she'd've lit into him for having the audacity to do all of that without getting her okay first. Well, she'd learn to live with it. In his house, with him. She could get as riled as she wanted, as long as she climbed into his bed at the end of the day, and as long as it didn't get vulgar or disrespectful.

They had never slept together – not out of any sort of antiquated morals, but more out of respect for her parents. And they certainly wouldn't be doing anything physical tonight, that was for sure, but that was also fine with Mac. He would be content - for now - just having her next to him. After he made sure that she had downed a few more good-sized spoonfuls of chowdah, he took her hand and led her upstairs to the master bedroom, which was fairly large but still dominated by the huge California King bed. Emily disappeared into the bathroom to complete her nightly ritual, but hadn't remembered to grab any pj's. When she reappeared, he was standing there with a lacy cotton gown in his hand. Mac had made sure on one of his trips over here with her stuff that her nighties had taken up residence in the opposite side of the dresser from his underwear.

Emily reached out to take it from him, but Mac wasn't going to let go. "Relax and let me take care of you, Em, you're dead on your feet."

Emily's teeth worried her lip as she looked up at him. Mac had never given her any cause to be afraid of him, but every female alarm she owned was going off at this point. She'd never let any man besides her doctor see her with no clothes on – and her doctor was a woman! And here he was, wanting to undress her and stick her in bed with him!

"Em, it's me? Mac? The one you used to share a bathroom with? And a bath – "

She smacked his shoulder. "We were five years old, for cryin' out loud!"

A crooked finger tipped her chin up. "Are you really afraid of me, Punkin'?"

That thought was abhorrent. He might spank her – no, he *did* spank her. But hurt her? No. Emily dropped her hand from the nightgown, too exhausted to fight him anymore. In truth, he gave her no further cause for alarm, undressing her as lovingly and carefully as he could. The last thing he did was take her hair out of the scrunchie she'd had it up in all day, brushing its length out as she sighed contentedly.

"Hop into bed, sweetie," he whispered against the top of her head with a kiss, and Emily found herself obeying him automatically, without thinking. Although she'd never slept with another person, except those occasional all-girl sleepovers in her childhood, she ended up cuddled against his left side as if she'd been there all her life, and fell asleep only moments after he tucked the covers in around her. Mac sighed, happier than he'd been in a long time, despite the fact that holding her in his arms all night was going to drive him crazier than he already was, and that he was probably going to die of heat since, to cater to her tender sensibilities, he was wearing pajama bottoms when he usually slept in the nude. But he was more than willing to forget pretty much any inconvenience. All was right with his world – Emily was with him, and he had no doubt she'd soon be his in every sense of the word – including wearing his name.

The next morning, just before dawn when Mac had to get up, he made love to her as naturally as if she'd been his for decades, and of course she had in every sense except this one. Emily had gotten up to go to the bathroom, and then he took his own turn, gathering her close when he got back to bed. His mouth drifted down from her forehead to settle on her lips, and she found herself relaxing against him. This was Mac. She'd loved him all her life. What more natural expression of their love could there be?

Despite the multitude of chores that awaited him, there were no hurried gestures, no flurries of kisses. He was going to claim all

of her, and he certainly wasn't going to do it in three seconds flat, no matter how long he'd waited. Their kisses were deep and slow, with her tongue shyly meeting his as her hand crept up his bare, lightly furry chest to cup his jaw, stroking his full, gray mustache with her thumb.

Mac took his time pulling away from her, his mouth leaving a wet trail down the side of her neck to the scoop front of her gown, to just at the beginning swell of her breasts. He heard her tentative breath as his fingers began unbuttoning the buttons they found there. His mouth nuzzled hers again as he murmured soothing nothings, his fingers working busily until he could separate the two parts of the front of her gown to reveal those wonderful mounds of tight-tipped flesh. He couldn't take his eyes off her, breathing her name in such a reverent manner that she couldn't muster embarrassment, and almost flushed with pride that he found her attractive.

A tanned hand began at her collar bone and ventured south at a crawl, as if they had all the time in the world. He didn't want to startled her, didn't want to make her feel threatened in any way. No, he wanted her to feel cherished . . . desired . . . loved. At first, he simply reveled in being able to touch her like his, that rough-skinned hand rubbing over every inch of exposed flesh with tender possession. Mac's chest swelled with pride when he deliberately caressed each hard nipple with his palm and she whimpered. He repeated the motion and she moaned slightly, stirring restlessly beneath him, not really knowing what she wanted, just that he was making her ache in more ways that she ever imagined she could.

His lips descended, not to hers but to suckle at those teased nipples, standing hard and ready for his warm, wet mouth. Mac thought she was going to buck him off when he claimed a tip and tugged avidly, but his weight was too much for her to move. Emily had to settle for moving her head back and forth on the pillow as Mac pulled and licked then gently nipped at her, creating such a

feeling of pressure and pleasure that she didn't think she could stand it, and she said so out loud.

Mac bestowed an evil grin on her that might have had her worried if he were not being so gentle. "We've just begun, my Emily." He leaned more of his weight onto her, resting some on his elbows so that he could take a breast in each broad paw and bring the nipples to his mouth in turn, all the time watching her with loving eyes, her every response both soothing and stimulating to him, making his already fully capable body harden and pulsate and ache to be buried deep within her just that much more.

With a nipple held tightly against the roof of his mouth, Mac reached between them and undid the buttons of her nightie, pushing it partly off to the sides, but mostly leaving her in it. When his right hand moved down over her tummy and even lower, Emily found that, because of the gown, she couldn't move her arms enough to grab him, or even hold him. Suddenly concerned, although her intellect told her she didn't need to be, she called to him anxiously. "Mac?"

He was absorbed in the freedom he had to touch her intimately, but not so far gone much that he didn't hear the very real concern in her voice. Although his hand didn't stop its possessive descent, cupping the heat of her body with every care, as if it was a tiny bird in his hand, he did want to reassure her. "Am I hurting you, baby?" Mac asked, his long middle finger gently parting the folds between her legs, sliding between them with exquisite tenderness to find her moist heat.

"N- N – no," came the very tentative reply as that same finger backtracked a little to flick over the sensitive bundle of flesh, making her arch up, seeking, wanting, aching for more of that same touch but almost afraid to at the same time. Emily again tried to pull her arms away from her sides, but she couldn't. "My – arms – Mac"

Mac could see her struggling and stretched out beside her, his fingertip still in its intimate cove, rubbing slowly, but he didn't release her. Instead, he kissed her deeply, all the while tracing over and over that tender nub, making her writhe and moan and enjoying every second of his sensual power over her. "You don't need to move your arms, my love, just your hips. Come for me, Emily. Let me pleasure you."

She couldn't stop him and he wasn't about to stop voluntarily. She was trapped against him, her arms useless, and he had unrestricted access to all of her, even the most private part of her body – and the most sensitive part. Emily writhed and moaned, and near the end almost sobbed as her body instinctively answered the demands he was making of it, that taut button swelling and rising to meet that torturing finger while he created a tremendous ache by a mere flicker of movement. She flew apart when his lips settled at her nipple again to suckle strongly, almost painfully, adding another unbearable element of feeling that set Emily to thrashing uncontrollably. When she came, Emily thought she was going to fly apart physically as well as emotionally, but Mac was there to catch her and hold her together as she shuddered violently, her hips bucking; a loud, long moan rising from the back of her throat.

There was no way he could hold off a second longer. He had to be inside her. Mac freed her arms, but she was too sated to move. He shrugged out of his pajama bottoms and moved between her legs carefully so as not to startle her. With the tip of his penis at the entrance to her body, those nipples drew him again and he couldn't resist another long drink of each as he began to work his way inside her.

Emily thought she'd never move again, even once her arms were free, but then he was between her legs, pressing himself into her, and her body leapt to pleasure once more with a sizzle coursing through her veins - until she felt the size of the thing he was trying to put inside her. It made her tense, even when Mac

kissed her and told her it would be alright. There was only a slight pain as he truly began to open her, thanks to years of horseback riding, but the feelings – the nerve endings he was rubbing against as he stretched and filled her were at least as sensitive as the ones he had been teasing before. The pressure and ache were unbearable, making Emily try desperately to move away from him, pushing her bottom into the mattress, but he followed relentlessly, inching himself deeper and deeper into her.

She clutched at his rock-hard biceps as Mac reached beneath her with one hand, lifting her hips to him, seating himself inside her to the hilt. Emily's knew she wasn't going to live through this, and she begged, "No, Mac, I can't stand it – "

She was moving so wildly on him of her own accord that he was having a hard time controlling his urge to thrust. But Mac wanted to give her some time to grow accustomed to him, to the new feeling of accepting him into her body. He stroked her hair in what he hoped was a soothing manner. "Does it hurt, baby?" he asked, concerned.

"N-no – I – I – it feels so – so – " she swallowed hard, unable to find the words to tell him what she was feeling, or the strength to still her restless body.

Mac understood completely. "Shhh, honey, I promise you it'll get better. It'll get better." He had reached the end of his rope; his patience snapped and he turned himself over to his instincts, thrusting at first gently but then less so, heeding the dictates of his body that made him drive into her over and over. In a part of his mind that was still rational, he worried that Emily might be frightened or upset at his single-minded pursuit of his own goal, but then he realized that her legs were wrapped around his waist and she was right there with him, riding him back, heeding her own instincts, clenching internally around him in her own ecstatic end.

When it ended for him, when he climaxed for the first time deep inside her, Mac thought it would go on forever, his body

pulsing for long, pleasurable moments as he spurted his seed into the woman he loved. The errant thought of a baby drifted through his mind and he fervently hoped it was an omen of things to come as he collapsed on top of her.

She was truly his. Finally.

Chapter 3

Although he would have said he was totally used up in just that one fantastic bout of lovemaking, Mac proved himself wrong by making love to her again before he absolutely had to get up, then coming back after the morning chores were done to take her again and again all morning long. Neither of them got anything constructive done that day except to catalogue a whole lot of sensual knowledge about each other.

Eventually they settled into a routine of sorts, but each and every night was filled with sensual exploration. Mac was entirely insatiable, and Emily was an apt student, shy but eager, and completely trusting of him. Mac initiated her into the ways of physical love with a tender amusement, making certain that she knew that she could share anything with him – that there was nothing they could not explore within their bed. If it turned her on, it would turn him on automatically. Mac was a sensual, earthy, entirely insatiable lover who demanded even more of her than he did of himself once he discovered that his little love was multi-orgasmic. From that point on he became almost obsessed with making her dance that pleasurable dance on the tips of his fingers or within the moist heat of his mouth over and over.

As they lived together and their relationship grew more settled, Mac enforced certain inalienable rules that he felt helped keep Emily safe and out of trouble – the seatbelt rule (always wear

one), the budgeting rule (always follow the one he sets up for you), the speeding rule (definitely don't), and the swearing rule (don't, at least not in front of him).

When he spanked her, fairly infrequently, but frequently enough, she always knew that he really didn't want to have to do it. Although Mac never let his reluctance dissuade him, Emily knew that he hated to cause her pain; he was so much more interested in driving her crazy with ecstasy. But when he had expressly told her not to order another thing from QVC and she did anyway, or she slipped during an argument and used a vulgar word - his old fashioned tendencies definitely extended to not allowing his woman to use foul language - or if she got cranky and was disrespectful to him, even if she apologized immediately and tried to butter him up or distract him with sex, Emily could see that determined look in his eye that meant she was going to get it.

Mac usually spanked her in their bedroom, although he had occasionally done it at the "scene of the crime" - the kitchen or the living room. Normally, though, he would point the way up the stairs and say, "Get your fanny up to our room." If she wasn't fast enough, he'd accent the order with a healthy swat to her bottom, making her rub it even as she headed upstairs, before the actual spanking even began. And there was a lot more where that came from, she knew from experience.

He never made her wait long, wanting to get it over with so that it was not be between them any longer. Mac was an excellent disciplinarian - firm, consistent, and loving, but strict. He wasn't trying to beat her under any circumstances - his big gruff heart was way too tender for that. Generally, the only position he put her in was over his lap, which was both terribly intimate and terribly humiliating. It was almost always his hand that reddened her bottom and the backs of her thighs good and proper, although sometimes, after reducing her to tears just with his hand, he would make her get up and get her own wooden hairbrush from her vanity to bring back to him, or, less frequently the paddle that hung in her

closet that had her name on it that he'd taken from her parents' house. Twice he'd put her over several pillows on their bed and used the belt from his pants – that was reserved for serious disobedience, things like when she'd put herself in serious jeopardy health-wise by letting a head cold become pneumonia, and when Mac had found out she'd hitchhiked her way home from a friend's house when her car died.

When he had to use his belt on her, she knew he felt almost as badly as she did through the whole thing – and when his arms went around her once he'd thrown the belt across the room after the last stroke, he was always shaking, and usually crying, too, vowing over and over how much he loved her and how sorry he was that he had to punish her like that, and asking her please not to make him have to do that again.

But usually, it was a very private, intimate thing when he came upstairs and sat on the edge of the bed with an exasperated sigh. "C'mere, baby," he'd say in a quiet voice.

Emily would stand in front of him and he would either pull her jeans and panties down to her knees – he always spanked her on the bare – or strip her entirely, which usually meant he was going to put her to bed after her spanking. Then he would put her over his knees, with her bottom well up in the air so that she was somewhat off balance and had to grab his leg or put her hands on the floor to steady herself. He found that that kept her from being even more naughty and reaching back to protect her roasted bottom.

Then, in that humiliating position, she would have to listen to his lecture, and God forbid he should think she wasn't actually listening – then he'd start to spank *during* the lecture, which he didn't even consider to be a part of the "real" spanking.

Mac approached Emily's punishments the same way he approached everything else: slowly, thoroughly, and deliberately. The broad flat of his hand scorched every inch of the creamy flesh

in front of him, up and over each hillock and down the backs of her thighs. Now, this is not what he would choose to be doing to her bottom, given the choice. Oh, he was rock hard while he spanked her. Mac couldn't be within a ten mile radius of his lady without becoming very interested. And he would much rather have been making love to her, making her scream with joy rather than pain, but Mac would never shirk his duties, and he considered this to be one of them. He was extremely conscientious about making sure that he applied all of his attention to fulfilling each and every one of his duties – especially those that pertained to her - and this was no exception.

When he finished with her hand spanking, and that was it, he would either hug her tightly and rock her while she cried it out in the safety of his arms, or he would tuck her into their bed with a kiss to cry herself to sleep on her tummy. That was one of the hardest things he did – leave her crying in their bed. But sometimes he felt she needed a delay in the comforting that he knew was so important, so that she could reflect on the naughtiness of the behavior that had brought about the punishment. Mac would sneak in later and wake her up with a kiss and a hug, usually making love to her to reaffirm their bond and his absolute love for her.

If he had determined that another implement needed to be used to reinforce the lesson, she was required to get whatever he requested, and then he would apply it to her posterior once she'd draped herself back over his lap. Usually, because the implements hurt that much more, he'd have to hold her hands at the small of her back, knowing how hard it was for her to stay still while the hairbrush or the paddle seared her tender flesh.

Because of Mac – and even because of his implacable punishments - Emily was certain that there was no woman in the United States who was more loved than she was – in any interpretation of the word. Mac was her rock in more than just the physical sensation of the word. He helped her and held her through the death of her parents, also doing as much of the administrative

things as possible. Mac didn't like the idea of strangers buying her parents' farm, so he bought it. Since he intended to marry Emily, they would own both farms together. He liked to think that Charles Robertson would have liked that idea, too.

So Mac was happy, her Mom and Dad and their best friends were happy and together in Heaven, raising hell, she was sure. Tammy was happy . . . the whole damned world was happy.

Except Emily.

Oh, she didn't have any of the usual problems – her finances were fine, thanks to Mac and his tighter-than-the-bark-on-a-tree mentality – and his tendency to enforce budgetary rules on her bare bottom – her job was fine, she lived with a man who thought that the sun rose and set on her command, and he showed her that every night when he brought their bodies together in heated passion.

He was rock solid, staunch, slow, deliberate, practical, and pragmatic – frankly, all of the things she'd fought to get away from. He was also rabidly sexy, funny, occasionally lewd, and a veritable powerhouse in bed. And he loved her with every ounce of his being. She knew it like she knew there would always be death and taxes. She loved the stodgy old stick-in-the-mud, too. It was what kept her with him despite her ranting intellect.

But was that enough? To give up a lifetime of Paris, New York City, art galleries, trendy clubs, and eclectic conversation for life on a farm in backwoods Maine, where the routine is the same, three hundred and sixty-five days a year, day in, day out – relentlessly and unapologetically rural and dreary and drab.

It was Valentine's Day, and she had gotten him a set of coins he had wanted for his collection, along with a suitably mushy card. Mac had wanted for them to have dinner at the most expensive restaurant in the area; in fact he had even suggested it in more than enough time for them to get reservations. But Emily didn't want to go out for Valentines Day, and she was able to talk

him out of it by enticing him with his favorite meal – garlic and white wine marinated pork roast with apple sauce, homemade bread, green beans, and garlic mashed potatoes.

Emily didn't mind cooking for him – she loved to cook – and for some reason she felt it was imperative that they *not* go out for dinner tonight. She was afraid that Mac was going to ask her to marry him tonight. And she was going to turn him down. She *didn't* want to do it in front of most of the County, who would also be out for the romantic holiday.

And she had been dead right about his plans. After presenting her with a dozen beautiful red roses and a big heart-shaped box of chocolates, and opening the set of coins that he enthused over, Mac ate the wonderful meal she'd cooked for him, then, when the dishes had been cleared, he brought her into the living room and sat her down on the couch, assuming a position on one knee in front of her and holding an open ring box that held his grandmother's diamond ring.

"Emily Katrina Robertson, will you marry me?"

Her eyes had filled with tears immediately as she gazed into the clear blue eyes of the man she loved. Her fingers delved into his full head of gray hair; Mac had started going gray at eighteen and was fully gray by his early twenties. But that never made any difference to Emily. He could have hair that was sky blue-pink or be bald as a cue ball as far as she was concerned. Hair or the lack thereof would never, ever make him any less of a man.

Before she had a chance to say yes or no, he'd already put the marquis diamond onto her finger, kissing her hand in a courtly gesture.

She got up, her eyes on the ring; her heart ripping slowly in two and falling apart inside her like a puppet whose strings had been snipped. His arms wrapped around her from behind, hugging her close, whispering hoarsely, "I've loved you for so long, my

Emily. You are so special to me. I want you to be my wife. I want you to be the mother of my children."

Emily hugged his arms, enjoying what would probably be the last time she felt so safe and loved and cared for, with him warm and strong behind her. She was going to hurt him terribly, and he would probably never look at her again in this lifetime except with contempt. She didn't know how she was going to do it. How could she do that to him when he'd never been anything but loving and sweet to her, even when he blistered her bottom?

She pulled away from him slowly and turned around, holding his face in her hands. She said it quickly, like ripping off a band aid, but it didn't help. "I can't marry you, Mac. Living here for the rest of my life would drive me crazy. You deserve someone who can be happy - " Mac's forehead was wrinkled in a deep, pained frown, and he deserved the courtesy of a better explanation, but Emily didn't think she could say anything that would help stop the hurt, so she took the ring off her finger and pressed it into his hand, folding those callused fingers around it and kissing them reverently. Then she sprinted out of the house to her car.

He hadn't tried to follow her for which she was eternally grateful; maybe he was too shocked.

That was the last time she'd seen him. Mac wasn't about to come crawling to her under any circumstances. Emily left town the next day before finishing the school year, which didn't give her a reference from that job, but then the job she got at an art gallery in New York didn't care much about that anyway. They wanted her language ability and her knowledge of modern art. She didn't even go back to his house to collect her stuff; Emily started over with everything new in the city, and that was okay with her. There would be nothing around to remind her of him.

Yet everything did. Absolutely everything, for more than a year.

Especially the long, lonely nights.

Chapter 4

"Well?" Emily asked, her eyebrow raised.

Laconic as always, Daniel took his time answering. "Jesse Barlow, maintenance assistant for the building.

He's gonna go get Ed Ketchum. If he can get him before he leaves for the fourth, then we'll be outta here within the next hour or so. If he can't, it's likely to be a coupla hours."

"Son of a bitch," she muttered under her breath, blithely ignoring Mac's immediate frown.

"What did I just tell you?" How many times had she heard that phrase and known that she was seconds away from getting a good, hard licking? Hell, her bottom was already tingling in anticipation, and he hadn't touched her in nearly two years! *Jeez, that man made a lasting impression!*

Emily sniffed and answered confidently while digging in her purse for her cell phone which ended up being at home in a different purse, "Nothing that I have to pay any attention to any more."

She might as well have waived a red flag in front of an angry bull. Before she knew it, her purse was commandeered out of her hands, and she was in that uncomfortably familiar position over

his lap, although this time she was way too up close and personal with the carpet that desperately needed vacuuming.

The skirt of her light summer dress was pulled up and draped over her back while Emily struggled, getting nowhere rapidly, not that she really expected to. But she squealed loudly and redoubled her efforts at escape when Mac's fingers hitched themselves under the elastic of her panties and pulled them down to her knees, his hand then resting on her vulnerable bottom as he easily controlled her jerky, ineffectual attempts to roll off his lap.

"Don't you *dare*, Daniel MacGregor!" she hissed, quickly becoming exhausted and getting nowhere.

Mac didn't say a word, just raised his hand and spanked. Two years might as well have been two seconds to him. Emily was still his. She'd always *be* his, whether or not she cared to acknowledge it, and he was not about to put up with vulgarity from her, regardless of the provocation. Because of the size of his hand and his incredible strength, it never took long for her to be reduced to tears, but they had never so much as slowed him down, nor did they now, nor did the scissor-kicking or the promises of better behavior. Mac didn't ease up on her until her little fanny and thighs were a sore-looking crimson, and when he stopped she didn't even move, remaining over his lap and hiccupping sobs.

He never could stand to hear her cry, even if his spanking was the direct cause of it. Mac turned her towards him, cuddling her in his arms, rubbing her back, soothing her gently as she tried to regain the control of herself that she lost to him during a punishment.

"You – don't – have – the – right," she breathed, unwilling to forgive him for the humiliation of being taken over his knee – again - knowing she should by all rights be fighting her way out of his arms.

Mac sighed, his breath blowing over her tear-wet cheeks as he faced the fact that he still loved and wanted this annoying

woman. "Honey, I'll always have the right. You belong to me; you always will, even if you don't want to accept that fact - or my love."

That made Emily sit up quickly, then stand, pulling her panties up from her ankles with an embarrassed air. She reclaimed her neutral corner, hissing in pain as her sore bottom connected with the floor of the elevator, and then yelping as she felt something sticking into her finger. A stray tack.

"What?"

She didn't answer him, but put the abused digit into her mouth, sucking on it. "Nothing."

"Emily." How could he put such a wealth of warm reproach into just that one word?

Too tired to fight him, sullenly, "I pricked myself."

His humor came to the forefront. "That used to be *my* job."

Emily turned and saw his sad smile. He deserved much better than the way she had treated him, and she would regret her behavior for the rest of her life, but she didn't entertain any foolish hopes that he would ever take her back. But she might as well get it over with. "I'm so sorry I hurt you, Daniel. You were the last person in the world I ever wanted to hurt and yet the one I kept hurting . . ." Emily had grown up a little in the past two years – a year and a half of which had been spent hiding from exactly this confrontation.

Nothing. No response, which made her nervous, which made her ramble.

"I – I was just afraid, you know, of – of you – " he looked surprised and concerned, but remained quiet. " – not of *you* you but of what you represented – oh, God, I'm putting this so badly, and I'm not trying to make excuses for the horrible way I acted I just . . . " she swallowed hard and took a deep breath. "I just wanted something more than I thought I could find here, with you, getting

married . . . having the house, the hubby, and the requisite two-point-seven children."

And I was dead wrong, she thought vehemently, but she didn't say it.

Mac sighed, tasting the familiar ashes of defeat he'd had in his mouth since she'd run from him like a frightened rabbit on a night he had naively thought they would spend making love and making plans for their future together, thinking to himself, *And you were dead right*. He knew that he was about as exciting to her as yesterday's oatmeal – except in bed – and that life on the farm with him wouldn't have all of the hustle and bustle of the city life she seemed to crave, or the culture or the galleries or the *thee-uh-tuh*. He knew that all he could offer her was himself – his undying love, the security of having money in the bank enough to pull them through a bad year or two, his strong arms to cuddle in with hands to spank away any bad behavior, his babies, his family . . . a hum-drum life full of the day-to-day hassle of home and children and bills and work.

But then why was she here, in town? Why had she come back to the place she supposedly hated? Mac had known the moment she'd arrived – every busybody in town had delighted in filling him in as to where she was living – in a small apartment in one of the beautiful old houses on Main Street – where she was working – First Maine Bank not more than a block from where she lived. What a come down, they enjoyed crowing at him, thinking he would also want to revel in the obvious misery of the woman who has spurned his proposal and run off in the dead of night to do who-knew-what in the Big City.

Mac had done no such thing, but it had haunted him every long, lonely day that she hadn't come to him since she'd been back. Not for apologies, and not for recriminations on his part, but because they were old friends. It had taken a rickety old elevator to get her to talk to him, and even then it was only at his pointed prompting.

Finally, he said, "I don't want apologies, Em."

Emily swallowed hard, eyes and throat aching with unshed tears. She understood. Mac wouldn't want any part of her now, regardless, which is why she'd deliberately stayed away from him since she'd returned. Not that she could blame him one iota. She didn't want to rub his nose in it, and, although she'd realized sometime during the haze of that eighteen months without him that it was her fondest wish that he would forgive her and put that ring back onto her finger, Emily knew there was no way in hell he'd take her back.

"But that doesn't change the fact that I was wrong and I am sorry."

"I know you are. But I should have known – I should have read you better."

Emily snorted. "None of the blame about that evening was yours, Mac. You've never in your life done anything that wasn't the absolute right thing to do." There was a certain amount of resentment in that statement, and they both knew it.

Mac, however, had made the spit second decision that it might be worth it to stop being so proper and gentlemanly just now – better late than never. He'd been good so far; when she'd pulled away from him he hadn't followed the dictates of his body and gone after her as he was literally aching to do. But he was sick of being good and going without because it was the "right" thing to do. Mac couldn't count the number of times during the past six months that he found his hand on the front doorknob, or he'd slowed down in the middle of Main Street hoping to catch a glimpse of her, or the tractor stopped mid-field while he talked himself out of storming down to her place, waling the tar out of her bottom, then making love to her until she begged him to take her back.

The "right" thing was always to be inside her, to let his body love her as it craved to, to wallow in her humor, her smile,

her cries of ecstasy. There could be no wrong in that, as far as he was concerned.

Well, here was the perfect opportunity to indulge himself a little, and when Mac decided to do something, he did it. One minute she was concentrating on fighting back tears, drowning in both of their sorrows, sucking on her finger and absently wondering where in hell the cavalry was, and the next minute she found herself straddling him. He reached under her bunched up skirt and ripped her panties off, then opened his pants and arranged himself so that she was cradling his hardness intimately. Emily drew in a startled, angry breath, getting ready to blast him, but his finger crossed her lips, then moved boldly to take its familiar place in the folds between her legs. She knew she should fight him, but she didn't really want to. Oh, she put up a token struggle, but he bent her down to him easily and kissed her out of it while stroking her in just the right way, just the way he knew she liked, holding those soft lips apart to fully expose her love button to the insistent ravishment of his finger. Emily was wet. Being spanked had always turned her on, even when he went hard on her.

"Mac, no, we – we – " Cripes, she couldn't think straight when he was doing that to her! " – we sh-shouldn't!"

His "mmmmmm" in response came out as a tortured groan as Mac moved side to side a little, holding her hip in his free hand, guiding himself to her opening as he continued to torment her, flicking and rubbing non-stop, even as he slid home within her.

Emily's heart stopped as he filled her, her head back, hair tumbling over her shoulders as he strained to get up inside her, stretching her, making her moan but never easing the pressure until he was fully seated and she hung on him, impaled like a rag doll over his hips.

Mac pulled her down to him again by winding a lock of hair around his hand, kissing her deeply then lifting her dress over her head with eager help from her, capturing a taut nipple in his mouth,

all the while stroking in and out of her and over and over that special spot, making her writhe and moan and finally, scream his name in complete abandon. Less than a minute later, he joined her in ecstasy, taking her hard and fast because it was the only way he could stand it, screaming her name back at her –

"Hey, are you all right in there?" A strange male voice asked from above. It was definitely *not* God, Emily thought, because God would not have such a smug tone to His voice – whoever it was knew exactly what it was that they had been doing, to her complete mortification.

Still, she couldn't move until Mac moved. "Yeah, we're fine, Ed."

"I imagine you are," came the sniggering reply.

Cripes, Mac thought, *Ketchum was one of the biggest gossips in the County. Word of this would be all over the state of Maine before they were even rescued.* He'd bet his bottom dollar on it. But he still hadn't moved. It felt too good to be back where he belonged – deep inside his woman, with her legs at his waist and her nipples still peaked against his chest.

Trying for diffidence, Emily commented sarcastically, "You'd better get off me before Ed begins the live feed to the eleven o'clock news."

Mac chuckled and kissed the tip of her nose, then levered himself to a standing position. Emily sat up and found his hand in front of her face to help her up, which she accepted gratefully. Mac spotted her panties in the corner of the small room, in pretty much unwearable shreds. He smiled at her with no remorse, snatching them up and stuffing them into his pocket.

Emily was about to protest, but what was she going to do with them besides throw them in the trash? If he wanted some sort of weird souvenir from a time when they both went a little crazy, who was she to deny him? The elevator seemed smaller than ever in the awkward silence, but a quick glance at Mac found him

staring at her with a stupid, satisfied grin on his face. He didn't look like he was feeling in the least bit awkward or embarrassed, damn him. He looked like the cat that ate the canary, and it made her want to hit him, hard – injured party or not.

"It's fixed," they heard Ed yell down. "It'll jerk ya' around a coupla times at the beginning, but you'll be fine down to the Lobby. We'll let you out there."

"Famous last words," Emily muttered, looking around nervously just before she was again tossed unceremoniously against Mac again as the elevator finally started its descent.

His arms closed around her automatically, squeezing tight. "If there's one thing Ed knows, honey, it's this building and its crotchety machinery."

Ed was right, thankfully, and, after the initial turbulence, the ride down was uneventful. Emily tried to separate from Mac, but he wouldn't allow it, keeping her clamped to his side with ridiculous ease as the doors opened. Ed was standing there grinning in much the same way Mac was, with the younger – but still middle-aged - Jesse Barlow giggling like a schoolboy who had seen his first *Playboy*.

Emily had never been so humiliated in all her life. If things had been different between them, she would have buried her face against Mac's chest so that she would not have to see the looks of male understanding on the two men's faces, but she no longer had that right, so she had to tough it out. All she could do was try to get to her car as fast as possible.

And Mac, she didn't even want to see his face . . .

If she had, though, it would have been a revelation. He looked fit to kill the two of them for embarrassing Emily, and she, in turn, was trying to run away from him again, as fast as her little legs would take her. If it hadn't been for the need to corral her as she sprinted ahead of him, Mac would have dropped each of them with one satisfying punch.

But he wasn't about to let her get away from him a second time.

Once they were out of the building and down the steps, Emily found herself swept up into Mac's arms. "What do you think you're doing?" she asked in full-blown indignation, even as her arms settled around his neck.

Mac stopped short and kissed her, hard. "I don't know about you, but what we did in the elevator was just an appetizer. I'm takin' you home for the main course."

~ ~ ~

Later, much, much later that evening – actually, closer to early the next morning - Emily lay cuddled against Mac's broad chest, his hand rubbing slowly up and down her bare back, but not far enough down to touch the sore redness of her bottom. Mac had given Emily the spanking of a lifetime somewhere in the middle of all those lovemaking sessions, and she had submitted to it with as little fuss as he'd ever seen her take a punishment. He hadn't gone easy on her – his heart wouldn't let him, and for the first time ever he used both the paddle and his belt on her poor cringing cheeks as she sobbed and chanted her apologies, then finally just sobbed as the belt fell and fell.

Then he had soothed her, as only he could, loving her with his mouth and his tongue and his lips and his fingers and his hands and his whole body, overwhelming her with himself and the pleasure he brought to her, as no one and nothing else could. They had each declared their love for one another frequently in the night, before, during, and after their passionate coupling, and it was almost like they had never been separated.

Almost.

Suddenly, Mac rolled away from her a second, then rolled back, grabbing Emily's left hand and putting his grandmother's ring back on the third finger, where it belonged. Emily was aghast and sat up, even before he pulled her out of bed and practically threw her into her rumpled dress, stepping into jeans and shrugging on a shirt, then stomping into boots and dragging her out of the house and into his truck while she was still trying to get her sandals on.

"Where are we going at two-thirty in the morning?"

He didn't answer her, but drove with a single-minded concentration that frankly worried her, until they pulled into the driveway of a familiar house.

"Daniel, it's the middle of the night – you are *not* going to do this!" He came around to her side of the truck and she flatly refused to get out, trying to keep her voice down as she hissed at him. "I *will* marry you. I'm keeping the ring. See?" She showed him that it was still on her finger.

Mac was unmovable, standing there with his arms crossed over his chest and his feet planted wide, as if he expected a physical fight. "Either you get out of that truck right now or I'll help you out. Your choice."

"But there's no need for this – " She didn't even get her sentence completed before she was out of the truck and back in his arms. He held her quietly and she muttered under her breath the whole time they stood at the doorway after he rang the bell. "We'll be damned lucky if he the only thing he does is arrest us, you know – "

Mac was in the process of scowling fiercely down at her when the big mahogany door swung open to reveal Judge Halverston tying his considerable paunch into a robe. He didn't even seem surprised to see them, in fact, just stepped to the side so that they could go to the parlor where he usually presided as a Justice of the Peace. It was already lit romantically with candles,

and Mrs. Halverston was there beaming in her own robe and slippers.

"Oh, my dear," the older woman said, patting Emily's arm. "I am so happy for you. Why when we heard – " She stopped mid-sentence when her husband shot her a warning look. "We're both very happy for you," she repeated.

Mac had yet to put her down, so she began to wiggle. "Stay still," he commanded, in a more no-nonsense tone than usual, tightening his arms, and she did.

It was the fastest wedding ceremony Emily had ever seen, ruthlessly boiled down to the basics by the poor Judge who obviously wanted to get back to bed in a reasonable timeframe. There were no rings, and Mac felt the lack, but he looked at Emily and promised that they would pick them out as soon as possible. He wanted a wedding ring on her finger, but at least they were getting the legalities down. There would be time for rituals later.

"You may kiss the bride."

Mac took his duties as a married man very seriously, as anyone could tell by that kiss. Finally, the Judge "harrumphed" loudly in the background, before the couple decided that his Persian carpet looked comfortable enough for their needs. Congratulations were said all around then Mac turned with his wife still in his arms and carried her out to their truck. He repeated the procedure when they got home, carrying her over the threshold and on up to their room. Emily, whose feet hadn't touched the ground since some time this afternoon, both figuratively and literally, was again lying against Mac's, only this time she was also cuddled against her husband's side.

Just before they went to sleep, Mac sighed contentedly. "There. Now I've finally got you, and I'm not lettin' you go."

Emily leaned forward and kissed him on the lips gently. "I don't want to be anywhere where you aren't. I know now that I've

got myself a good man, and I'm gonna spend the rest of my life
trying to be his good woman."

End

The Good Man

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Backside of Love: the *Intimacy of Authority*

<http://BacksideOfLove.com>

Dearest reader:

Are you... *there* yet? ☺

If the sorts of loving, unyielding attentions that make up most of these peoples' lives is the stuff of fantasies you thought you could never share, then please join Carolyn and husband (UB) at their *Backside of Love* project.

There we explore the profound sorts of romance which include the giving of *authority* to your trusted Other, structure and *consequences* for behavioral control, and sexual *intimacy* winding through it all.

Come over and join our community forum, library and magazine devoted to the common threads which weave through lifestyles like BDSM or D/s, Domestic Discipline, and Intimate Ageplay: trusted *authority*, firm-but-loving *punishment*, and the *sexual* intimacy that those things spark.

Which label you put on your needs isn't the point: It's finding the absolute most fulfillment possible from exploring these *Intimacy of Authority* themes.

--Carolyn and Unka Bobby (her "Daddy" and husband)

If our story has piqued your interest, then please be sure to ask about Carolyn's other classic works in this genre:

Jake Ryan's Woman

Blood From A Stone

Embraced

Love Will Find A Way

Priceless Love I

...and over 70 other adventures!