

s e l e n a k i t t



Back to
the Garden

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Back to the Garden

By Selena Kitt

Garden of Eden

Libby was fifteen when she started sleeping with her daddy, but it was only because of her nightmares. It seemed natural to climb into his big bed, into the place where her mother had slept until Libby was eight, to snuggle under his strong, muscled arm and his watchful eye. Daddy was always watching, just like God, and it made Libby feel safe as houses.

They came and went, her nightmares, but somehow she just never moved back to her own room. Daddy joked that her nightmares were just God trying to get a direct connection, but Libby knew it was her mother. She never doubted where her overwhelming sense of dread and abandonment came from, the kind that left her sweating and shaking and gasping for breath—it was all she'd ever known when it came to her mother.

The night before her mother came back, Libby woke up pounding on their bedroom window, screaming, "Let me out!" Her father, who never woke her during one of her sleepwalking incidents, actually shook her until she could see him, his eyes wide and concerned, more panic in them than she'd ever seen before.

"Where are you, Libby girl?" he murmured while he held and rocked and stroked her as she hitched sobs against his chest. "Where do you go?"

"Hell," she whispered, clinging.

She thought she knew what hell was, and then her mother came back.

Libby remembered her leaving, packing her big blue suitcase in the middle of the night, the screaming and the crying and the yelling. Little Libby in her Cindy-Lou-Who

nightgown, shifting from foot to foot in the doorway, listening to them argue, her eyes flickering between them.

Her mother came back carrying the same big blue suitcase, walking right back into The Garden of Eden as if she had never left. Her father was a kind man, but as Libby watched them hug hello, she wondered if even God would be that forgiving. It was the one time Libby wanted to believe that once Eve had fallen, there really was no going back.

And of course, her mother was wearing clothes.

A stylish yellow sundress with a pair of white heels which made her legs look even longer, and her auburn hair, darker than Libby's orange-tinged mane, was pulled up on top of her head. She was beautiful, as always, and in spite of her absence, or maybe because of it, Libby's father hugged her hard and long, his eyes squeezed shut. To Libby, he looked like he was in pain.

"Libby!" Her mother held her hand out to her only daughter. Libby felt eyes raking down her form, lingering at her naked breasts. "My goodness, you've grown!"

Her father came up behind her, wrapping his arms around Libby's little waist and kissing the top of her head. She glanced up at him and saw the pride glowing in his eyes.

"Hasn't she?" His voice was warm, his nude body strong and solid behind hers. "She looks like you did at that age, doesn't she, Kim?"

Libby glared at her mother. "Ten years is a long time."

The older woman frowned, her eyes falling to Libby's bare hips, where his hands rested. "Don't you think it's a little inappropriate for her to be running around like that?"

Libby rolled her eyes and snorted. "What did you really expect?"

"Libby!" Her father reprimanded her but gave her a squeeze before letting her go.

Libby flounced over to a chair, watching her mother fan herself with her hand.

"God, it's hot in here..."

"Not if you're naked," Libby retorted.

"Libby!" Her father shook his head, grinning in spite of himself.

"Ed, do you have anything to drink?" Kim asked. "Iced Tea? Diet Coke?"

Libby left them, going out the back door and sitting on one of the chaise lounges. She heard her father putting ice in a glass, her mother's voice going on about something.

"Hey, Lib—sunscreen!" her father called through the screen door on his way by.

Libby sighed, reaching under the chair and finding a bottle of it. Her father kept them everywhere. Being a redhead in a nudist community wasn't always a picnic. If she forgot sunscreen, even once, just for an hour or two, she turned as red as a lobster and could barely move for days.

She could still hear them—something about Arizona. Was that where she'd been? Libby wondered, rubbing cream over her freckled shoulders, down her chest, over her rounded breasts with their cherry tips pointing toward the sky and her soft, flat belly, past the triangular red patch between her legs and over her slim, creamy thighs and calves.

Libby poked her head back in through the door. "Daddy, can you do my back?"

"Sure." He motioned for her to come in.

Libby handed him the bottle and turned a chair around, sitting on it backwards and looking over her shoulder at him.

Her father squirted lotion in a line down her back and she squealed. "Daddy!"

"Sorry." He chuckled, rubbing the white lotion into her shoulder blades and down her spine. Libby saw her mother watching them, her eyes veiled, her mouth tight.

"Did you get your little butt?" He slapped it playfully with his hand and she laughed.

She stood, kneeling on the chair. "Nope. Can you get it?"

Libby saw her mother's jaw working as her father used both hands to rub lotion into her bottom.

"Done," he announced, rubbing the excess up his arms, but Libby knew he didn't need it. Daddy was as brown and sleek as a seal all over. She climbed off the chair, grabbed her book from the kitchen counter and headed out the door again.

"Ed, this is just wrong," Libby heard her mother say.

She opened her book, leaned back in the lounge and tried to read. She couldn't concentrate, though. She kept hearing a few words here and there drifting out towards her. *Remarried. Divorce. Papers. Sign.* They were mostly her mother's words, although she heard her father say *when?* and *extra room* and *you can ask her*.

Her mother came out onto the patio after a while and Libby felt for a moment like she couldn't breathe at all. All she could remember was her mother and the blue suitcase going out the door, while the girl in the pink nightgown stood there calling, "Aren't you going to take me, Mommy?"

She knew she was that girl, but she didn't want to remember the feeling of being left standing there as her mother climbed into a cab and disappeared.

"Hey, Libby." Kim sat on a patio chair, crossing one knee over the other. "You're probably pretty mad at me, huh?"

Libby didn't put her book down, but the words were swimming.

"I don't blame you." Her mother sighed, looking out across their patio and the yard bleeding right up into the sand leading to the ocean.

It was an incredible view, one Libby had grown used to—she saw it every day of her life. There was a volleyball game going on, the pink and tan of nude bodies moving in the distance, the far-off shouts of "side-out!"

"Libby, I'm sorry." Her mother's voice was soft, distant, her eyes somewhere out over the horizon. "I couldn't stay here, then, living this way..."

"What's wrong with it?"

Kim's jaw tightened again. "I couldn't condone what your father wanted to build here, with this place."

Now Libby's jaw tightened, her eyes flashing. She looked a great deal like her mother in that moment. "How would you know what we have here? You never stayed to find out!"

"No." Her mother folded her arms across her chest. "I left. That was my choice. But I'm here now."

"And so?" Libby rolled her eyes, swinging her legs over the side of the lounge.
"What do you want here? You hated it, you said so. You hated Daddy, you hated me..."

Libby felt tears welling and willed them gone.

"No, no, sweetie." Her mother's voice was soft, trembling even, her hand reaching out but not quite touching Libby's bare knee. "I wanted to see you...I just couldn't..."

"Forget it." Libby shook her head, standing. "I don't want to know."

Her mother reached for Libby's hand as she passed, grasping her wrist. She looked into her mother's green eyes, mirrors of her own, with those strange gold flecks in them.

"Listen to me." Her mother's voice was pleading now. "I want you to come live with me and David. You can go to a real school. You can go to prom—"

"I'm done with school," Libby countered, her mouth set in a grim line. "I'm eighteen now...if you didn't remember."

"College, then," her mother continued. "You can have a real life, Libby. You don't have to live this way..."

Libby yanked her arm out of her mother's grasp. "*This way?* You make it sound like I'm living in some sort of a cult. I'm happy here with Dad, helping him run things. This *is* a real life. My life."

"I'm staying for a few days," her mother said flatly, shading her eyes as she looked up at her daughter. "Your father and I are finally making this divorce thing official, and there are some papers he needs to have a lawyer look over."

"Wouldn't you feel more comfortable in a hotel?" Libby snapped, flicking the screen door open. "Where you could wear clothes?"

"All right, Libby," Kim sighed, standing. "Maybe I misjudged this place. Maybe I'm just being a prude, like your father always said."

Libby narrowed her eyes, frowning. "You'll give it a chance?"

"If you give me one," her mother said, reaching for the girl's hand. Libby took it, reluctant, as they headed into the house.

* * * *

Libby fell asleep on the sofa in the middle of *American Idol* and knew she'd spent just a little too much time out in the sun today. She woke up with a line of drool running down the cushion and sat up to discover the dog had eaten the rest of the bowl of popcorn which had tipped to the floor.

"You can have Libby's old bed," she heard her father say. Her mother was still here. It wasn't a nightmare.

"Libby's bed?" They were in the kitchen, it sounded like. "Where does Libby sleep?"

Uh-oh.

"With me."

There was a long silence, and Libby felt it stretching.

"Ed, you've got to be kidding me."

Her father was putting away dinner dishes, she heard cupboard doors opening and closing.

"It's innocent," he replied. His voice was tight, she noticed. "She has nightmares."

"I assume you sleep—?"

"Naked?" her father finished. "Yes, Kim. We do everything naked. That's what nudists do. Being naked isn't a sin."

"You're sleeping with your teenage daughter!"

Libby winced at the tone in her mother's voice and for the first time felt like she wanted to hide herself. She looked around the living room for a blanket and found one hanging over the back of the sofa.

Her father's voice shook in reply as he quoted, " 'And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.' "

"Oh please!" her mother cried. Libby heard a chair scraping on the linoleum. "Spare me the scripture...and she's not your wife, even if you've tried to make her a second best replacement for me."

Libby pulled the blanket over her head, trying to drown out the words.

"She's the best of you." Her father slammed a cupboard door. "And she isn't ashamed of her body or who she is, and I won't have you making her feel that way. Don't you dare come into my house and do that...don't you dare!"

"Fine...okay," her mother muttered. "I just don't think you see how really wrong this is. Your moral compass is way off."

Her father had his preacher voice on now, Libby recognized it as well as she recognized the words from the Gospel of Thomas inscribed on the plaque in the main meeting room: " 'When you disrobe without being ashamed and take up your garments and place them under your feet like little children and tread on them, then will you see the son of the Living One, and you will not be afraid.' "

"Like I said, spare me the scripture," her mother sighed. "She's my daughter, too, you know."

Libby ducked her head and pretended to be asleep as her mother came into the living room.

Her father's voice followed, "You should have thought of that when you walked out that door, Kim."

Libby felt her father's hand on her hip. "Lib? You wanna go to bed?"

"I'll sleep out here," she mumbled and rolled away from them. Her heart was thudding hard in her chest.

She heard her father cleaning up, turning off the TV.

"I'll show you Libby's room," her father said, his voice low so as not to disturb her, she knew.

"She has nightmares?" Libby felt her mother's hand in her hair and tried not to wince away. "About what?"

"You," her father replied softly. "Leaving her."

* * * *

"You don't really go to church—*naked*?" Kim came out wearing another lovely sundress, this one a light, dusty blue with green flowers Libby grudgingly admired.

"We do everything naked," Ed reminded her with a smile. "And if you're coming, clothing isn't an option."

Kim looked back and forth between her daughter and soon-to-be ex-husband, her mouth working but nothing coming out.

"Hurry." Libby glanced at the clock. "Daddy has to be there early."

Her mother shook her head, blinking a few times. "Ed... you don't really preach up there...I mean...with all your...dangly bits just flopping around...?"

Libby raised her eyebrows as she looked over at her father, but he wasn't looking at her.

"I do have a podium," he admitted, looking sheepish. In her whole life Libby had never seen him look that way.

"Maybe I should just... stay here." Kim cleared her throat and looked toward the door.

Libby folded her arms over her breasts. "You said you'd give it a chance."

Ed looked between the two women, like he was waiting for something.

Kim sighed, kicking off her shoes. "Okay. You know what? Fine."

Both of them watched while she unbuttoned her sundress, starting at the top. The row of buttons went all the way down to the hem, but she didn't have to undo them that far. She slipped the fabric off her shoulders, sliding it down over her slim hips and stepping out of it.

She didn't look at them as she folded the dress carefully and laid it across the back of a chair. Libby looked at her mother's body for the first time since she was very little, noticing all those things familiar to her—her mother's freckled shoulders, the long curve of her waist and slope of her hip, her slender, long legs—all of those things Libby had inherited from her.

"David would kill me..." her mother said under her breath as she unclasped the front hook of her bra, hesitating, her eyes shifting toward Ed before she let it fall, her breasts spilling free. Libby knew those nipples, the puffy pink areola, the round cherry tips—they were just like her own. When she looked over at her father, she saw a light in his eyes she'd never seen before while he watched her mother's breasts swaying as she bent to retrieve her bra.

Kim seemed to sense his gaze, too, and turned a little away from Ed and more toward her daughter as she hooked the top elastic band of her panties with her thumbs, sliding the white material down over her hips. Libby saw with surprise that her mother was shaved completely smooth between her legs. Her father had his eyes closed, a look of pain on his face.

"Ok." Kim tossed her bra and panties onto her dress, looking over at Libby. "There. Happy?"

Ed cleared his throat, holding his hand out to her. "You'll actually feel more comfortable this way than you would in clothes. Trust me."

"It's true," Libby agreed, taking her mother's other hand as they headed out the door into the sunshine, the three of them as naked as the day they were born. Kim seemed to be trying to hide between them. Libby held both of their hands, swinging them as they walked.

The sea of bodies grew as they got closer, every age, size, shape and color merging as they went through the double doors. Libby felt her mother's hand tighten in hers, noticing how warm and damp it was.

"Are you ok?" Ed leaned past Libby's head and whispered into her mother's ear.

Kim glanced at him, her eyes a little wide. "I think so. How many people live here?"

"One thousand, five hundred and twenty-nine," Libby rattled off. She did most of her father's paperwork.

"They won't all be here today." Ed laughed, seeing Kim's face go pale, the freckles across her nose, just like Libby's, suddenly appearing more prominent.

"That's—a lot of people." Kim's gaze moved over the couple standing next to them, two young men holding hands.

Ed just smiled at her when she stared up at him in confusion. "We're all equal in God's eyes."

"That's the best part," Libby explained as they got to the doors. "You can be who you really are."

"Is that really a good idea?" her mother murmured.

The pews were already mostly full, but Libby led her mother to the front row where there was always a section reserved for the preacher's family and friends. She felt her mother's eyes moving over the sea of flesh and, when they were seated, Libby turned to her.

"You get used to it," Libby whispered, smiling behind her at Mrs. McCallister, who came completely naked like everyone else, but still insisted on wearing her hats. This one was pink with two peacock feathers in the side.

"Libby, this is so crazy," her mother whispered back, shaking her head as she crossed her arms over her bare breasts. "Naked in church?"

"This is how God made us," Libby countered. "Daddy always says we can each choose to stay in The Garden of Eden. That's why he named our community that."

"I know." Kim frowned, her eyes moving over her daughter's face. "I just...I think it's kind of a delusion to think you can go back to the garden..."

"You're already here." Libby smiled, touching her mother's arm. "This is *The Garden of Eden*."

Their conversation was interrupted when Ed stepped up to the podium in front, and Libby saw her mother's jaw drop when their choir began to file in, standing on the risers in their birthday suits and facing the largest congregation of Christian nudist community members in the country. Kim hid her face behind her hand for most of the service.

* * * *

"Where is she?" Libby asked as she came into the kitchen and saw her father sitting alone at the table with coffee and the paper.

"Out." He shrugged, watching her pour a bowl of cereal. "Are you ready for tomorrow night?"

Now it was Libby's turn to shrug. "Do I have to be?"

"Kind of hard for the preacher's daughter to skip it, babe." He smiled. "One night a year to get dressed up and go dancing. Doesn't it sound like fun?"

"Like going to the dentist." She gave him a grim smile, pouring milk in her cereal.

He laughed. "Come on, Lib. It isn't that bad."

She curled up in the chair next to him, milk dribbling down her chin as she chewed. He was watching her and she sighed. "Do you want to hear something incredibly stupid?"

He raised his eyebrows, waiting.

"I don't have anything to wear." She bit her lip, seeing his smile, and shook her head. "Don't you dare laugh."

His face worked and he cleared his throat. "I'm not laughing."

"You were thinking about it." She took another bite of cereal. "Sara's had a dress for this stupid dance for a month. I kept meaning to get one...but then *she* said she was coming..."

Her father sighed, sipping his coffee and watching her. Libby continued to spoon her cereal in, chewing thoughtfully in the silence.

"I have an idea." Ed put his cup down on the table and stood, holding his hand out to her. "Come on."

She followed him into his room and sat on the bed while he opened his night table drawer. Curious, she watched him remove a small key and unlock the chest that sat at the foot of the bed. It had never been opened, as far as she knew.

"After your mother left, I put these here," he said, the lid creaking open. "She never asked for any of it back...and I couldn't bear to..."

Libby crawled to the end of the bed, peering over the side. "Oh, Daddy."

She moved to kneel in front of the chest, her fingers running over the various materials, soft, silky, velvety, that lined the cedar. Libby lifted one of the dresses, the softest, pale yellow with a purple paisley pattern.

"It's so pretty." She stood and held it against her body.

Ed's eyes swept over her. "Try it on."

Libby lifted the dress over her head, slowly pulling it down over her hips. The dress was a silky yet stretchy kind of material that clung to her upper body, the bodice plunging and cinched, crossed with two thin bands of purple outlining her breasts. The spaghetti straps left her freckled shoulders bare and, while the top hugged her, the skirt

flowed and swirled around her legs when she walked, the hem falling a little higher than mid-thigh.

She was lost in her own world, looking in the mirror over the dresser, turning to see herself from all angles at once. Finally, she turned to her father and saw that he was pale, as if he'd seen a ghost.

"Daddy?" She frowned, turning again. "Don't you like me?"

He shook his head, as if to clear it and his voice was hoarse. "You're stunning. You look so much like your mother..."

He came up behind her, looking at her in the mirror, and her tummy clenched when she met his eyes. She had never seen him look at her that way before. His hands moved over the silky skin of her shoulders, fingering the thin straps, straightening, his eyes moving down the front of the dress, how it hugged her breasts, her slender waist.

"When did you grow up?" he murmured, smiling as he met her eyes again. Clearing his throat, he went on. "I think your mother left some...underthings... You might need a...bra?"

Libby went to the chest, sifting through, finding a lacy black bra and a pair of soft, mesh panties. She flushed as she touched them, looking up at her father.

"These?"

He nodded, sitting on the bed. "I think those will work."

She felt his eyes on her as she slipped the dress off her shoulders. He was watching her like he'd watched her mother slipping her clothes off, and Libby took her time, carefully laying the dress on the bed before bending to step into the panties. They felt foreign to her, the material going on like a whisper over her flesh.

"Do I have to wear a bra?" She held it up and made a face. "I never wear these things."

"I think so," he replied, looking at the dress.

She sighed, putting her arms through the straps, bringing the cups around front and working at the clasp. They were small hooks and eyes and her tongue snuck out to the corner of her mouth as she concentrated on fastening them.

"Daddy, can you help?" She rolled her eyes. "I can't get it."

Her father nodded, crooking his finger and she went to him, standing between his thighs and offering the front of the bra to him so he could clasp it.

"I'm not much better at these," he confessed, his big fingers working between her breasts.

Libby held her breath, feeling his palms brushing over the black silk and lace, making her nipples stand up involuntarily in response. She worked hard at not showing her embarrassment, feeling a tingle between her legs.

"There," he said, peering at the two hooks. "I think that's it."

"Thank you." Libby adjusted the thin straps, the lace edge framing the soft fullness of her breasts, now pressed up in the fabric.

Her eyes met her father's and she swallowed, seeing his gaze moving over the curves and swells of her body covered in black silk and lace. Her nipples were hard, and he looked back and forth between them as they poked out against the material.

His hands spanned her waist, pulling her close and kissing her navel, just like he used to when she was little—except this time, it was different. His hitching breath, the

heat of his lips, the way his hands gripped her sides, all made her feel weak and dizzy and aching for something.

"Pretty, isn't it?" Libby asked softly, turning away from him and toward the mirror.

She put her hands on her hips and arched her back, angling her bare midriff as she looked at herself in the mirror. She touched her tummy, her eyes moving over the smooth skin of her legs, turning so she could see the back and how the mesh panties curved over the rounded swell of her behind.

"It is," her father agreed, clearing his throat. His eyes still followed her hands as she adjusted the straps and, looking over at him, Libby saw something that shocked her—he had an erection.

"Excuse me for a moment." He didn't cover himself, but he stood quickly and went out the door and down the hall to the bathroom.

She stared after him, and then looked back at her reflection in the mirror, the way the crotch of the panties cupped her mound, how the bra pressed her breasts up and together.

She pulled the dress over her head and found a pair of black strappy shoes tucked away in the corner of the chest that she put on and practiced walking in. Wobbly and unsure, she paced back and forth in front of the mirror.

"Libby," her father said from the doorway and she turned, startled. He was flushed, but she noticed his erection was gone.

She smiled, gathering her hair up and putting it on top of her head. "What do you think?"

He took a deep breath and let it out with a shake of his head. "I think you're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen."

"Daddy!" she admonished, blushing and letting her hair fall to look in the mirror. "Am I really?"

"Yes," he breathed, closing his eyes for a moment and then opening them to smile at her. "There's only one other woman in the world who has ever taken my breath away like you do in that dress."

Libby felt something small and tight turn over in her lower belly as she walked, a little unsteady, into his arms, pressing herself against him and giving him a kiss on the cheek.

"Thank you, Daddy," she whispered. "I love you."

* * * *

"Well, I suppose my old dress is better than no dress," Kim remarked, fingering the material and glancing over at Libby. "Does it fit you?"

"She looks just like you did in it at that age, Kim," Ed replied, coming into the living room with two diet Cokes and handing her one. "I couldn't believe it."

"So are you coming?" Libby asked as her mother sat at the other end of the sofa.

"I suppose," Kim said with a shrug. "As long as I don't have to go nude."

"You're in luck," Ed said with a smile. "You picked the one day of the year when we do something with clothes on."

"Do you remember the last time I wore that dress?" Kim asked. Libby saw some sort of communication pass between her parents.

Ed popped the tab on his Coke, sitting next to his daughter. "Of course I do."

"The night you were conceived," her mother told Libby, using a long fingernail under the tab on her Coke.

Libby looked up at her father, remembering his reaction to her in the dress. "Oh."

Kim's cell phone rang and Libby rolled her eyes, reaching for the remote. It was the fourth time in as many hours.

"Hello?" her mother said after flipping it open, sighing as Libby turned up the TV. "Hang on, David..."

Kim scooted off the sofa and went into the kitchen, but they could still hear her talking.

"No, I told you...Wednesday..." Kim paced, prowling the perimeter of the small kitchen. Libby saw her mother out of the corner of her eye. "Yes, I promise you, I'm keeping my clothes on..."

Libby snorted, nudging her father in the ribs. He shook his head and shrugged, taking another drink of his Coke.

"It's disturbing, actually." Her mother lowered her voice. "They're both naked together all the time, and I told you about the supposed nightmare thing..."

Standing, Libby tossed the remote next to her father. "I'm going to bed."

"It's only eight o'clock." He looked up at her, surprised.

She shrugged. "I'm tired..."

Libby heard them talking in the living room, her mother asking about her. She tried to drown them out, looking for a cool spot on the sheets. Most nights they left the windows open, but tonight she felt unusually warm, even though there was enough of a breeze to blow the curtains around.

Squirming under the covers, she kicked them off. Every time she closed her eyes, she remembered her father watching her try on her mother's dress. She could feel his hands, helping her hook her bra, the way his lips brushed over the skin of her belly like a brand.

She wasn't sure if it was excitement or shame that made her so warm and flushed, but whichever it was, it was a long time before she drifted off, her mind returning to that moment again and again, when she looked over and saw the proof of his arousal swelling between his thighs.

It was late when he slipped into bed beside her and leaned over to kiss her shoulder in the dark. His lips were soft, warm, and she remembered his mouth and breath against her belly, how he looked at her. Every movement made her tingle—the weight of him in the bed beside her, the shift of him rolling onto his side.

She feigned sleep for a while, listening to the sound of his breathing become deep and even as she stared up at the shadow patterns the curtains made as they blew the moonlight around the ceiling. The breeze touched her skin, giving her goose bumps, although she didn't feel cold. In fact, she felt entirely too warm, her whole body filled with a slow heat.

"Daddy?" Libby whispered in the dark, looking over at his broad back, hearing the sound of his breathing. He didn't respond and she knew he was asleep.

Closing her eyes, she slipped her hand down over her belly, finding the soft, downy red triangle of hair between her thighs where all of her feeling seemed centered tonight. Everything down there was swollen, wet, and her fingers slipped easily between her lips, through the soft folds of flesh.

She remembered his hands, the way they gripped her, the look in his eyes, like he could devour her, as she nudged her tender, sensitive clit in the dark with her fingers as quietly as she could. Her breath came faster as she recalled how hard he had grown just from looking at her in a pair of panties and a bra, how the sight of her barely concealed flesh had aroused him.

Her fingers circled her clit, pressing it harder, faster, her muscles tightening against the mattress as she imagined her father's hard cock, the way it swelled and stood up and pointed at her, as if it wanted something. That one brief moment of arousal, knowing he was looking at her, desiring her, the lust showing not just in his eyes, but throbbing undeniably between his legs as well, made her wild with wanting.

What would it feel like? She wondered with a shiver, sneaking a hand up and tweaking her nipple. What would it be like if he kissed her and pressed it up against her? She'd watched his erection rise like an exclamation point, a demand, something that knew exactly what it wanted and knew just how to take it.

Libby tried hard to control her breathing as she rubbed and rubbed her clit, listening for any sounds or indication her father might be waking. She knew she shouldn't be doing this, thinking about this, but she couldn't help it. His body had responded to the sight of her, and her body now responded to his presence, so close, less than a foot away from her on the mattress. She wanted to reach over and touch him, and she wanted him to touch her.

Her fingers were wet and slick with her juices and she couldn't control her breath at all anymore. It came faster and faster, she was panting and gasping, her thighs trembling with her effort.

"Oh Daddy," she whispered, her breath hitching, her voice barely audible even to her own ears.

She was arching as her belly tightened, her fingers edging her clit toward release. "Daddy, yes, yes."

Her climax shook her and the bed, although she tried hard to be still, not to cry out as the waves of pleasure rolled through her. She took a deep, hitching gasp, still petting her sticky mound in the darkness, her fingers playing idly, unfocused, just teasing little shock waves through her body now and then.

Quietly, self-conscious now, she rolled to her tummy, hugging her pillow. She closed her eyes, her body finally relaxing, sinking into the mattress as she began to drift off.

In the morning, she recalled whispering, "I love you, Daddy," just before she sailed off into sleep, and thought he might have breathed, "I love you, too"—but maybe, she told herself in the light of day, maybe it was just a dream.

* * * *

Libby wasn't used to being looked at. Strangely, living nearly her whole life among nudists made her quite unselfconscious—but she was used to being around people who didn't look at her in a sexual way. She'd had boyfriends, of course, but it was a Christian community, and people didn't act or think that way, for the most part. Being naked stripped everyone of their pretenses, and there was nothing left to hide, so there was nothing really to look at.

Now, on her way back to the dance floor from the bathroom, she felt eyes on her in a way she never had before. Men looked at her breasts, pressed up in her new bra,

and her legs, which looked long and shapely in heels. It made her feel shy, something entirely new to her.

"Hey, would you like to dance?"

Libby noticed his tattoo first, a tribal arm band that showed beneath the sleeve of his t-shirt. Then she met his eyes, bright blue and smiling, his hair nearly as red as her own, although she thought it might have been dyed. She opened her mouth to reply and found she couldn't form the words.

"Come on," he said, standing. "This is a great song."

Libby waved to her parents on her way by, pointing to the young man holding her hand and then to the dance floor. The community held an open—and clothed—get-together once a year, where people could invite their family members and friends who might have concerns about a nudist environment. Daddy joked it was the "We're Not Aliens" dance.

The music was too loud for them to talk and so they just danced, song after song, their bodies shifting closer together as the floor got more crowded. Libby was sweating lightly and noticed he was damp, too, when he pressed her to him for a slow dance and they finally got a chance to breathe. She looked for her parents and saw their heads were bent close and her mother was sipping her drink.

"What's your name?" he asked against her ear. The feel of his breath there sent shivers through her.

"Libby."

"I'm Will. Nice to meet you, Libby." He pressed closer still until she was breathless with the heat of them together.

"I'm thirsty," Libby protested, when a new song started. "Do you want to meet my parents?"

Will raised his eyebrows, but smiled and nodded. "Sure."

Libby made the introductions and while her mother smiled and offered Will a seat, her father stood, towering over Will as he shook his hand.

Instead of sitting, too, Libby slipped behind her father's chair as he sat, putting her arms around his neck. "Come dance with us, Daddy."

"Only if your mother joins us." Ed glanced over at Kim. "Don't want to leave her here all by herself."

Libby gulped the rest of her father's diet Coke. Kim took her estranged husband's hand as they stood. The music was even louder on the dance floor and the bodies were warm and moist around them, a surfing swell of flesh that rocked and swayed together.

Bumping her hip against his, Libby teased her father as she watched her parents put their arms around each other for a dance as the music slowed. Libby and Will melted into each other but she found she couldn't concentrate on anything, because her mother's head was resting against her father's shoulder, and Libby saw the tender look in his eyes as he stroked her hair.

They danced together all night long. Once her mother was out there, she didn't seem to want to get off the floor, except to go back to the table for a drink. When the last slow dance had ended, Libby said goodbye to Will, who asked for her number, and then she went to find her parents.

Kim was leaning against Ed as they left, the night air cool against their damp skin as they walked home. Libby watched as her mother put her arm around his waist.

Her father helped her mother to the bedroom when they got into the door. Libby slipped out of her shoes, her feet sore, and took off her dress, spreading it out on the chair and looking at it. She was standing there in her black bra and panties when her father came back into the living room—she heard him gasp.

"Is she ok?" Libby asked.

He was still wearing a suit and he looked so strange to her, not like her father at all. His eyes weren't his either, raking over her, looking at her in the way the men in the club had looked at her. She knew what that look meant and it made her feel tingly and warm all over.

"She had a little too much to drink," he father said, sitting on the couch, still staring at her. He patted the sofa and she moved to curl up beside him. He put his arm around her shoulders. "But she'll sleep it off."

"You still love her," she whispered, snuggling up and putting her head under his chin.

He sighed. "I do."

"She's leaving tomorrow," she reminded him, sliding her hand idly over his chest. She wasn't used to so much fabric between them. "She leaves, Daddy. That's what she does."

"I know," he replied with another sigh. "You coming to bed?"

She slid away from him. "No. I'll sleep out here tonight. Until she's gone."

"Don't let her do this, baby." Ed frowned, sliding his hand over her shoulder, brushing her hair out of her face.

"She changes everything," Libby murmured, feeling her mother's judgment and the self-consciousness she brought along covering her like a blanket and she closed her eyes against it. "That's what she does."

Her father quoted softly, "Then the eyes of both were opened and they realized that they were naked."

"So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves," she returned his quote with one of her own, pulling a blanket up past her waist, nudging him with her bare foot. "Go to bed, Daddy."

* * * *

She didn't know what time it was when she woke up in a strange place, the dog snoring against her feet. Her dream was still bleeding in around the edges, and she couldn't remember anything except the feeling she had lost something. She found herself left with that aching tickle between her legs that made her roll around on the sofa, tugging the blanket between her legs.

She ached all over and longed for warmth. The dog raised his head as Libby stood, the blanket trailing behind her as she made her way down the hall toward Daddy's room. Her old bedroom door was open, she noticed—so was the bathroom, and the door to her father's room at the end of the hall.

That's when she heard her mother's voice. "Yes! Oh, Ed, don't stop!"

Libby froze, pulling the blanket tighter around her. Now she heard the sound of bedsprings squeaking, the headboard knocking rhythmically against the wall.

She heard her father groan and call out her mother's name. A slow heat filled Libby's chest and belly as she listened to them.

"Harder, baby," her mother moaned. "Yeah, oh, that's it!"

Libby found herself creeping toward the sound of them rocking and moaning in the dimness. She could see past the door frame now, her father poised above her mother, the covers over the lower half of their bodies in the early morning light. The clock on the nightstand read 5:18.

"Oh God!" her mother cried, her hands moving over his broad, strong back. "Oh baby, fuck me harder! Yes, yes!"

The heat spread through Libby's belly, lower into her groin, her eyes wide and mouth agape as she watched her parents having sex. Her father grunted and moaned, and she saw them kiss, their mouths hungry and eager for each other.

"Ohhhh Kim," he moaned, his movements growing faster, harder. Libby bit her lip, a deep ache between her legs. "I can't hold back..."

"Yes," her mother purred. "I'm so close."

It was over like that, a fast, furious pumping, the soft moans and cries of her mother, the growl and thrust of her father as they came together in a moment of bliss that left Libby paralyzed and breathless as she watched them from the doorway.

"Oh hell," she heard her father say as he rolled to one side. The light coming in from the window was a little brighter now and Libby could see them sprawled side by side. "We shouldn't have done that."

"I know," her mother gasped, putting an arm over her eyes. "Fuck."

"I'm sorry," Ed apologized, turning up on his elbow.

"No you're not." Libby said the words, startling them all.

"Libby!" her father called after her, pounding on the bathroom door that she locked behind her.

She didn't answer him. She just slid down the wall, put her fist against her mouth, and sobbed.

* * * *

"Libby?"

She knew it was her mother, coming to say goodbye. What a novel idea.

Libby had stayed inside on the couch all day, curled up in front of the TV, naked under a blanket. Her father had tried several times to talk to her, but she'd turned away from his words. They left in the morning to go to the lawyer, and Libby had slept a good deal of the afternoon away, listening to the faint sounds of them talking in the kitchen.

With a sigh, Libby lifted her head off the couch cushion, not at all prepared for the sight of her mother standing in the doorway with the big, blue suitcase. Her stomach clenched, and she turned back towards the TV, pretending to be interested in a re-run of *Friends*.

She felt the sofa shift as her mother sat. There was water running in the kitchen and she knew her father was cleaning up the dinner dishes. Her stomach growled in protest. She hadn't eaten anything all day.

"Libby, remember when I said I'd give it a chance?"

Closing her eyes, she tried to block out the words.

"And you said you'd give me one, right?" Her mother's hand on her hip, rubbing.

"Can we try again? Maybe you can come visit me in Arizona."

The other side of the world, Libby thought. Might as well be a different planet.

"You better go," Libby mumbled, pushing her mother's hand off her hip.

"I love you, Libby." Her mother stood with a sigh, reaching down to finger a long strand of her hair.

Looking up at her for a moment, she almost believed, but then she saw the blue suitcase waiting by the door. The water had stopped in the kitchen and she sensed her father's presence behind them, watching.

"Go." Libby waved her away, her eyes back on the TV. "Leave us alone. It's what you wanted. It's what you're good at."

"Libby—" Her father's voice, pleading with her.

Libby pulled the blanket around her, standing. "Don't you talk to me. Not after last night."

She went to her own room, burying her face in the pillow. It smelled like her mother's hair and she sobbed into it, hearing the sound of the door, her father's goodbye. She couldn't help peeking out the window, but all she saw was a glimpse of the blue suitcase as the driver put it into the trunk. Inside the cab, her mother was in shadow, and then she was gone.

* * * *

She woke up screaming and he came and carried her to his bed, stroking and petting her all the way. The dream wasn't clear, fading and fuzzy around the edges, but the pain cut through like knives with every breath she managed to draw against his chest.

"She left, Daddy, she left." Libby sobbed.

"I know, baby." She thought she felt his tears, too, as he rocked her.

He kissed her hair, her cheek, and Libby felt that heat spreading in her belly as she turned her head toward him in the dimness and his lips found hers. He was kissing her like he had kissed her mother and her hand tugged at the hair at the back of his neck.

"Libby!" he exclaimed, pushing her to arms length.

They both rode the shockwave of it, gasping in the darkness.

"Daddy?" She moved closer, past the stiffness of his arms, softening him as she pressed her silky, supple flesh against his lean length.

He let out a long sigh. "I'm sorry, honey. I can't stop thinking about you, how you looked so much...like her...in that dress..."

"She's gone," Libby whispered. "I'm here, Daddy. I'm here."

"Oh Libby," he groaned and leaned in to kiss her again, a full, open-mouthed kiss, a hungry, eager, greedy kiss, drawing her in deeply. "Watching you dancing, seeing you in that bra and those black panties..."

His words thrilled her and Libby gasped when she felt his thigh slip between hers, fitting his body against her. She felt his erection against her hip, and knew just what it was and what it meant.

She moaned when his fingers moved over her breast as he kissed her again, pulling and tugging at her nipple as his tongue twined with hers.

"I was imagining you," her father whispered into her ear as he rolled onto her, spreading her thighs with his. "I was fucking your mother, and I was imagining how you would feel under me...wrapped around me...I wanted to make you come for me, Libby."

"Oh Daddy," she cried when his mouth found her breasts, sucking and licking like a man sent to devour her flesh.

"I heard you," he murmured, flicking her nipple with his tongue, teasing it. "I heard you touching yourself that night. I felt your whole body trembling with it..."

Libby groaned, her face flushing in the darkness. "... couldn't help it..."

"I know," he whispered, slipping a hand down between her legs, seeking her heat. "It's ok. Don't be ashamed, baby. I don't ever want you to be ashamed."

"No," she whispered back, her hands in his hair as he parted her lips with his fingers. "You taught me that. The world out there doesn't understand it. *She* didn't understand it...but I do, Daddy. I do."

She saw his eyes gleaming in the darkness, the light from a full moon casting them in a silver haze together. He was looking at her in the way that he had the other night, his fingers probing gently between her legs, his lustful eyes sweeping over her body in the dimness.

"Beautiful girl," he murmured, moving his hips with hers. "You're the only one I could ever hope would understand."

"Am I?" Libby whispered, moaning when he leaned in and kissed her.

"Yes," her father whispered against her neck, kissing over her freckled shoulders, over the gentle swell of her breast, sucking a nipple again into his mouth.

"Oh, Daddy," she cried as he suckled and nipped at her flesh and she felt the rigid length of him rubbing against her thigh.

"Fearless, beautiful, shameless," he whispered, kissing down her belly, dipping his tongue into her navel. He spread her slender thighs with his big palms, breathing her in and then sinking into heaven, his tongue exploring her soft, pink folds.

"Oh!" Libby moaned when his mouth settled at the top of her swollen cleft, his tongue making slow, lazy spirals against her flesh. "Yes...yes!"

He moaned against her softness, his face buried between her thighs, his tongue working there like a man possessed. She heard him swallowing her, his hands opening her legs wider, pressing them back, leaving her completely exposed. His mouth sent the most divine sensations through her, making her wiggle and moan and reach for him like she wanted something.

"Oh please," she begged, her hands roaming over her own body, her palms brushing against her nipples, sending sweetness down between her legs. She wanted more, her flesh on fire, his tongue the most exquisite torture she'd ever known.

"Daddy," she cried, using her fingers to spread herself more open for his mouth. "Oh yes!"

His fingers, probing between her legs, slid into the slickness between her thighs, stroking there, easing in a little at a time. Just one finger slipping through her flesh as he licked her, moving in and out.

"Oh God," she moaned, feeling completely undone in that moment, rocking on a cloud of her own pleasure, her hands grasping for something to hold onto and finding his hair. "Oh Daddy, yes, I'm... I'm ..."

And then she was spinning and dizzy with it, gasping and shuddering against him as the most delicious, rhythmic pulse beat against his groaning and growling mouth between her legs.

"Libby," he murmured, kissing his way up her quivering belly, his mouth wet with her as he found hers and she tasted herself for the first time. "Oh, God, baby you are so beautiful."

She felt the heat of him, a steel rod pulsing against the wet cleft between her thighs as he kissed her, his tongue twined with hers, sucking at her, biting at her lips.

"Then the eyes of both were opened and they realized that they were naked," Libby whispered, his thumbs moving over the pink swell of her nipples, making her gasp and squirm against him.

"I don't want you to hide." He rocked his hips and she felt how stiff he was between them. "Sex and flesh aren't a sin."

"I know." She closed her eyes and rocked with him. "You taught me that, too..."

"This is Eden," he whispered against her mouth, licking at her lips. "We're in the garden. No fear, no shame..."

His hands moved through her hair, his shaft teasing her slit, rubbing up and down the length of it.

"This is freedom," he murmured, rocking, his breath coming faster as he rolled her hips. "...salvation..."

"Yes." Libby kissed him back, her tongue probing between his teeth.

"Wild nights, wild nights—" He whispered between kisses, his hands grabbing her hips and pressing against her with his erection.

"What is that?" Libby murmured. "The bible?"

"No." Her father gasped, groaning when she reached between them to touch his length, her fingers tickling the head. "Emily Dickinson...Rowing in Eden; Ah, the Sea! Might I but moor-tonight... In thee..."

Libby moaned, rocking under him like a wave. "Yes, Daddy... *in me*..."

"Oh, Libby—" She stopped his words with her mouth, her wet slit open and rubbing over his shaft as she moved her hips up to meet him.

"Yes," she whispered, reaching down and touching him, rubbing the spongy, velvety tip of him into her flesh, making them both moan with the sensation.

He groaned when she pulled at him, pressed him, aiming him.

"Please." Libby wiggled, squeezed, the head of him positioned against her softness. She rocked, the tip moving over the slick folds, through her wetness, not quite inside.

"Oh God," he moaned against her neck. "Oh fuck, oh God..."

The word made Libby gasp and sent a jolt straight up her spine. "Yes, Daddy," she whispered against his ear, still rocking, pushing him a little further. "Fuck... *me*."

He gasped and she clung to him, squirming.

"Don't leave me, Daddy," she pleaded.

They both gave in to it, right at that moment, a cry that sounded like he was in pain escaping her father's lips as he moved into her, sinking past her resistance, making her gasp and blink in startled surprise at the thick stretch of him between her thighs.

"Oh!" she cried, clutching him, and they both trembled.

"It's ok," he whispered, feathering kisses over her freckled cheeks. "Daddy's here."

"Yes." Libby squeezed him between her legs, feeling the slow stretch and burn starting to fade.

"Here ..." Her hand reached down between them, feeling the point of contact, the thick pulse of him filling her. "Here."

"Oh baby girl," he murmured as he began to move inside of her, and she wrapped her limbs around him, pulling him in tighter, wanting more. The heat between her thighs began to grow, the delicious friction of his shaft sliding through her wetness making her weak with it.

"God..." His movements were faster, and she remembered how he moved inside her mother that night, how she had watched them and wanted this.

His voice was hoarse and pained. "Oh God forgive me...you feel so...good..."

"Yes," Libby purred into his ear, grinding her hips up against his, feeling him driving deeper into her soft, pink flesh. "Fuck me, Daddy!"

He groaned at her words, his breath hot and coming fast in her ear. "Beautiful baby girl," he whispered, and she felt the swell of him between her legs. "You make Daddy feel soooo good."

"Harder," Libby begged, digging her nails into his back, arching. He was rubbing there, between her legs, a slow burn turning quickly to white heat. "Faster...oh, please!"

He grunted, moving harder into her flesh, the wet sound of their bodies together filling her ears as they rocked. She moaned, meeting him, feeling every inch of him as he thrust harder into her, the bed shaking beneath her with his effort.

"Oh Daddy!" She twisted and squirmed with her ache, their bodies slick.

"Yes," he groaned, his hips rocking her into oblivion. "Come on. Come for Daddy."

"Now," she moaned, clutching him and arching up, grinding her hips as her climax peaked and shuddered through her, making her cry out and mew beneath him as the heavenly waves washed over her again and again.

"God," he grunted, her soft wetness all aflutter around him, pulling him deeper. "Oh fuck, I'm going to come!"

Libby felt the heat of him, a thick pulse between her legs, his shaft swelling with it and then bursting inside of her, making him groan and tremble. He collapsed onto her and she felt him shivering against her neck.

"Oh, what have we done?" she gasped as he rolled onto his side next to her.

"We found paradise," he replied as she snuggled up against his side. "Heaven on earth."

"This is the garden." She felt him touch her lips with trembling fingers in the darkness. "I love you, Daddy."

She kissed his palm. "I'll never leave you."

He sighed, pulling her into him, kissing the top of her head. They rolled together and slept, Libby nestled under his arm, her back pressed against his belly, and there were no more nightmares.

Lassoing the Moon

She was going to hell. There was no getting around it—do not pass go, do not collect two-hundred-dollars—she was going straight to hell without any little orange "Get out of hell free" card.

"Your turn."

Leila rolled the dice, moved her little shoe, and bought Baltic Avenue for a song. She could start putting houses on it now, since she owned Mediterranean as well. But she wasn't thinking about Monopoly. She couldn't think about anything, watching her twenty-year-old son home from college, sitting out in the living room in his boxers watching The Ultimate Fighting Championships on ESPN.

She was so going to hell.

"Ha! You owe me!"

Leila glanced up at her niece, startled, and forked over the money. Small price to pay for a little bit of freedom. If she just kept rolling the dice, moving around the board, no one would notice that she was watching him out of the corner of her eye, looking at the tight, ridged muscles in his stomach, the dark line of hair that disappeared below his boxers, dreaming about the hard cock she had accidentally caught him stroking in the bathroom that morning...

"Don't you want to put hotels on!?" Chloe nudged her aunt under the table, making a face. "You're not paying attention!"

Damn. Caught. Leila bought four houses, arranging the green plastic pieces on the board, glancing at the clock. Her sister should be back soon to pick up Chloe, anyway. There was no way they were going to finish this game.

Rich made fake punches in his seat, watching the fight. "Oh, man, he opened himself up for the leg sweep!"

"Boardwalk!" Chloe squealed, bouncing in her seat and waving an orange five-hundred dollar bill. "Gimme, gimme!"

Leila, as banker, gave over the property and a hundred dollars in change.

"Dude!" Rich yelled, jumped up in his seat. "Fucking choked him out!"

"Rich!" Leila warned, nodding her dark head toward Chloe.

"Whoops." He walked toward the kitchen table. "Sorry, punk." He ruffled Chloe's hair as he went by, heading for the refrigerator. "Nothing you haven't heard before, right?"

"Not the point." Leila watched him standing in front of the open door, the light casting a glow over his strong jaw. Sometimes, like now, he looked so much like his father it made her heart hurt.

He grabbed a Heineken, screwing the lid off and tossing it on the counter. She watched him down half of it, still standing in front of the open door, her eyes watching his throat working as he swallowed.

"Hey, that better not be the last," Leila said as he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

Shutting the fridge door, he came to sit at the table between them. "Plenty left, Ma. So, who's winning?"

"Me!" Chloe piped up, fanning out her properties for him.

He raised his eyebrows, smiling around the rim of his beer. "Regular Donald Trump, aren'tcha?"

"Not so fast." Leila flashed Baltic and Mediterranean. "Technically, I've got the only Monopoly here!"

Chloe snorted, flipping her brown ponytail over her shoulder. "Well, I've got all four railroads and both utilities!"

The front door opened and Tanya breezed in, carrying dinner—her payment for Leila's babysitting services.

"It better not be sushi again," Rich muttered, trying to see around his mother to peer at the bags his aunt was carrying.

"I heard that, mister." Tanya set the bags on the table, breathless. "Boston Market—a normal chicken dinner, I'll have you know. Nothing raw—even the veggies are cooked."

"Did you get everything you needed?" Leila asked, raising her eyebrows at her sister. Tanya had gone Christmas shopping for Chloe.

Her sister nodded. "Almost."

"Mom, I'm winning!" Chloe jumped up and grabbed her mother's waist.

Tanya continued unpacking the bags around her daughter. "Good, sweetie."

"Actually, you won." Leila started to sweep the board. Rich helped her put away the pieces and she smiled a thank you.

"Can't we finish?" Chloe begged, watching the money and properties disappear into the rectangular box.

"Sorry, babe." Tanya crumpled up the empty bags. "We gotta get home."

"Aren't you staying to eat?" Leila handed the box top to Rich, watching him put the rest of the game away.

"Can't," Tanya replied. "Bill's coming over tonight."

Leila raised her eyebrows, glancing at Chloe. "On a school night?"

Tanya rolled her eyes. "At least I'm actually seeing someone and not pining away for some..."

Tanya stopped, glancing at Rich, whose eyes moved between his mother and his aunt.

Leila snorted, standing up and going to the cupboard to get plates. "I don't know if 'seeing' is the word I'd use."

"Come on, Chloe." Tanya held out her hand to her daughter. "Time to go."

"See ya, punk," Rich said to Chloe, who flashed him a shiny metal smile as he opened one of the plastic containers of chicken.

"Thanks for watching her, Li." Tanya pulled Chloe toward the door.

Leila shrugged, putting the plates on the table. "Sure. Thanks for dinner."

When they were alone, Rich went and got himself another beer, putting one in front of his mother. She thanked him, giving him a warm smile.

"So, you're pining, huh?" he asked through a mouthful of chicken.

Leila choked on her beer. "No."

"So how come you don't date?"

She watched him licking his greasy fingers and handed him a napkin. "I date."

"I think she's right," he went on, spooning up mashed potatoes. "You miss him."

Leila took another drink of her beer, her chest tight. "Yeah. Of course I miss him. He was the only man I ever loved."

Rich stopped, putting his chicken leg down. "You never said that."

"I know." She gave him a small smile, picking at her carrots.

He chewed thoughtfully, frowning. "Well, wherever he is, I hope his life with what's-her-name is a living hell."

Leila shook her head, clearing her barely touched plate. "I don't wish that. I hope he's happy."

Staring at her over his beer, he sighed. "You're too generous, Mother."

Washing her hands at the sink, she watched him shoveling the rest of his potatoes in, turning the spoon upside down to get them all, just like Frank always did. How could you inherit things like that, she wondered. The way he ran his hand through his hair, or hitched at his pants, or cleared his throat when he was nervous. Frank had done that, too.

"Wanna watch a movie with your ole Ma tonight?" Leila flicked water at him before grabbing a dish towel.

"No freaking *Terms of Endearment*," he warned, wiping his hands on the napkin.

"Awww, come on," she grinned. "You cry—every single time..."

He grabbed a carrot off his plate and threw it at her. "I do not!"

She loved the way his ears got red when he was angry or embarrassed—or turned-on. She hadn't known that little fact until this morning, of course. Watching him clear his plate, she remembered seeing him sitting on the toilet, his cock—my God, she hadn't seen him naked since he was ten!—seemed enormous to her as he pumped it in his fist.

It was his fault for leaving the door open, she reminded herself. He was away so much at school now that having him home was sometimes an afterthought. She had

done a load of laundry and figured he was still asleep in his bedroom—until she walked by the basement bathroom and saw him. It wasn't until just this moment that she realized he must have gone down there so as not to be disturbed. Yet she had discovered him, anyway.

"How about *It's a Wonderful Life*? That's a holiday classic," she said as he moved behind her with his plate. The presence of a man in the house again was intoxicating to her and she let herself revel in it for a moment as he clattered his dishes into the sink. She wished she could stop thinking about this morning. "I'll clean up and you make popcorn?"

"Deal." He gave her a peck on the cheek as he passed.

Leila pulled a blanket up around her as they started the movie and noticed it was snowing outside. The little table top tree in the corner of the room was the only light, other than monochrome glow of the television.

"Are you cold?" Rich asked, still stretched out in his boxers, his feet up on the coffee table.

"Always." She smiled at him, pulling the blanket up to her chin.

"Well, come here, then." He frowned, holding out his arm, and she snuggled up.

It wasn't the first time they'd sat like this and watched movies—he was a living furnace, like his father, and she always needed a blanket—but after this morning, things felt different to her. She knew he was sexually active, and they had gone through all the teenage angst about girls and wet dreams and Playboys stashed in his room. But he wasn't a little boy, or even a kid anymore—he was a man.

"Comfy?" he murmured, breathing deep as he squeezed an arm around her shoulder. Leila swallowed. She could have sworn he was smelling her hair.

"Very," she replied, although it wasn't entirely true—or, maybe, she was too comfortable.

The movie started, the familiar music like opening a door. It brought back instant memories of Christmases, she and Frank snuggled together like this with Rich tucked between them, watching the old angel try to get his wings. She found herself lost in them, drifting, her eyes even closing a little as she listened to her son's heartbeat against her ear.

"You always remind me of her," Rich said softly.

"Me?" Leila opened her eyes, looking at Donna Reed on the screen. She was about to lose her robe and end up in the hydrangea bushes. "Why, because we're both light brunettes?"

He smiled, shaking his head. "No, because you both always set your sights so high."

Leila glanced from him to the screen. His eyes were soft when they met hers, questioning even. They made her feel warm all over.

Rich started doing his Jimmy Stewart impression, which was actually quite good, stutter and all: "What is it you want, Mary? What do you want? You want the moon? Just say the word and I'll throw a lasso around it and pull it down."

"I'll take it," Leila quoted, reaching her arm across his belly and giving him a quick squeeze. She found her hand still resting lightly on his stomach, and she couldn't help noticing how tight and hard it was.

Rich nudged the blanket aside. Her blouse had pulled open slightly, exposing her neck and a little shoulder and his fingers moved lightly over her skin, making her shiver.

"I wish I could give it to you, Mom," he whispered, and she felt his lips touch her forehead. Everything inside of her went silent.

"You're very sweet," she replied, her voice trembling and slightly hoarse.

She didn't move her hand and he didn't move his and they watched as George Bailey delivered his own line about moons and lassos and then ran away into the night, leaving poor Mary deserted. But he came back, Leila reminded herself, dipping her finger into her son's navel and hearing his sharp intake of breath.

"I'm sorry about this morning," she whispered, looking down at the dark line of hair that started at his belly button and trailed down under the elastic band of his boxers. She grazed it lightly with her fingertip and found herself thinking about what lay beneath the navy blue material.

He shrugged. "I should have closed the door."

"Why didn't you?" She closed her eyes as his fingers moved lightly over her collarbone.

He swallowed. "I don't know. I guess I forgot."

Leila was trying hard to just keep breathing, to ignore the sweet sensation of his fingers on her skin, how it made her nipples tingle and harden. She didn't want to admit, even to herself, that she was getting wet, the gentle pulse between her legs turning into a throb.

"I didn't mean to interrupt," she murmured, teasing the waistband of his boxers with her fingertip. "It looked like you were...pretty close to finishing."

He cleared his throat, shifting his weight. "Yeah."

"Did you?" she asked after a moment, seeing what she was sure was a slow rise under his boxers as he shifted again.

"Mom..." he breathed as she snuggled a little closer, pressing her full breasts into his side.

"Did you come?" she whispered, seeing a definite tenting in his shorts now.

He swallowed and whispered, "Yeah."

"Good," she purred, feeling his hand slipping a little lower in her blouse. She knew she should stop him, stop herself, but she didn't seem to be able to. "I'm glad I didn't spoil it for you."

"You didn't," he assured her, moving his hips slightly, like he was trying to get comfortable.

"I haven't seen you naked since you were a little boy." He gasped when she slid one finger under the elastic waistband, tugging it up and letting it snap back. "It was kind of a shock."

"Yeah," he agreed, his voice lower, his breath warm and his lips almost touching her ear. "For me, too."

Slowly, she let her whole hand move underneath his shorts, reaching toward heaven or hell, she wasn't sure which, but she found she didn't want to stop.

"Mom!" he cried when she found him, just as thick and hard as he had been this morning.

She turned her face up to his. The kiss was sudden, their lips melding together, a slick heat between them as they both moaned in unison. Her hand tightened on his cock, making him gasp against her mouth.

"Oh God, Mom," he murmured as she squeezed and tugged between his legs. Leila watched his face, saw the pleasure there, and moved her hand a little bit faster, making him groan out loud.

She leaned in to kiss him again. His tongue found hers as she stroked his shaft, his hips beginning to match her rhythm. Moving her blanket aside, he slipped his hand under her blouse, his fingers sliding over her bra, cupping the fullness of her breast as he kissed her back.

What am I doing, she thought, rubbing her finger over the spongy head of his cock. The thought took precedence for a moment and then his thumb found her nipple, making it harden against the material and sending delicious waves of pleasure trembling through her. It had been so long...*so long*...

On the screen, George Bailey was ranting to Mr. Potter about sitting around and spinning webs. Neither of them were paying attention anymore, all pretenses dropped as they pressed against each other, their hands fumbling, their tongues twining together, lost in their lust as they rolled on the sofa.

"You're so hard," Leila murmured as she slid to the floor between his thighs, tugging at his boxers while he lifted his hips. She gasped when his cock sprang free, pointing toward the ceiling. "Oh baby...you've got such a beautiful cock..."

He moaned as she took him in her hand and slid her tongue around the tip, watching his face as she began to suck him. She couldn't take her eyes off him, the way

he looked at her, like he was lost in a dream and couldn't quite believe this was happening. She couldn't either—but it felt so good. His cock was steel heat in her throat. It had been ages since she had done this, but she remembered it, and savored it, making soft noises in her throat as she swallowed as much of his shaft as she could.

Watching her through half-closed eyes, he reached down to touch her breast through her blouse, sending immediate heat flooding through her chest when he found and rubbed her nipple. She squirmed between his thighs, sucking him harder, licking all around the head before going back down on him.

"Let me see, Mom." His voice was hoarse and he was tugging at her blouse.

Sitting back, she worked the buttons with trembling fingers, wet with her saliva. He took his cock in his hand, stroking it as he watched her, and she couldn't take her eyes off his shaft, how it glistened, how the skin pulled up over the head.

She peeled her blouse off her shoulders and knelt up between his legs, seeing his eyes focused on her breasts. Smiling, she unclasped the front hook, opening her bra and letting the full, rounded globes spill out against his thighs.

"Oh God," he groaned, looking at her topless between his legs and reaching for her with his other hand.

"Do you like them?" She gasped when he found her nipple, rolling the dark, fleshy bud between his thumb and forefinger, sending a jolt through her.

"You're beautiful," he whispered, his hand moving faster on his cock as he tugged and squeezed her breast.

She snuggled up a little closer to him, wedging herself between his thighs and pressing her breasts against his hard shaft. Taking him in her hand, she slid him in

between her cleavage, pressing her heavy breasts around the thick meat of him. He moaned as she started to move, using her soft flesh to create a smooth tunnel for him to slide through.

"Fuck Mommy's tits, baby," she whispered, watching the tip of his cock appearing every time she went down again and reaching her tongue out for it.

He groaned and began to thrust up against her, his hands covering hers as he shoved his cock between her heavy breasts. His breath was coming in short gasps, his thighs quivering, and she knew he was getting closer.

Leaning in, she slid her whole body up him, her mouth capturing his, trapping his throbbing cock between their bellies. Her pussy was aching, longing to be touched, and she stood between his legs, unsnapping her jeans and sliding them down her hips.

"Oh," he breathed, watching her turn her back to him as she wiggled them down her ass, taking her panties with them. Then she faced him again, completely naked, and he reached for her, my God, her son reaching out for her, wanting her, she had seen that look in his eyes a thousand times but never like this...

She pressed forward, the full, dark triangle between her legs at his eye level, and he was staring at it, his hand on his cock, squeezing hard.

"Do you like it?" she murmured, putting one foot up on the arm of the sofa and using her fingers to spread her lips, showing him the promise of pink inside. He nodded, swallowing, watching her move her fingers through the soft folds of flesh, slipping through the wetness there.

"Feels so good," she whispered as she slipped two fingers inside, her thumb moving to find her clit. The wet sound of her fingering herself filled the room and her

son's eyes were glued between her legs, his hand moving faster and faster on his cock.

"Do you want to taste, baby?"

He groaned, nudging her fingers out of the way as he leaned forward, looking up at her, over the soft, rounded belly and full breasts as she watched him moving toward her center. His fingers found her first, probing between her lips, parting the thick, wiry hair and getting lost in the softness inside.

"Oh baby," she moaned, feeling his hand moving behind her, cupping her ass as his fingers slipped in deeper, beginning to slide in and out. "Please..."

He sank his tongue between her lips then, quickly searching out and finding her clit, and she realized with a start that this was hardly the first time he had done this. His tongue was skilled, moving around the sensitive bud of flesh, making her gasp and squirm, but the hand against her ass squeezed hard, holding her tight against his mouth.

She sank her hands into his thick, dark hair, rocking and moaning against his tongue. His fingers didn't stop, driving faster and harder into her flesh as he licked her, making soft noises in his throat as he swallowed her juices. Looking down at him, seeing his eyes, his mouth tight against her pussy, working her flesh with his tongue, was too much. She knew she was going to come, she couldn't stop it, didn't want to anymore—she was his.

"Oh Richie," she moaned, using a name she hadn't called him since he was young, grinding hard as she felt her orgasm swelling. He seemed to know it was coming, his tongue moving lightning fast between her lips, back and forth now, his fingers pistoning into her flesh, and she couldn't resist it anymore.

She shuddered, her knees almost buckling as she came, her pussy spasming around his fingers again and again. He didn't let her go, his hand on her ass, steadying her, his tongue sending tremoring waves of pleasure through her body as he continued to fuck her with his fingers.

Panting, she pushed his head back, looking down and seeing her juices all over his cheeks and chin, and she smiled, leaning over to kiss him, tasting herself in his mouth. She felt his cock against her thigh as she pressed between his, the tip wet with pre-cum, and she pushed him back as she straddled him on the sofa.

"Mom," he gasped as she reached between them, tugging at his shaft, aiming him. She shook her head, kissing him into silence. Whatever second thoughts he was having, whatever doubts and fears she might have had, were simply being melted away in the heat between them.

"I want to fuck you," she whispered, kissing his cheeks, his chin, rubbing the head of his cock between her swollen pussy lips.

He groaned, thrusting up towards her, his cock finding her opening, his hands going immediately to her hips. They both gasped when she was sitting fully impaled on his cock, their eyes meeting, their bodies slick and trembling together. Leila thought her heart would stop, seeing the pleasure bordering on pain in her son's face, and then he began to move inside of her.

There was no thinking then—there was only the sweet, delicious friction between them building up as they rocked together. She leaned in to him, kissing his cheek, his ear, his neck, tasting the salt of his sweat, biting at his shoulder when he dug his fingers

into her ass. He guided her, pulling her pussy down hard into his groin as he thrust up deep inside of her.

"Do you like that?" she whispered into his ear as she squeezed her muscles around him. He hissed and gripped her ass, rolling her around on his cock.

"Yeah," he panted, his belly hard and tight against her softness. "I love it."

"Tell me," she murmured, rolling her hips, now, too, feeling her clit rubbing against his shaft. "Tell me you love fucking your mother's pussy."

"Oh God," he growled, driving himself up into her now, slamming her down onto his cock. "I love fucking you, Mom!"

The sound of the words gave an immediate edge to her pleasure and she clutched him, working for it, grinding her hips as he fucked her.

"You're going to make me come again, Richie," she whispered into his ear, holding him tight.

"Ohhh fuck!" he groaned, and she felt his whole body strung and quivering with it, like a bow pulled tight and waiting, and then letting go, an arrow seeking its mark.

"Yes," she purred, rocking and rolling against his groin, feeling his cock beginning to flood her with thick, hot bursts of him. "Come in Mommy's pussy, baby."

He was lost in it, his head going back, his eyes closing, and she let herself go, too, following him over that delicious edge, her own eyes fluttering closed as she came all over his cock, her pussy fluttering around him, milking the last bit of his cum.

Panting, Leila slowly slid off his lap, reaching for the blanket and covering them both. His breath came in fast hitching sighs that started to slow as they both relaxed.

The slick wetness between her thighs was more than enough of a reminder to her of what they had done.

On the screen, Clarence was finally getting his wings, and she felt like she had, too.

"Are you ok?" he whispered, putting his arm around her shoulder and pulling her close. His eyes were concerned, loving, and she smiled, feeling tears welling.

"Yes," she answered, snuggling up, watching Zsu Zsu ringing the bell. "Are you?"

"Yeah." He kissed her forehead and breathed her in again.

"You know something, baby?" Leila murmured, finding his hand and clasping it. "I don't want the moon...I just want you."

Lost Souls

There were no mirrors in the house, but with night coming on in the lamplight, Lily could see her reflection in her bedroom window, enough to straighten and tuck and smooth her costume into submission. No makeup, she didn't dare hide it anywhere in the house for fear of getting caught, although she might stop by Amy's if there was time.

She glanced at her bedside clock. It was an old one, with a second hand, because of course nothing digital was allowed in the house, and certainly nothing with a radio. *At least it's not a sundial.* She smiled a little wryly at that. She bit her lips and pinched her cheeks for color, a trick she'd learned years ago from a girl in Sunday school.

She flipped her red hood up over her hair. It had never been cut and hung in dark waves down past her bottom. Usually it was braided or pulled back tightly and put up into a thick, complex kind of chignon her mother had taught her to configure when she was about thirteen.

That was the year before her mother had succumbed to metastasized breast-to-bone cancer, and there was such urgency in her teaching Lily hadn't really understood at the time. It had taken countless tearful tries for her to learn it, and she remembered how her arms ached and trembled after each hour-long session from the effort, but now, five years later, she could manage it in under ten minutes.

Tonight she felt very exposed with her hair down and was grateful for the costume's hood. The skirt felt too short, although she'd actually added three inches to the pattern. The lace-edged red-checked gingham didn't quite meet the white stockings she wore, which left her knees exposed. The air on her thighs felt coolly wicked and the

unexpected moistness between them made her flush. Her heart beat fast and hard, and she didn't know if it was from the excitement of going to the Halloween dance with Luke, or from her own defiance and a deep-seated fear of getting caught.

It was probably both.

She took a deep breath and closed her eyes, sending up a little prayer.

Please God, let this night go well, please let him like me and please don't let Adam find out.

All she wanted was a little taste of normal, one brief moment out of exile, just one carefree night of being with all the beautiful people. She heard Adam's voice in her head quoting scripture: "The wicked shall die for his guilt!" and she moved back from the window as if he were really there and could see her.

Oh what he would say, what he would do!

Her heart raced even faster at the thought, and she pressed her wet palms against her skirt to cool them.

"He's gone, Lily, he won't be home until tomorrow," she whispered reassuringly to herself.

She was supposed to be at church tonight, helping with the prayer circle, and she had *Jude the Obscure*, *Lolita*, *Catcher in the Rye* and the first of the Harry Potter books sitting on her bureau, all waiting to be set to flame at the finale of the church's evening—the annual book burning.

She'd read them all, down at her sewing table in the basement, running the foot pedal now and again with no thread, so Adam wouldn't suspect. *Lolita* in particular had given her a thrill and she'd found her hand sneaking up under her skirts, probing the wet

crevice in her white cotton panties and rubbing there until she was panting and breathless and then, oh then...

Lily squeezed her legs together at the memory, feeling both ashamed and an urgent longing to do it again, right now, this very moment, especially with so little material between her and the promised land. She resisted the urge, but enjoyed the aching pressure of her inner thighs coming together.

She'd been to a church service on every Halloween night since she could remember. No candy or trick or treating or costumes or parties for her. She knew other churches held carnivals and fall festivals and had bonfires on Halloween, but Adam wouldn't hear of it.

Instead, their church was praying tonight for the souls of those celebrating on what Adam insisted on calling by its old pagan name: "All Hallowed's Eve." She sometimes took a little consolation in the fact that they had a bonfire of their own, of sorts, every Halloween. It had only been the last four or five years that she'd actually started to read the books Adam would collect for the book burning.

This year, he'd actually left *Lolita* sitting on her bureau, and had given her a long lecture about it, how heinous, how perverse it was. As if she could possibly resist reading it after that? She'd thought it might be a test, him leaving it right there, speaking of it, walking away, but he'd never mentioned it again.

Adam always preached Halloween as the most dangerous of all the holidays, a night when the veil between worlds was thin, when the devil took every possible opportunity to tempt man to evil doings. She knew exactly how he would feel about what

she was doing. To celebrate on a night like tonight, to perform pagan rituals and call them by another name? Oh, no.

She could hear him, "Lily, don't you understand, it's all just an exercise in self-deception? An entire society professing to be Christian who celebrate this day of the occult by dressing up and passing out candy? It's heathen and profane! Paul told us, 'If it looks like evil, stay away from it!'"

She could see his dark eyes flashing, his earnest mouth and flushed cheeks. She took another trembling breath. *God please forgive me this one transgression*, she thought. *Just this one.*

She nervously smoothed her skirt again and straightened the laced bodice. The tops of her breasts felt too exposed, and her own breath on them made her break out in gooseflesh. She'd almost chosen a witch costume and had hungrily fingered the black satin in the fabric store, but had decided on this because she could explain away red checked gingham and even the red hooded cape, if she had to.

She worked on it in the basement, and she often made things for others, too, for spending money, so Adam didn't bother her about it. She'd prayed she would get away with that little gamble, and she had. It had made her bolder, and she had purchased a pair of red panties in a store in the mall—it was redolent with the smell of sachet. All of her undergarments were always plain white cotton and purchased at Target. She'd never had anything like these, silky and delicate and sheer. They went on like a whisper, like the telling of a deep, dark secret that breathed heat into her limbs.

The phone rang and she gasped, her heart leaping to touch her tonsils. She'd phoned the church earlier. Pastor Tom was there, filling in for Adam for the weekend, and she'd explained she had some sort of stomach virus and couldn't be there tonight.

Maybe this was him again, checking up on her? Or maybe it was Luke, calling to cancel? She'd very reluctantly given him her phone number, with strict instructions on when to call and not call, and what to say if Adam ever answered. *Please, God, don't let it be Luke*, she prayed as she ran down the stairs and grabbed it off the hook on the wall.

"Wolfe residence, how may I help you?" Lily answered breathlessly, by rote. She was glad she had, because Adam's voice crackled in the receiver.

"Lily, are you ok? Tom called me." His voice was soft and concerned, smooth as ever, like velvet over steel. She felt like she was swallowing past her beating heart.

"Just a little bug, Daddy," she replied, her voice small now. "I'll be fine by tomorrow for service, I'm sure."

She knew that even if she'd been really sick, she would have still had to go. She'd once had meningitis when she was six, and had fainted dead away on the pew a few minutes into the service, but no one had taken her to the hospital until it was over. Adam's services often ran two to three hours.

"That's my girl," he said. "You put on your PJs and go straight to bed. Would a warm bath help?"

"It might." She chewed nervously on her lower lip. "That's a good idea, Daddy, thank you."

"It's not a surprise on a night like tonight," he said darkly. "There are heathen everywhere, worshiping the God of demons, serving the Lord of the Dead. A devout Christian knows the true God is the God of the living, Lily."

"Yes, Daddy." She felt what her friend Amy called an "Adam-Bomb" coming on. She waited.

"The darkness of this night is everything He is not," he continued, his voice growing stronger, deeper. "Death, demons, the spirit world, mysticism, to say nothing of the silly costumes and the begging for candy. Do not be tempted by the darkness. Luke told us, Lily, he spoke God's word: 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' The devil will do everything he can to tempt you tonight. His ways are cunning and deceptive. You must resist with all your strength!"

"Yes, Daddy," Lily agreed quietly.

Luke, he'd said Luke! At the mention of the name, her eyes closed, and she could see Luke's face, his blue eyes and that half-lidded lazy look he gave her which made her knees weak under her long skirts. It was making her knees weak now, just remembering.

"This is not one of His holy days," Adam went on. "We reject pagan practices based on worship of the dead! You know there is only one Lord of the Dead, Lily, and that Lord is none other than Satan himself! We must pray for those unwitting sinners out there in their costumes, believing they are only making merriment on this evil night, because they are really celebrating the dead, and they do nothing but honor the Devil and invite him into their hearts!"

"Yes, Daddy, we pray for them," she breathed, sitting on one of the kitchen chairs, feeling a little faint, but still careful to smooth her skirt underneath her.

She knew she was hearing part of his sermon this weekend at the retreat. He was practicing—he often did that with her, using her as a sounding board, a congregation of one. There was no telling when Adam was going to decide to pontificate, but she'd learned she had to be ready, willing, and able to stop everything to listen. Most of the time, she didn't really mind. He was an amazing preacher, with a dramatic flair and a way of finding the perfect scriptures, even in the moment, to fit any occasion.

"Listen to me, Lily, you get to bed and stay there tonight." He'd stopped himself and turned his attention back to her. She loved when he did this, when he interrupted himself, realized she needed tending to in the midst of his discourse. He really did love her. She felt a twinge of guilt.

"I will be home soon to take care of you, I promise," he said. "I'll tuck you in and feed you soup and read to you." It sounded heavenly. Now the twinge of guilt was turning into a bigger tug, hearing the real concern and compassion in his voice. He was always so kind to her when she was ill that she'd feigned sickness as much as she could after her mother died just so she could find her way onto his lap and into his big, strong arms.

"Thank you, Daddy. I will," she said, adding softly, "I love you."

"I love you, too. I have to run, I'm on the pay phone and it's about to storm." His voice seemed even further away. "Take care of yourself, and I'll see you soon!"

"Goodbye, Daddy." She replaced the receiver and swallowed hard. Then the doorbell rang and she didn't have any more time to think or feel remorse. Her whole body responded like iron to a magnet: *Luke!*

When she opened the door, there he was, in breeches and knee-high black boots, a patch over his eye, a sword at his side. The sight of him grinning on her porch was more than she'd ever dared to dream of, and the way his eyes lit up at the sight of her, sweeping her over appreciatively, was more than enough to banish the thought of her stepfather from her mind.

"Hey there Little Red Riding Hood... you sure are lookin' good!" he exclaimed

She flushed, but she didn't get the reference to the 1960's Sam The Sham And The Pharaohs song. Any musical reference would have perplexed her, really, no matter what the decade. The only music she listened to was classical or gospel, and that only selectively, so she didn't recognize Luke's "You're everything that a big bad wolf could want. Owooooooooo!" either, but she thought it was endearing and funny, and she laughed.

She grabbed her little picnic basket—which also doubled tonight as her purse—and locked the door on the way out. The air filling her lungs was night-cold and dark and breathing felt like swallowing black ice. Darkness enveloped them as they moved away from the house toward his waiting car, the only illumination sporadic porch lights and the eerie glow of jack o'lantern faces leading costumed children to neighboring doors.

Their porch light, she remembered, had only been on once on a Halloween night that she could remember, when Adam had decided to hand out tracts and preach to the

trick or treaters who came to the door. Their house had been egged later that night, and Adam had never done that again.

Lily shivered, looking at the glowing face of a pumpkin shimmering on the porch across the way. They'd always been frightening to her, those disembodied heads, and this one, with its sharp teeth and narrowed eyes, seemed to both mock and menace her for her audacity in being out on this night. Luke's hand pressed lightly into the small of her back as he gentlemanly swung the passenger door open for her and she closed her eyes for a moment, savoring the sensation.

Please God, she sent another prayer heavenward. Just this one night. One magical night. Is that too much to ask for?

Hope fluttered lightly in her belly as Luke pulled out of the driveway, and she smiled shyly at him, liking the slow, easy smile she got in return. How could God ever condemn her for this feeling, she wondered. It was like every light in the world turned on when he smiled at her. It couldn't possibly be wrong. She slid across the seat closer to him, feigning cold, and he let her.

* * * *

Lily glanced over Luke's shoulder and saw Amy dancing with Chris, her witch's hat dangling behind her on its elastic band, tangled in her dark blonde hair. Amy turned, sensing her, and smiled, winking.

Luke pulled her closer, his lean hardness against her full softness, the difference startling and thrilling her at once. His mouth was against her ear, singing low and softly to the song, "I can hear her heartbeat from a thousand miles, and the heavens open up every time she smiles..." She felt as if he were singing to her, for her, and she let herself

melt into him. He shifted his weight, taking hers, finding all those places where they fit so easily together. Did everyone fit together like this? She wondered.

The room was dark, the music loud, and all around them there were people dressed as someone or something else. There were exotic costumes—when they'd first arrived, she couldn't take her eyes off of the bare and pierced midriff of the girl dressed as a belly dancer. And there were strange ones. One boy was walking around with a lawn chair strapped on his head and his face painted pink—he said he was a piece of bubblegum. There were also scary or gory or just plain silly costumes.

She'd received compliment after compliment on her own costume, and she sensed many of the girls were jealous, but curious. The boys just stared, or raised their eyebrows. She didn't know most of the kids, although of course she knew Amy, who lived three houses away and had been her best Barbie buddy since they were four.

She found herself smiling, remembering that although it had taken many, many pleading and cajoling sessions at Adam's feet to even acquire one Barbie to her name, Amy'd had hundreds and was always willing to share!

She was the sheltered, home-schooled weirdo among them—she knew it and felt eyes on her. She found herself tongue-tied while they all talked easily, felt herself awkward while they flowed like water on the dance floor.

But Luke seemed to have eyes only for her, no matter how many girls had come up to them, laughed gaily, touched or squeezed his upper arm, or more daringly, his upper thigh—he looked back at Lily like it was their inside joke.

She remembered how he'd found her reading under her favorite shade tree at the park, how he'd smiled his liquid smile, plopped himself down next to her and started

talking. So easy...he made everything easy. She could breathe more deeply when he was next to her.

How many times had he asked her out? She lost count. But here she was. He'd persisted, and here she was, pressed against him, his voice in her ear dancing her across a high school gym floor she'd never set foot on before in her life. The first of many firsts tonight, she thought...she hoped...she fantasized...letting her fingers curl into the blonde hair at the nape of his neck again and again.

The slow song ended, and she moved reluctantly away from him. Amy gestured, urging her back to their table, and they filed through like the world's shortest parade of some mixed up fairy tale, witch, wizard and pirate with little red riding hood bringing up the rear. Lily went to sit, but Luke pulled her into his lap, and she squealed, delighted and embarrassed at the same time.

"You two are so cute together," Amy remarked again, for probably the tenth time that night. "How come you don't ever pull me into your lap like that anymore?" she nudged Chris, who rolled his eyes and did something, who knew what, under the table to make her squeal and her eyes widen.

Lily reached for one of the candy corns strewn on the tables for decoration, but Luke anticipated her, putting one between her lips. She kissed his fingers and smiled a thank you, chewing happily. She couldn't remember a time when she'd known such sweetness.

"You sure do love those things," Luke remarked, looking at her with a little bit of wonder. She sometimes felt as if she were some novelty for him, that every new thing

he exposed her to somehow made him come alive, as if he were experiencing it for the first time as well. She both loved and loathed that feeling.

"Well how come you made me dress up like some old guy from Lord of the Rings just so we could be a matching set?" Chris quipped back to Amy. "The things we do for our women, I tell ya."

Luke just smiled, his hand cupping and periodically squeezing Lily's luscious hip. Her hand found its way to the back of his neck again, unable to resist those curls.

"Everyone knows a couple should come to a costume party as a matched pair," Amy insisted.

"What is that, like some Dear Abby's Halloween Etiquette Rule or something?" Chris snorted, plopping his pointed wizard hat into the middle of the table. "Hey, you two should match, then...you should have come as a wolf, Luke!"

Luke shrugged. "Think so?"

"I know the perfect costumes for you two...Adam and Eve!" Chris howled. Amy nudged him again, but he ignored her, leaning forward with a mischievous look in his eyes. "What was the first thing Adam said when he first saw Eve naked in the Garden of Eden?"

Lily recognized the beginning to a joke when she heard one. She braced herself. Amy nudged Chris again, harder this time, hissing. Luke just smiled lazily, still rubbing Lily's hip and bottom.

"Stand back! I don't know how big this thing gets!" Chris snorted laughter, delighted with himself.

Lily hid her embarrassed face against Luke's neck. It wasn't that she didn't know about sex—well, at least as much as Amy had been willing to tell her about it—but it was all a great mixed-up mystery to her, sometimes embarrassing and shameful, sometimes urgently exciting, often both all at the same time.

"You are driving me to distraction," Luke whispered into her ear, nuzzling her neck. Her eyelids fluttered closed at the sensation, glad her hair hid the reaction. "I want to take you home."

"Now?" Lily whispered back. She wasn't objecting, just asking.

"Yes," was all he said.

"Luke..." His name in her mouth felt thick and full, filling her. She couldn't say anything else, but he didn't need to ask. He simply took her.

They were out the door without another word, just smiles and nods to Amy and Chris. Amy continued to poke and prod Chris, sure it was his fault they were making an exit, but Lily was too shy to explain. The anticipatory tingling in her body which had begun the minute he touched her tonight was now a buzzing feeling like a chorus of angels singing through her whole being.

* * * *

"I feel positively wolfish." Luke confessed as Lily fumbled with her keys. She giggled as they tumbled into the house, and he pressed her back against the door.

"What big eyes you have," Lily whispered, playing along and trying to distract herself from the feelings welling up in her. Fairy tales she knew well, as Adam had read her countless, and for her, there was nothing bloodier or scarier than fairy tales, except maybe bible stories.

"The better to see you with, my dear," Luke grinned. He pressed against her harder, his mouth finding hers, and she felt as if she were floating, his lips soft and warm and then his tongue, oh my God, his tongue on hers, so unexpected, like an electric pulse running from the tip of her tongue to the tips of her toes.

"Oh Luke," she breathed, her hands pulling at the breeches at the waist. "What a big..." Her words were swallowed with another kiss, and she felt him swallowing her, there was no other sensation but this. "What a big..." She felt him pressing against her, down there, the hardness of him between her legs, but she couldn't manage to get the word out of her mouth.

"Yes," he growled, grinding himself into her. "The better to fuck you with, my dear." She gasped out loud at the harshness of the word, how it shocked and titillated her—the word, the thought, the act. Her body felt on fire and aching for something. She didn't even know what.

They found their way to the living room couch, Luke hungrily kissing her, mouth, neck, the tops of her breasts pushed up in their bodice. He unlaced her easily, and her dark nipples peeked over the top, playing hide and seek as she writhed beneath him.

She shuddered as his mouth found first one, then the other, his tongue tracing hot, wet spirals she saw when she closed her eyes. His hands moved over her legs, up over her knee socks, pushing her skirt up high on her thighs and pressing himself between them. Her breath was coming too fast, making her dizzy. The room was spinning, and she groped at him for balance.

His mouth pressed against her belly, his breath hot, and he whispered her name, "Lily, oh Lily," again and again. It was like music.

"Jeeeesus," he breathed when he got to her panties, the sheerness of the fabric showing a moist, dark patch curling around the edges. Lily's mouth was a small "o" as she looked down at him, pure wonder in her eyes.

Luke took off his eye patch with a small smile, and then began covering her thighs with kisses, light as dove's wings, and when his tongue reached the edges of the red lace, he pushed it aside, searching for her soft, red center.

Lily groaned softly, her head moving from side to side. Something inside her was saying no, no, we can't, but another part of her was moaning yes, yess, please God, yes!

His tongue was doing unholy things to her, finding the sweet spot she thought only she knew about, the one she'd found a few years ago with pressing fingers, half asleep, not really waking from a spilling, throbbing dream. This sensation was beyond pleasure, beyond hope, beyond God. This must be heaven, she thought wildly as his tongue lapped at her over and over, the feeling building like the pressure of a dam about to burst.

"Oh Luke, please," she pleaded.

He urged her on with his tongue, making soft encouraging noises in his throat, and the sight of him between her thighs, still in his breeches and boots, his shirt pulled out, sent her over an unexpected edge. "Oh God," she moaned, "I'm... I'm...flooding...!"

And she was, like a river of honey flowing over his tongue. Lily shuddered and gasped, her hands fists in his curls, pressing, pressing, and then she lay still, marveling. She welcomed the weight of him, stunned by the taste of herself on his tongue as he kissed her.

"So beautiful," he murmured. "My God, you're so beautiful."

Her hand slowly crept and fumbled and found the front of his breeches, rubbing him there, the hardness she felt. She was scared and excited and filled with an indescribable longing.

He moaned and pushed against her hand, telling her, "yes, yes, good," giving her courage, and she found the zipper and slid her hand inside. She'd never held anything like it. The heat was incredible, and he thrust in her hand, his breath coming faster, faster. Her whole body flushed at his response as she caught his rhythm, excited by his breath, his eyes rolled back slightly, his open mouth, and especially the shifting, throbbing, swollen flesh in her hand.

"Wait, wait," he moaned, but her grip was too firm and too steady now, and she gasped in surprise as he bucked and grunted against her, and she felt an alarmingly hot liquid spreading over her thighs. Lily lay stunned, feeling him go slowly, steadily softer, full of sticky wetness, listening to his ragged breathing eventually return to normal

"Sorry," he murmured against her ear, sounding apologetic. "Didn't mean to do that."

"Seems like it felt nice," she whispered, wanting to reassure him, and he chuckled, nodding against her neck. She felt full of him somehow, satisfied and content, even relieved it hadn't gone further than this, and it was in that sweet, soft-focused moment she heard the most terrifying thing she'd ever heard in her life.

"SINNERS!" Adam's voiced boomed louder than she'd ever heard it during any hellfire and brimstone sermon. "You will burn in hell! Get off my daughter!"

Lily's whole body went stiff, paralyzed with fear, her breath disappearing. Luke's eyes flew open in panic and, fumbling with his clothes, moving quickly off her, he began mumbling apologies.

Then Adam had him by the scruff of the neck. He was a large man, over six feet tall, and he towered over Luke, shaking him like some naughty puppy. "Get out of my house! Don't you ever, EVER come sniffing around here again! Do you understand me?!"

Luke nodded, glancing briefly at Lily, whose eyes pleaded silently with him. There was nothing he could do. He let himself be tossed out the front door, down the porch, and made his way to his car. It was pouring down rain and from her vantage point still frozen on the couch, Lily saw the jack o'lantern across the way blazing like a vague threat in the night before Adam slammed the door.

Lily couldn't breathe. She thought she might have forgotten how. Thoughts raced, tumbled—what was he doing home early, how had this happened? She closed her eyes, unable to comprehend the change, the difference between the indescribable sweetness she'd experienced moments ago and the terror and disgrace she felt now. She smeared a sticky hand over her thigh, disgusted and suddenly shameful, and the movement brought her breath back, and then her hot tears.

"Whore!" The word breathed over her face, dark and deep and full of scorn. She wished she could make herself disappear. She couldn't face this, she simply couldn't, but she knew he would say it. "Open your eyes!" She obeyed, looking up into Adam's angry face, but the disappointment she saw there pierced her even more deeply.

"Daddy, I'm sorry," she whispered, not knowing where her voice was coming from—it seemed very small and far away. "I'm so sorry, I..." and there were just no more words. Nothing, nothing she could possibly say would have redeemed her, this. She was simply going to have to bear it, whatever humiliation and punishment was to come.

"Lily, what have you done?" He shook his head, and she saw tears in his eyes. She was truly remorseful now, feeling the weight of her trespass pressing into her. She just shook her head, her own tears streaming down to her temples.

"What is this?" He pointed to her dress, still pulled up over her hips, her cape hanging askew. "What in the world are you wearing?" He sounded genuinely confused and she watched the recognition come over his face with dread. "Is this...is this a... Halloween costume?" He choked on the words.

She nodded reluctantly, biting her lower lip and, suddenly aware of how exposed she was, attempted to pull her skirt down.

His face changed suddenly, from disappointment and despair, to absolute righteous fury. "You went to a *costume party*?" he fumed.

She nodded again, tugging at the hem of her skirt.

He slapped her hand away, sneering, "Don't you dare cover yourself. You deserve to be exposed for what you are! Do you realize what you've done? Do you?"

She didn't answer the rhetorical question, just winced and nodded.

"I come home to take care of you because you said you were sick, and what do I find? Sick! Yes, you *are* sick! Heaven help you, girl! You have eaten the forbidden fruit from the tree, Lily. You are no longer innocent! *'And the eyes of them both were*

opened, and they knew that were naked!" His voice shook with feeling, and she cringed again, quailing at the looming figure above her.

His eyes closed for a moment and she waited, her breath coming in hitches. When he looked at her again, he was resolute.

"Stand up," he demanded.

She obeyed, quieting the urge to pull her skirt down further.

"Get me the wooden spoon."

She stood motionless, incredulous. The wooden spoon? He hadn't used it on her in years! She couldn't remember the last time...oh, yes, suddenly she did. She was thirteen, and he'd caught her with a teen magazine in her room, one filled with articles about rock stars and teen heartthrobs. She now remembered it very clearly.

"Go," he commanded, sitting rigidly in the living room chair, waiting.

She made her way to the kitchen, swaying a little as she walked, as if the world were slightly tilted. She found it in the drawer next to the stove, buried underneath the can opener, the vegetable peeler, other more often used utensils.

It was a big wooden spoon. She thought it had belonged to her mother's mother, heavy and thick, with a large flat-backed head. She held it in front of her, like she was taught to carry a knife or scissors as a little girl. When she offered it to Adam, her hands trembled. He looked up at her, and her heart ached with contrition, and something else, feeling the sacrifice of Luke, the last vestige of her hope, pushed out the front door. Why did her heart feel torn right in two?

"Daddy, please," she whispered, sinking to her knees and bowing her head. Her hair fell like a waterfall across her tear-stained face, hiding her, and she was grateful. "I

know it was wrong. I will pray for my sins. I will repent, I will..." She took a quivery breath, and felt his hand in her hair, finding her chin and lifting it.

"You will," he confirmed, nodding. "Yes, you will. It's the least you'll do. But Lily, this is no small thing. This isn't a hidden CD or candy bar or magazine." He looked pointedly at her and she knew he remembered, too, the last time she knelt here like this, years and years it had been. She'd been such a good girl, she tried so hard to please him, to meet his impossible standards.

"I know, I'm so sorry," she pleaded, reaching her trembling hand out to him. He let her bury her face in his lap, and he stroked her hair absently as he talked.

"No, Lily, I don't think you do know. This night of all nights, you should have been surrounded by God's children, praying, keeping your soul intact and pure. Evil forces have taken you over, child. I can feel them in you. I can see them in your eyes. You have been tempted, and you have succumbed. You lied to me, Lily," his voice shook and she sobbed harder in his lap. "You deceived me. You dressed yourself like a whore, a pagan slut, and went out among the wolves, as a sheep amongst the wolves. You brought home a boy and let his carnal lust overtake you. This is beyond sin, Lily. This is..." he paused, searching for a word that might encompass her actions, and finally settled on: "This is depravity."

The weight of his words was crushing her and she could barely breathe through her sobs. He sighed, his hand smoothing the hair away from her wet cheeks. He sounded truly sorry, even reluctant when he said, "It must be punished."

She shook her head in his lap, but then she started to nod. "Yes, Daddy, yes, ok, yes," she breathed.

If this was her punishment, then, the humiliation of being whipped like a willful child, so be it. Anything would be better than his words, his anger, and most of all, his disappointment and disillusionment.

He pulled her across his lap, it was a quick movement, and she gasped out loud. She tried to balance herself across his long legs. She wasn't a little girl anymore, and his thighs dug into the soft flesh of her belly, her hands pressed the floor, attempting balance, her body steepled at a strange, arched angle, like an upside down "V," with her bottom thrust up to create the apex.

He reached under her chin, pulling the tie on her red hooded cape, and tossed it off her to the floor. She hadn't realized how much warmth the material had been providing, and the cool air on her body, across her back where her blouse was pulled up, and especially her not oft-exposed legs, was a sudden, shivery shock.

Adam's hands pulled her skirt up higher. It had crept down during her walk to the kitchen. She heard his sharp intake of breath and felt herself flush, remembering how sinful the panties she was wearing really were. She was mortified. He pushed her skirt up even higher, high around her waist now, and his hands seemed to linger over the scant material of her disgracefully sheer panties. Her body tensed, waiting.

"Virgin daughter of Babylon," he said, his voice hoarse. "Make bare the leg, uncover the thigh... thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen," he quoted and then quietly cleared his throat.

She held her breath as Adam's hands grabbed the edges of her panties and yanked, tearing the delicate material and exposing her completely. She wiggled, looking

for a more comfortable position. His hand found her backside and he spanked her hard, making her still.

"Lily, you are a sinner. Say it!" he demanded.

"I am a sinner," she repeated, her voice muffled in the cascade of her hair.

"Yes, and 'if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you!"

With that, his hand came down again, this time on the other side, making a red mark she would have for days. She whimpered, feeling the humiliated sting of her tears along with the sting on her bottom. "You are a whore. Say it!" he demanded.

"I am a whore," she whispered, closing her eyes against it.

This time it was the spoon, harder and more wicked somehow. She heard it slice the air before it hit her tender skin. Again. Again. Again. She sobbed uncontrollably, and she heard him working furiously on her, the pain searing her bottom and the backs of her legs.

She tried to twist away, but he grabbed a handful of her hair and pulled, and she stopped, caught. His breath was coming fast and he allowed her to sink across him, limp and aching and crying.

His hand, now cool and soft, smoothed the red flesh across her bottom. It was a tender caress, and she looked back at him through her hair in wonder. He wasn't looking at her, but rather watching his hand on her, his eyes dark. She felt a lurching feeling in her belly, and then he saw her looking at him and met her eyes.

"The lips of a strange woman drop as honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil... her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword," he murmured.

Lily shrank from something she saw in his eyes. "To play the whore in your father's house, Lily... did you know, in biblical times, that was a sin punishable by death?"

She nodded. She was a preacher's daughter—she knew scripture inside and out, almost as well as he did.

"Did you let him know you, Lily?" He lifted his hand from her thigh and saw wetness there. "This is his seed, isn't it?" His voice trembled, she thought from rage and she was terrified, but still she nodded. "Did you?" he demanded again. "Did you let him know you in the Biblical sense?"

"No, Daddy," she whispered. "No, we didn't, I swear." Her whole backside was tingling and felt raw.

"But you're a liar, aren't you, Lily?" he crooned, his hand still moving over her bottom, as if he were in a trance. "How can I know that?" She stared back at him, unsure.

"I think..." his fingers kneaded the tender flesh of her thighs, spreading them gently open. "Lily, I think I'm going to have to check for myself," he said softly, almost regretfully. Her eyes widened, her mouth dropping open.

He can't possibly mean...?

"Spread your legs," he whispered, nudging her thighs apart with his hands.

"Oh, no, Daddy," she pleaded, her face reddening. "Oh please, no."

His fingers found her anyway, she knew they would, opening her lips and she felt him rubbing gently up and down. His voice was full of disapproval: "You're very wet."

She knew she was and she hung her head lower.

"Did you let him put his tongue here, Lily?" he asked her.

"No, Daddy," she lied after a moment's hesitation, too ashamed to admit to the startling and delicious pleasure of Luke's tongue, especially now as Adam's fingers moved over her as an aching reminder of the unfathomable difference between the sensations of tongue versus digits.

"Liar!" he boomed, and his hand came down hard on her bottom. She yelped and squirmed in his lap. "I saw you," he hissed. Her body went still, and she lay incredulous. Just how long had he been watching? She wondered. What had he seen? Her face grew redder, and the heat spread downward, through her chest, her belly, settling low there, like a fireball.

"You liked it, didn't you?" His fingers probed her, opened her, slid up and down in her wetness. "You liked it when he licked you here, right here?"

Oh no, oh God, his fingers had easily found that place, that tiny swelled spot, and she moaned softly. He tapped it remotely with his index finger, like he was trying to send morse code, and succeeded in sending electrical impulses through her whole body.

"Yes," she breathed, finally admitting it, finding herself opening her thighs further, arching her back a little so he could reach her more. He seemed absorbed, just absently petting her there, and it felt so good she was dizzy with it.

"You touched his cock, didn't you, Lily?" he asked, probing a little more deeply. That word, from Adam's mouth, made her breath stop. She'd heard it before, but nothing like it ever from him, ever.

She nodded, a whispered, "yes."

"Did you like it?"

Another whispered, "Yes."

"Say it, Lily," he urged. "Tell me how much you liked his big cock."

"Oh Daddy," she breathed, feeling his fingers slipping through the tender folds between her legs. She felt ashamed of the wetness there, and for what she'd done with Luke, and for liking what Adam was doing to her with his fingers, and for wanting him not to stop.

God help her, she had wanted Luke, and now she wanted Adam, too. A wave of lust and nausea washed over her simultaneously. He was right. She was depraved. She couldn't seem help it, or to stop herself from responding truthfully. "Oh Daddy, I liked his big cock...very, very much."

"You are a sinful girl, Lily...a very sinful girl."

"Yes." She swallowed hard, agreeing to anything, anything, praying he wouldn't stop touching her like this, the sensation beyond dreaming.

"But you didn't let him put it here, did you?" His fingers moved now, away from that little button of flesh, and they opened her more, probing, pushing into her.

"Oh, Daddy, ow, ow, no not there." She wiggled in his lap, trying to close her legs. He grunted with the effort to keep her there, and when he moved, she felt something against her belly, something hard and thick. She flushed with embarrassment and excitement when she realized what it was.

"I have to know, sweetheart," he murmured. "I have to know if you're still intact."

His fingers, first one, then two, moved in deeper, but it was too much and she screeched, "It hurts, please, stop!" but he didn't. Slowly he moved his fingers, in and out of her. His thumb moved against her, finding her again, the sensation divine, and she

moaned a little, unable to stop herself, getting used to being filled this way. His breath was coming faster, she could hear it, and hers matched it.

"It feels like you're telling me the truth," he told her after a moment.

He swallowed hard, moving his fingers out of her. She sighed, part of her wanting him to stop, part of her never wanting him to stop, wanting more. She didn't move in his lap, and she heard him struggling to control his breathing, his hands now resting on her thighs.

"Daddy?" she finally asked, looking back at him. She found him staring hungrily between her legs. The look in his eyes sent a shockwave through her. She wet her lips. Did he want her? she wondered. Did he really want to touch her as much as she wanted him to touch her?

"God is faithful... he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear," Adam muttered, and his hands pressed into her thighs, pressing her weight down onto him, so she could feel the length of him, how hard he was, against her belly.

He let out a shuddering breath. "Oh Lily, tempt me not." It was barely a whisper.

She couldn't help herself, something was compelling her. Maybe it was the devil, she didn't know, and she found in the moment, she didn't care.

He whispered, almost to himself, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed..."

"What is this that thou hast done?" Lily whispered, quoting scripture. Her heart beat hard and fast. "And the woman said, the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat...' I did, Daddy, I did ..." she confessed, sliding slowly off his lap to the floor and resting

between his legs. He looked down at her, transfixed, brushing the hair away from her face, his fingers lingering along her lips and mouth.

"There are serpents in the world that will tempt you, Lily," he told her softly. "You should know them. You should know how they behave, what they will try to take from you. I want to show you."

He unbuttoned his trousers, unzipping. Her eyes widened, her breath coming short. She'd never really seen one erect. Not this close, not like this. She was both curious and shy.

"Give me your hand," he said, and she did. He wrapped her hand around it, and again she was shocked by the heat, how it pulsed and seemed alive in her hand, truly like a thickly muscled serpent, with a life and will of its own.

"Daddy?" It was a question, a pleading—she didn't know what to do.

He breathed deeply, looking down at her, and showed her how to move her hand on it in a way he seemed to like. She stared at it, at the tip, like an eye watching her which had starting to weep.

"The serpent beguiled her, and she did eat," he murmured, his hand slipping behind her head. "Put your mouth on it, Lily," he instructed. She stopped altogether, hesitating. He smiled down at her.

"This is what you wanted with that boy, isn't it?" he asked her, his voice a little harder now. "You liked his big hard cock, you said. You wanted it. Well, this is what he wanted from you, Lily. This is how the serpent tempts and beguiles, and it isn't always what you thought, is it?"

Her eyes and mouth were wide as she shook her head.

"Now," he rumbled. "Suck my cock!"

He slid her mouth down on it, and she nearly gagged. *Oh dear God, no, it's too big, too much!* He groaned, pressing further into her throat, holding her head still with his hands and moving in and out of her mouth. Slowly, she got used to the taste, the feel, the motion, and began to respond to his excitement. Soon she could feel the wetness between her own legs beginning to seep down her thighs.

She caught his rhythm, and began to take over, hungry, eager, looking up at him, willing to please. He let his head go back, let her take him into her mouth again and again, let himself be carried away in the sensation for a moment. Then he grabbed her by the hair and pulled her back so hard she gasped out loud.

"Stand up," he directed.

She did, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand. It was red and swollen, like she'd been stealing and eating overripe raspberries.

"Undress."

She stood there for a moment, then swallowed hard. She hadn't been fully naked in front of him since she was very little. She hesitated, but when she met his eyes, saw the hardness there, she pushed her skirt down over her hips and slipped her bodice off. She didn't know what was going to happen and she was scared, but also a little wild with wanting something, some hazy, vague something.

When she bent to remove her knee socks, he stopped her. "Leave them."

She was suddenly cold, her nipples hard.

"Sit here." He pointed to his lap.

She turned, lowering her bottom, the fabric of his pants rough against her thighs. She looked over her shoulder at him, her hair spilling like some ribbon of black highway over her pale skin. She remembered, just a few months ago, seeing a similar look in his eyes when he'd forgotten to knock on her bedroom door, something he had done more and more recently, she'd noticed, and he'd opened up to find her sprawled on her belly on the bed in only her nightgown, her hair falling down all around her.

He had stood in the doorway what felt like a long time, startled by her, maybe by himself, the rise and fall of his chest betraying his increasingly rapid breath. She remembered turning a little, to see him better over her shoulder, aware it made her nightgown shift and pull, probably exposing her panties, aware she should cover herself, and deliberately not doing it because of how his eyes had settled there like he'd seen a glimpse of heaven and simply couldn't look away.

She thought that was the night he'd left the books on her bureau, but she couldn't be sure. Now when he looked up at her, the look in his eyes was like he was falling off some cliff, and she felt herself going with him.

He touched her all over, just roaming her like she was a map he was trying to read with his hands. They were large, warm hands, cupping the fullness of her breasts, lifting them, letting them fall, pulling her back toward him with one hand at her waist, and it was then she felt his hardness pressing against her bottom, like a brand.

"Up," he urged, and she stood between his legs, looking back at him again, curious.

"Bend over," he instructed, and she did, using her hands on his knees for balance. His fingers found her, even more slippery there now, sliding in and out a few

times. He grabbed her hips and guided her slowly down, aiming, her dark curly pubic hair hiding the pink flesh of her inner lips slowly beginning swallowing his cock.

"Oh Daddy, no, no, we can't," she whispered, feeling the tip of him meeting a taut resistance in her, but looking at him, she saw it was lost, he was lost, and he grabbed her hard and thrust upward, sinking deeply into her hot, wet flesh.

It seared and burned like hellfire between her legs and she began to shake. "Please, Daddy, don't, no," she pleaded, moving forward, wanting him out, it was too much, too full.

"This is what you wanted," he growled, letting her fall forward, onto the floor on her hands and knees with her red cape as a cushion. She felt wetness on her thighs, and reaching her hand between her legs, she discovered blood and was horrified.

"This is how the serpent will bewitch you, how he will deceive you and betray you and make you his!" He pressed her down to the floor, and she covered her face, crying silently into the red cloth. She struggled, gasping at the size and feel of him, pleading, but he was persistent, pressing so far into her she feared that she would tear apart.

"God forgive me," he whispered.

She felt him pulsing inside of her. He started pulling out of her and she sighed, relieved, but then he moved into her again.

"So tight," he breathed. "The heat...ohh God, it's so good." It was almost a moan. "Easy, easy."

She wasn't sure if he was speaking to her or himself. His thrusts were very slow at first, simply an opening of her flesh a bit at a time, the movement subtle but relentless. She lay still, trying to relax into it, letting him move into her, again and again.

He found her hips with his hands, lifting her a little, reaching beneath and finding the little nub of flesh that made her insides contract involuntarily when he touched it. She flushed when she heard him groan out loud as her muscles fluttered around him.

His fingers worked her flesh. There was so much wetness, she didn't know where it was all coming from, and she heard the sound of him inside of her, slipping in and out of her softness. He groaned, his fingers pressing her harder, faster, rubbing and rubbing, until she shivered with the pleasure of it, trembling under him like a small earthquake. Then she was simply gone, everything else had disappeared and she felt herself being pushed toward some precipice, dangling right on that edge.

"Lily, look at me," he panted, and she obeyed him, she always obeyed him, she'd always wanted to give him everything, everything.

"Tell me," he said, his eyes looking into and through her at the same time. Somehow she knew what he wanted, she always knew.

"Daddy, yes," she whimpered, begging. "Fuck me, Daddy, please fuck me harder!"

He made a noise deep in his throat, moving faster, harder, giving her more, she wanted more and more, and then she felt it, like some slow trickle that suddenly became a deluge, flooding her, flooding him.

"Oh God help me," she whispered, and the eager pulse of her forced the thrust and surge of him. He pulled himself out of her with a great deal of effort and she felt the liquid heat of him, wave after wave, over her back and her bottom, so much of it, sliding heat down her slit toward her belly.

She collapsed onto the floor, and he looked down at her curled into the redness of her cape, her dark hair tangled in her limbs, her knee socks still on. She looked up at him as if he were God, and to her, he always had been.

"And saith unto him, all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me," he murmured, easing his hands over the smoothness of her thighs, opening her to him as an offering, seeing the virgin blood there.

"You're a good girl, Lily." He gazed down at her, almost bemused, or maybe just bewitched.

It was something she'd waited to hear her whole life. She smiled back and reached for him, and he enfolded her and held her, and it was finally enough. She waited for the shame, the feeling or sense this was somehow wrong, but it didn't come. Adam's breath became deep and even, and she heard thunder outside now, a full-fledged storm.

"Daddy?" Lily queried after she couldn't stand the silence anymore. She wasn't even sure what she was going to say. "What we've done... I... isn't it... isn't this... wrong?"

"Oh, Lily." He stroked her hair. His eyes were closed. His voice sounded heavy, and she wondered if he was regretting what they had done together. "You know God forgives us our trespasses...and sometimes we have to be taught certain lessons in life. I don't know anyone who could have taught you more lovingly than I did. And tonight, this is All Hallowed's Eve, Lily, remember...the devil is in us all, and sometimes... sometimes his taunts and his temptations... sometimes it's too much to bear, even for a man of God."

Lily sat with that for a moment, looking at the curve of his mouth and idly wondering how it would feel, if Adam's mouth would transport her to other worlds like Luke's tongue had between her legs. Oh this had to be sinful, it had to be, her mind raced, and yet the stirring in her belly, and lower still, told her it didn't matter, nothing mattered, as long as he loved her.

She didn't feel shame, although she had a vague sense she should, and she didn't want him to regret this, more because she didn't ever want him to stop doing this with her, something that took her to the heights she had been to tonight. There couldn't be any place closer to heaven, she thought.

"In the book," Lily whispered. "Lolita loves her stepfather... like this." Her fingers brushed over his upper thigh to the dark thatch of hair where the root of him was pulsing alive again at her touch.

His eyes flew open in the darkness. "Lily! Did you read that book?" he demanded.

She nodded slowly. She had known, the moment she said it, and now looked up at him, biting her lip, and purred: "Yes, Daddy. I know. I've been a very, very naughty girl."

"You are the devil's own temptress," he whispered, looking into her eyes as her hand found him again, teasing him awake. "I have a feeling you have a lot more lessons to learn like this that I'm going to be forced to teach you."

"Yes, Daddy," she agreed, her leg slithering over him.

Outside, the rain pelted the roof, and the candle in the leering pumpkin across the street flickered and finally gave up with a puff and a hiss. The night turned darker as

a sliver of a moon sliced open a velvet sky, and this time Adam plucked ripe fruit, and fell, and Lily sank to her knees and offered penance for all of their sins.

Man of the House

There are three things I remember clearly about 1944, the year my father went off to war and left me alone with my mother.

I remember her crying at the docks as we watched the steamer pull away. She tried to hold out and put on a brave face for my father, although we could only have been pinpricks of color to his eyes by then, because the sailors on the ship were a blur of navy and white to me across the deck as they waved their goodbyes. Still, she tried—she was so brave to try—but in the end, she turned to me and sobbed in my arms, burying her hot, wet face against my neck. That was the first time I'd ever seen that completely open, vulnerable side of my mother, but it wouldn't be the last.

I remember his words to me, the firm handshake and quick one-armed hug, “You’re the man of the house now, Patrick. You take good care of your mother.”

I vacillated between both relief and guilt—at just nineteen years old, I should have been sailing off on that ship. My father was a veteran and going back for more. It was the brave and courageous thing to do, and a part of me thought so, and wanted to do the right thing, too. The decision had been taken out of my hands, though, not only because I was still a student, but also because my mother had given birth to me in Canada while she was staying with relatives, and I was technically a dual-citizen. I always felt like I lived in two worlds, and that irony was never lost on me.

On the surface, it seemed life went on after he was gone. Our routines moved us through our days. My mother did loads of volunteer work during the war years, and she ran to the mailbox every day, looking for a letter. The days when one came, I could usually find her upstairs soaking in a hot bath, her hair pulled up, cheeks pink from the

heat, the bubbles dissipated enough so I could see the tops of her breasts and their dark nipples floating in the water.

Sometimes I would go in and sit on the edge of the tub and talk to her. She was always bubbling over with news—where he was, how he was, that he loved us and missed us, that was all a given—the biggest news, though, was that he was safe. For that moment, in the instant when pen touched paper, he was still alive and moving in the world. That was enough for her to hold onto until the next letter.

I loved those days, too, when she took down her long, dark hair and asked me to wash it. I can still see the water spilling down her back and over her shoulders, beading on her skin before I poured another deluge over her head. There was something so trusting and vulnerable about her posture, the way she tilted her head back, eyes closed, that took my breath away.

There were times when I poured warm water over her hair long after any remnants of soap had been washed away. With her eyes closed, I could gaze freely on her body, at the soft, rounded curves of her waist and hips and thighs as my eyes moved in and out and around the bends. The dark triangle between her legs was just barely visible in that position, and I strained to see, wanting more, but was never satisfied. Even when she stepped out of the tub and motioned for me to hand her the towel, the dark mat of hair covered her flesh like a shroud.

Days when she wanted to be alone, I was met with the gentle closing of her bedroom door. It was never forceful or abrupt, although it often felt that way to me, standing on the other side and listening to the sound of her opening drawers and shuffling through her clothes. If the news was particularly good, though, and she was

still brimming with it, she would allow me to accompany her to the bedroom. I would sit quietly on the edge of the bed and watch her dress.

My mother was a methodical woman, and I am much like her, now, in the slow, deliberate way I do things. Every part of her was rubbed dry, from top to bottom. She was much rougher over her sleek, soft skin than I would have been, dragging the towel over her breasts and belly, tugging it between her legs. I loved watching her dry her calves, seeing her breasts swaying and getting a brief peek at the dark patch between her legs as she bent over.

Then she would open her drawer and pull out a pair of panties. Back then, almost all panties were made out of silk, still hand-sewn, and they fastened with buttons up one side. Most had some sort of lace or decoration on them. My mother's underwear was exquisite. I often wondered if my father bought it for her—or if she bought it for him. The pair I still have is soft-as-butter silk, almost a flesh-color, with two mother-of-pearl buttons that fasten on each side.

To me, there's nothing more feminine than panties, and women are never more feminine than in the sublime moment when they're sliding a pair on. She would bend over, giving me another glimpse between her legs as she wiggled the shimmering fabric up over her hips. I would trace the scalloped lace edges with my gaze, over her thighs, toward the apex between and, if the light was just right, I could see the dark hair underneath showing through them. The buttons were my favorite part, seeing her twist around to do them up, one on each side. The first one was always the easiest, but the second sometimes gave her trouble.

I would wait in great anticipation on the edge of the bed to see if she would sigh and walk toward me, turning her exposed hip in my direction and asking, "Patrick, would you mind?"

Those moments lasted years, when my fingers worked that tiny button, feeling the silk of the panties covering the velvet of her skin. She would smile a thank you, sometimes tousling my hair or chucking me under the chin as if I were still a boy.

And part of me was grateful to be still that, to her—allowed into her room, to be a part of this, to help her bathe and dress. There were men off fighting a war in conditions I couldn't even begin to imagine, my own father among them, and yet I was here, in my mother's boudoir, getting a glimpse into a world that would hold much more power over me, then and for the rest of my life, than any other battle could. I was privileged to be there, and I knew it.

I suppose I should confess that my erection was present throughout this entire process, and I sat in a way which would allow me to hide it as much as I possibly could. She never looked or asked or even indicated I might be in the least excited by what she was doing. To her, I was simply her boy, keeping her company and helping her get dressed. For me, it was a descent into hell and a glimpse towards heaven.

I knew I should've felt guilty or ashamed in those accidentally intimate times I spent with my mother, but I didn't. You see, my father had entrusted me with her care when he left—"You're the man of the house now, Patrick." Perhaps I simply rationalized that he had given me his permission. But nothing happened. Not then. And I was still a boy to my mother, and thought I would remain so forever.

But something changed. And that was the last and most bittersweet thing I

remember about that year—Naomi, who changed the course of everything in just one night.

* * * *

“You have to help me!”

I wasn’t paying much attention to the impassioned plea on the other side of the glass. My shift selling tickets at the bus station was over and I had a book of ration stamps to cash in—my mouth watered just thinking about eating a few ounces of meat. Old Mr. Howard, sliding into the seat I’d just vacated, would have to deal with the soldier who needed help.

“Where do you need to go, sonny?”

“No, it isn’t me, it’s my wife.” The soldier was young—my age, a little older maybe. He had a wife? The thought was a mystery to me. What must it be like to have a wife?

“All right, where does *she* need to go?” Mr. Howard asked.

“No, you don’t understand.” The soldier pressed his palm to the glass, as if he could reach one of us. “She’s coming. She’s coming all the way from Washington—Washington *State*!”

I checked to make sure the ration book was still safe in my coat pocket—the lines would be long, although maybe not too long, I thought, glancing out at the gray New England sky. No one liked to stand out in the cold, and it would be even better if it started to snow.

“What can I *do* for you, Sonny?” Mr. Howard was getting impatient with the piecemeal information the soldier was providing and I was impatient, too—to be gone. I shrugged on my coat, already anticipating the possibility of beef or lamb.

“She’s coming to visit me. Her mother sent her on the bus, gave her the money to come, because I had a two week furlough, and we hadn’t seen each other since I shipped out,” the soldier just kept talking, looking as if he knew he was making a long story even longer but he seemed unable to stop himself as Mr. Howard tapped his fingers on the ticket counter and I wrapped a gray scarf—my mother had knitted it for me that Christmas—around my neck.

“Sonny, I’ve got other customers.” Mr. Howard nodded to the soldier standing behind him. “Unless you’re buying a ticket...”

“You have to help me!” He was digging in his pockets, and I thought I recognized the look on his face. He looked like he was going to cry. It made me want to look away, but I was somehow transfixed by his frantic motion and I continued to watch the drama as I slipped on my gloves.

He found what he wanted, his eyes glowing with an “ah-hah!” as he opened his wallet and pulled out a twenty dollar bill. That was enough to make Mr. Howard and I both pay attention. “I’ll pay you! All you have to do is meet her bus and tell her what’s happened.”

“And what, exactly, has happened?” Mr. Howard asked.

I should have slipped out the door, but instead I took another step toward the glass as the soldier slid something else out of his wallet, slapping it up to the glass so we could see.

“This is her—this is my girl, Naomi. She’s coming on the five o’clock bus, and I won’t be here to meet her. Please, you have to help.”

“I’ll do it.”

It wasn’t the money—although twenty dollars was a fortune. I only made fifty cents an hour selling tickets at the bus station, and my mother made a little more at the factory, making widgets, that’s what she liked to call the parts they made for the war planes.

It was the photo. The girl in the photo was the most beautiful I’d ever seen. It was clearly her senior portrait, one of those posed pictures, but she didn’t get all dolled up like I’d seen so many do. She was completely natural, her hair like a long, dark curtain, looking as soft as silk against her velvet cheek, her big, dark eyes bright and full of promise. She was thinking about something or someone she loved, I was sure of it, and I burned with jealousy when I glanced at the soldier and realized it was probably him.

I didn’t realize until later, much later, how much Naomi resembled my mother.

“Which bus?” I asked, seeing relief and gratitude flood the soldier’s face. So I would be late getting the rations, late getting home. I knew my mother would understand, when I told her the circumstances—and showed her the twenty dollar bill.

“Thank you!”

I nodded, barely hearing the soldier’s words as he took the picture down from the glass. I wanted to ask for it, to keep it, and I thought of a way it might be possible as he went on talking. “We got new orders, we’re shipping out in an hour—less than an hour now.” He glanced at his watch and I opened the side door to the booth, stepping out into the bus terminal. The soldier held out his hand and I shook it. “Name’s Jerry.”

“Patrick,” I replied in kind. “Which bus is she coming on?”

He opened his wallet again, taking out a slip of white paper and shoving it into my hand. “I wrote it all down here. I can’t tell you how grateful I am. What rotten luck, eh? We barely had a honeymoon before I was shipped out, and here I am, being shipped out again on my first furlough in six months, and I won’t even get to see her!”

The soldier—Jerry—was holding the picture again, and I took it this time, wanting to touch it. The woman in the photo smiled at me, just for me, her eyes saying the most delicious things.

“Here’s the twenty I promised you.” He pressed that into my hand, too, but I didn’t pay much attention. I was still staring at the photo. “You tell her...tell her what happened. Tell her I got shipped out. She’ll have to get her ticket changed so she can turn right around and go home to her mother. I—” Something clicked in Jerry’s throat and I glanced up, seeing that look on his face again, like he was going to cry.

“That shouldn’t be a problem,” I said, holding fast to the photo as he reached for it. “I’ll help her. I promise.” He looked both confused at my refusal to let go of the picture and relieved at my willingness to help. “Listen, can I hang onto this? I’d hate to go up to the wrong girl and tell her that her guy’s been shipped back off to war...”

Jerry frowned, blinked, then slowly let go. “Sure. Sure, okay. But will you give it back to her, so she can mail it to me? It’s the only one I have.”

That made me wince with guilt, but I didn’t change my mind. “Of course.” I slipped the twenty, the picture, and the slip of paper into my pocket next to the ration book. “I’m really sorry this happened to you.” That was true but I felt like I shouldn’t have

said it. I actually saw tears brimming in his eyes and this time, I did look away, glancing up at the clock. “What time are you shipping out?”

“That reminds me.” I pretended not to notice him wiping at his eyes with the back of his hand as he reached into his coat pocket with the other. “Will you give her this?” He handed me an envelope. It had her name on it – *Naomi*. I thought I’d never heard such a beautiful, exotic name and I said it in my head, savoring the flavor. *Naomi*. *Naomi*. “Tell her...tell her...” He gripped my arm, squeezing. “I love her. And please, take...take good care of her for me.”

I nodded, flashing suddenly to the moment my father had left, his eyes grave. “You’re the man of the house now, Patrick.” Now two women had been entrusted to my care.

“You can count on me.” I said it with as much conviction as I could muster, and it seemed to satisfy Jerry. He nodded, giving me a short salute before turning to go. It was a strange but poignant gesture, and for some reason, it made my chest burn.

“Can I ask you something?” He turned back for a moment, his eyes sweeping over me, and I knew what he was looking for—some sort of deformity, some logical reason a seemingly able-bodied man wasn’t wearing a uniform, like he was.

“I was born in Canada.” I’d explained this fact a hundred times, a thousand. “Uncle Sam says I have to be a U.S. citizen to go to war.”

He nodded. “Well, I’m glad. I’m glad you’re here. I know you’ll take good care of Naomi for me.”

I agreed I would, and then he shook my hand, thanked me again, and was gone, weaving his way through the crowd and pushing out through the glass doors. I saw it

was starting to snow, my wish coming true, although I didn't even know if I was going to make it to stand in line for our weekly rations at this rate.

I killed the hour and a half waiting for Naomi's bus by sitting on a bench in the cold and warming myself by looking at her picture. I was under an overhang, and the snow was falling in fat, drifting flakes, but I didn't pay much attention to it. Instead, I memorized her face, every soft curve, gentle slope and delicate line. What did her voice sound like? Her laugh? How did she look when she was happy? Excited? Sad?

That last, I had a feeling I was going to get the chance to see, and I didn't relish the thought. I could sit and moon and fantasize about this beautiful girl, but the reality was she was married, and her husband had entrusted me to tell her some horrible news, something that was likely to make her cry. That made my stomach lurch, and I stood in front of the bench, glancing at the clock and beginning to pace.

Up until that moment, I'd been so transfixed with the thought of meeting the beauty in the picture, I hadn't fully considered the weight of my message to her. We all lived our lives now with some measure of anxiety, like a constant hum in our ears, the possibility of disappointment, depravation, destruction, even death, around us all time. I didn't want to be the one to drop the bomb on this poor young girl's hopes, but I had volunteered. I'd taken the money, the information, the photo. I felt suddenly like I'd made a deal with some devil.

It was then that the bus showed up, right on time. Of course. Greyhound always ran late, but this one had to be right on time. I knew they'd cut their schedule because of gas rationing, and there were only eight busses a day now. This was number seven. I

stood, filled with a sick anticipation, glancing at the photo again before tucking it into my coat pocket to watch the steady stream of people coming off the bus.

I saw bus riders every day, and there was always one thing they had in common—they looked tired. Everyone who came off a bus looked as if they'd been put through my mother's wringer, some of them twice. To me, they looked like people who had been going to their worst fate, who had resigned themselves to it, only to be reprieved at the eleventh hour. Most came off the bus and breathed as if they'd never had air in their lungs before.

One of the things I loved about working at the bus station was watching the riders greet the people picking them up. There were families waiting for soldiers, sisters waiting for brothers, mothers waiting for sons—and then there were the couples. I could watch them all day long, wrapping their arms around each other, kissing passionately right there in front of everyone, any sense of morality and decorum lost in that sweet moment of meeting again. It filled me with a secret, voyeuristic pleasure, and a longing I understood but hadn't found a way to quench.

I knew that was just what Naomi was expecting. I saw it on her face as she stepped off the bus, searching for her man. She looked tired, just like all the rest of the passengers after a four-day cross-country trip, but she was still fresher, her cheeks flushed, eyes bright, her red skirt flashing a bit of knee as she stepped down, her coat open to reveal a silky white blouse, her hair spilling over it like a dark river. I stood mesmerized for a moment, the look of anticipation on her face rooting me in place.

I couldn't tell her. I couldn't.

It was the searching look on her face that moved me, the little quiver in her lower lip. I stepped up and took her elbow, just as if I knew what I was going to do and say.

“Naomi?” I steered her away from the crowd, looking into her puzzled eyes.

“Jerry asked me to meet you.”

She looked relieved, then disappointed. “Is he—?”

I waited for her to complete the sentence, hoping she might fill in the blanks and save me from actually having to tell her. Then I saw her leap far past the point I wanted her to go.

“No...!” She shook her head, eyes wide. “He’s not! He’s not dead!”

“No!” I assured her, feeling her panic—she was actually shaking. Her relief wasn’t just visible, it was physical. She collapsed against me, her eyes closing for a moment, and I didn’t have much choice but to hold onto her, or she would have just puddled on the concrete. “Please, don’t faint,” I begged, leading her to the bench I’d vacated and settling her there beside me. I wanted to keep holding her like I was, actually, but it didn’t feel safe. She literally felt like liquid in my arms.

“You frightened me.” Her voice shook as she tilted her face up, looking speculative. “Are you...who are you?”

“I’m...” It seemed easier to tell her about Jerry than to explain who I was. “I’m sorry, but your husband got new orders. He had to ship out. Today. Just a few hours ago.”

“He...he what?”

Just when I thought she couldn’t possibly look any more disappointed than she had the moment before...then the worst possible scenario I’d been able to imagine,

short of her fainting, actually happened. She burst into tears. I fumbled, patting her shoulder as she turned her face into my chest and looking helplessly at the people passing by as if any one of them could help me with the sobbing woman in my arms.

“I’m sorry,” she apologized, and she kept saying it, over and over. At first I thought she was apologizing for crying, but then I realized perhaps she just didn’t know what else to say. I had the forethought—although it was more like an afterthought, really, since the front of my coat was streaked and wet already—to retrieve a handkerchief and hand it to her. She used it to cover her face, but she wasn’t through. She sobbed silently against me, her whole body shaking with the force, and I couldn’t do anything but put my arms around her and hang on.

“Hours?” she gasped, using my handkerchief to wipe her face, blow her nose. Her eyes were red-rimmed, her nose red and swollen. She looked as far from the picture of her I had in my pocket as she possibly could have, and yet here, in person, I still thought she was the most beautiful woman I’d ever seen, puffy face and all. “He was here? You talked to him?”

“Yes.” I nodded. “He asked me to meet your bus, to tell you what happened.” I didn’t tell her about the twenty dollar bill. I felt bad now for even taking it. “Oh, and he gave me this.” I pulled the envelope out of my coat pocket, careful to keep the picture I had of her safely tucked away. “For you.”

She snatched it out of my hands, greedy, tearing it open and devouring it in the fading afternoon light. I felt like more of a voyeur sitting there on that bench, watching her eyes go over his letter, than I did watching lovers kiss in the bus station, or even watching my own mother bathe herself. In fact, Naomi had the same look my mother

always had when she read my father's letters in the tub—there was something eager and hungry in her expression, a face filled with such pleasure it was almost pain, as if she were eating something decadent or listening to a delicious secret.

"How did he look?" She turned her eager eyes up to me as I stumbled over the question.

"He...uh...fine." I shrugged. "No holes. That's good, right?"

She laughed, her cheeks still wet with tears, and the sound made me feel dizzy with delight. I wanted to hear that sound again...and again...and again.

"Yes, yes, that's good." She sniffed, folding the letter and slipping it into her coat pocket. "I can't believe it. We timed this so perfectly. I was so looking forward to...to..." The disappointment in her voice was a stark juxtaposition to her laughter the moment before. I wanted more of the latter.

"Stop right there!" I held up my hand in mock horror. "Don't tell me any more—you'll insult my delicate sensibilities!"

I was rewarded with another laugh, and this time, she blushed. "So how do you know my Jerry?"

My Jerry.

I swallowed and attempted an explanation, feeling a lot like I'm sure the soldier had, standing at the ticket booth window, explaining to a stranger. It took me a few tries, but she finally got it.

"So you just volunteered?"

I had to confess. "Well...he did offer me twenty dollars."

Naomi's eyes widened. "He must have been very desperate. Jerry Liebovitz and money don't part easily."

"I shouldn't have taken it," I admitted, fishing the crisp bill out of my pocket and pushing it at her. "Here."

"Oh no you don't." She closed my hand back around it, shaking her head and smiling. "I want to be able to tease him about this twenty dollars for the rest of my life."

I raised an eyebrow at her. "Oh?"

"That's all I was worth to you? Twenty dollars? Is that the going rate for wives now? Oy!" Her voice took on the tone of some nagging fishwife, and I couldn't help barking laughter. Poor Jerry.

"Well, thank you for staying..." She rolled her eyes and hit her forehead with her hand. "And where are my manners? What's your name, Good Samaritan?"

"Patrick." I still had my arm around her shoulder, and I kept hoping she wouldn't notice, but I held out my other one and she shook it. "Patrick Connell."

"A good Irish name."

"Ha. I wish I had the luck of the Irish!"

"Well, you're my Irish luck for the day." She gave me a wan smile and then sighed. "I don't know what I would have done, just wandering around the bus station, wondering what happened to him." She shivered, pulling her coat around her, and I remembered the cold—I didn't feel it. In fact, I was quite warm.

"Let's get your bag and get you inside." I nodded to where the baggage handler was still unloading. "We'll get you back on a bus toward home."

“I guess that will have to do.” She sighed. “Although I don’t relish the long trip back.”

It wasn’t like I hadn’t been thinking it all along, but when Mr. Howard told us the last bus out that night had been delayed into the wee hours of the morning because of mechanical issues, it seemed natural to offer Naomi a room at our place for the night.

“Are you sure?” Naomi tugged on my coat sleeve, and I was more sure than ever. “You’ve done so much for me—for us—already.”

“It’s just me and my mother,” I explained. “We’re a few blocks over. And Mr. Howard can vouch for me. Right?”

Mr. Howard snorted, but he said, “He’s a good kid.”

“See?”

“I guess it would be all right.” She glanced at her bag, which I had insisted on carrying, and then back at me. “There’s a guest room?”

“Of course,” I replied, taking her elbow and leading her. “Fit for a queen. I’ll even put a pea under your mattress if you want.”

“That was a princess.” Naomi buttoned her coat as we walked. The sidewalk was dusted with snow and we left footprints in it.

I sighed. “Well, I hope the princess can live with macaroni and cheese for dinner, because I don’t think the grocer’s still open.”

“Rations?” she asked knowingly, hands in her pockets.

“I was hoping for a big juicy steak.”

She groaned. “Oh, that sounds like heaven. It’s been so long since I had a steak.”

“Or bacon,” I commiserated. My mouth watered at the thought. “Remember bacon?”

“Afraid not.” Naomi shook her dark head. “We don’t eat pork.”

“Are you—?” I didn’t want to finish the sentence, but I didn’t have to.

“With a last name like Leibovitz, you thought we were...what, Catholic?”

I flushed. “I didn’t want to assume.”

She shrugged. “I’m not afraid to say I’m Jewish. I’m proud to be a Jew.” I admired the jut of her chin, the emphasis of her convictions. “And I’m proud of my husband and what he’s fighting for.”

“You should be.”

I knew it was coming, and braced myself for it. “So why aren’t you over there?”

“I’m not a U.S. citizen,” I replied. “And they tell me you have to be one to join the army.”

“Oh.”

We walked in silence down the street. Just around the corner was the grocer, and while I swallowed my guilt—I always wondered, should I tell people I wanted to go to war? That I tried to get drafted? That they’d refused me three times? It seemed overly defensive on my part, and I usually just said nothing—I was hoping they’d still be open.

“You can see the water from here,” Naomi observed, and I glanced up at the coastline. The dock where my father shipped out, probably the same one her husband had left from a few hours ago, was obscured by the railway station but you could see a thin line of water under the orange setting sun. My mother called this area

“Transportation Central,” because the bus station, train yard and boat dock all converged down here at the edge of the water.

“You can see it from our house, too.” I steered her around the corner, thrilled to see a line out the grocer’s door. It was probably the first time I’d been really happy to stand in a ration line. In spite of there being a war on, I was embarrassed to think all we could offer a guest was some meatless dinner. Besides, I knew my mother would be disappointed if I didn’t bring home rations, and I couldn’t bear disappointing two women in one day. “We’re right on the water, so we have blackouts on that side of the house every night.”

“Really?” Naomi’s eyes widened as we took our place in the ration line. “You have to do everything in the dark?”

“Oh, they gave us black shades,” I explained, pleased at the movement of the line, which didn’t even stretch to the end of the shop. This wasn’t going to take nearly as long as I feared. Maybe my Irish luck comment was coming true? “We pull them down, and viola, the house goes dark on one side.”

“Are they really afraid someone might attack?”

“We are at war.” I nodded. “After Pearl Harbor, it’s a real possibility.”

I felt her shiver next to me, and I didn’t think it was from cold. I wanted to put my arm around her, but without the excuse I’d had at the bus station, I thought it would be too forward. Still I was thrilled when she took a step closer, pressing into my side.

“I wish this war was over.” Naomi glanced toward the water again, although we couldn’t see it at all now—the line had moved.

“We all do, dearie.” The woman in front of us turned and looked at me from under the black veil of her hat. She’d obviously been listening. “I’ve lost one son already, and have two more over there.”

“I’m so sorry,” Naomi murmured. She looked sad, and I decided, even if she was still just as beautiful with her mouth turned down at the corners, I didn’t want to see that expression again in these next few hours.

I glanced at the woman in front of us and saw her speculative look, her narrowed gaze. Thankfully, I avoided the usual questions as the line turned into the grocer’s, and she was served next.

“So I shouldn’t ask if they have pork chops?” I teased.

“I hate to have you spend your rations on me,” Naomi said seriously as I hopefully handed over my ration stamps. I’d lost weight this year on rations, with only two eggs allotted a week, a few ounces of butter and cheese per person, and meat scarce—the grocer at the other end of town sold horse meat, which my mother refused to buy, although I’d considered it. Protein was scarce, but we all made sacrifices because there was a war on.

I took the package the grocer handed over and paid for the purchase. I had change set aside for that purpose, although flashing the twenty dollar bill occurred to me.

“Lamb?” I inquired, peering into the paper bag. The grocer was an old man with a bulbous, gin-blossomed nose and bleary eyes, and he just grunted an agreement as he took my money. I glanced behind me, seeing we were the end of the line, and leaned against the counter. “Do you have any beef steaks?”

He grunted again, shaking his head, but I knew better than to leave it at that. This time, I did pull out the twenty. “I can pay you.”

His eyes lit up like I was Santa Claus and he called over his shoulder, “Mama! Two strip!” He looked at the money, and then at me. “Two enough? It’s all I have.”

Two days wages for two steaks. I didn’t have to break the twenty, though, and for that I was grateful.

“Steak!” Naomi murmured as we left the shop. “What a treat!”

“This is turning out to be quite the lucky day,” I agreed, forgetting about her unhappiness, her husband gone off to war.

And, it seemed, she had too, at least for the moment. “It is, isn’t it?”

She reached for my hand, and I juggled the bag and her suitcase in one arm so I could clasp it for the short walk around the corner and down toward the beach. I saw our lights on—we were allowed to show them on this side of the house—and knew my mother was home, probably worried and wondering where I’d been. She, too, was in for a surprise,

* * * *

I stretched out on the sofa with a groan as Naomi settled in front of the radio, tuning the station. We didn’t get the best reception and often listened through static about news of the war.

“I’m stuffed!” I announced happily, rubbing the pouch of my belly. An entire steak, a whole potato—with butter!—and even carrots from the summer garden, stored for the winter in the larder. They were a little rubbery raw, but cooked they were quite tasty.

“Want to dance?” Naomi teased, settling the radio on some big band music.

I groaned. “Not on your life. Quick, someone push me back into the water!”

The sound of her laughter, coupled with my mother’s as she joined us in the sitting room, was enough to make me giddy, if the food hadn’t already done its job.

We all sat quietly for a while, although I admit I was watching Naomi through half closed eyes. Dinner had been a delight, both women talking animatedly, getting to know one another. I could pretend, and did, that the beautiful woman beside me was mine, and not married to a man headed halfway across the world to face certain death—if not his own, than someone else’s. It was a lovely fantasy, although I knew it was just that. I had no designs or intentions of making it anything else. Instead, I just enjoyed basking in the company of two beautiful women who couldn’t help but be their feminine selves. It fed me more than the huge meal ever could have.

That’s when the news came on the radio. Every time, we hoped it would be the end of the war, and every time, it wasn’t. This was no different—FDR making another statement about the atrocities happening overseas. We all listened, the jaunty edge immediately taken off our evening, the wind in our sails stilled by reality.

“The United Nations are fighting to make a world in which tyranny and aggression cannot exist; a world based upon freedom, equality, and justice; a world in which all persons regardless of race, color, or creed may live in peace, honor, and dignity.”

Naomi sighed, and I watched her as we listened to FDR speak, her eyes cast down, her mouth set in a small rosebud. The speech wasn’t long—just long enough to put a damper on the mood. Then the news came on, and they were talking about the Recy Taylor case—a young Negro woman, a wife and mother, forced into a car by four

white men and “ravished.” That’s what they called it on the radio. We couldn’t say the word “rape” in 1944.

“That poor, poor girl.” My mother sighed, turning a page in her book. She’d always been progressive in her views—much more than my father ever had. “We’re fighting for equality overseas, and we don’t even have it in our own backyard.”

“My cousins are in Poland,” Naomi spoke softly, her hair still falling in her face. “They’re in hiding—at least, I hope they still are. They got a letter out to us early in the war, saying they were safe, for now. But the world just isn’t a safe place anymore, is it?”

“No,” my mother agreed, marking her place and looking at Naomi. “But I’m not sure that it ever really was.”

“I need some air.” And with that, Naomi was gone in a flash, her coat plucked from the rack as she headed out the front door.

“Patrick,” my mother started, but I was already up.

“I’m going.” We weren’t supposed to go out after dark. There were wardens who patrolled up and down the beach, and you could actually get arrested for being out after curfew.

“Naomi!” I saw her walking, shoulders hunched against the February cold. “Wait up!”

It was snowing hard now, which was always disconcerting, to be walking in sand while it snowed, but I knew if I let her get too far, I’d lose her. Breaking into a run, I caught up, breathless, and found myself holding a sobbing woman in my arms for the second time that day.

She railed against me, although I knew it was more than me, as she struggled and hit my chest and screamed and swore. I'd never heard words like that coming from a woman's mouth—it was both sobering and heartbreaking. And then she collapsed, spent, and I couldn't hold her as we sank down to the cold sand. I rocked her, the way my mother used to rock me after bad dreams, for a long time.

“Naomi, listen, we—”

“No!” Her head came up, and in the moonlight, her eyes flashed darkly. “Not another word. I'm so sick of words.”

“But—” I had to protest. If we stayed out there much longer...

“Shut up!” Her directive was followed with the easiest way to make me, although I was so surprised, she knocked me off balance. Her kiss knocked us both backwards into the sand and snow, and we tumbled there together, oblivious to the cold, our bodies creating enough heat to keep us from feeling it.

I didn't want to take advantage, but the softness of her body pressing, her mouth slanting, her tongue—oh god, her tongue slipping into my mouth, so eager and hungry—all made it impossible to resist. She unbuttoned her own coat, and I did mine, her breasts pressing full against my chest as she kissed me again and again.

My erection was a monumental ache, and as she straddled me and rocked, blocked by far too many clothes, her skirt riding so far up her hips I felt the edge of her stockings on her thighs as I held onto her, I thought I would explode right there. When she reached down to unzip my trousers, the small, soft tug of her hand like heaven's own, I groaned and began undoing her blouse, lost in the sensation.

She encouraged me, whispering, “yes, yes,” as I fumbled one-handed with her brassiere, the other filled with the soft globe of her bottom, pressing her hard against my crotch. She grew quickly impatient with me and undid it herself, letting her breasts spill free, and I thought I would die in the midst of those mounds of flesh, my tongue and mouth making wet trails back and forth between them.

“Wait,” she whispered, and I sighed when she stood, lamenting the loss of the soft press of her body, afraid it was over, that she was going to realize what we were doing and call it off. Instead, she pulled her skirt up high and undid her garters so she could pull her panties down and step out of them. I couldn’t see nearly enough of her in the dark, just a dark triangular patch against the pale white of her skin in the moonlight, but my hand had a mind of its own and cupped her mound as she stood splayed above me.

“Oh yes,” she whispered, moaning softly as I explored the soft folds of her flesh, the slickness inside, and I nearly let go the moment my finger entered her, the place I wanted to bury myself, forever and ever. Her legs wouldn’t hold her and she lowered herself onto me, straddling my hips again, this time flesh against flesh, no material left to separate us as she kissed me and rocked, the curly mass of her pubic hair parting over my shaft as she looked for the best angle.

I’d never done this, but I didn’t want to tell her that and she seemed to know just what she was doing, just what she wanted. She sighed happily as she slipped me inside of her, settling down into my lap and wiggling. Me, I nearly died, my fingers gripping her hips so hard I thought I’d bruise her, but I couldn’t help it. Every nerve in my body was as taut as piano wire waiting to be played, and that’s just exactly what she did.

She played me, rode me, taught me with every circling motion of her hips, and I went along for the ride, panting in her ear as the dark curtain of her hair blocked out the moon. The words she'd used earlier in anger, she now used in love, urging me on, driving me toward dizzying heights. Again, those words from a woman's mouth, so powerful, so moving.

"Naomi, oh... god... I'm..."

She shuddered in my arms, biting my neck, her face buried there as I drove up into her, the tight channel I was lost in squeezing again and again, drawing me deeper, taking my pulsing seed with every contraction. There was, in that moment, no cold, no dark, no world, no war...there was only Naomi, and me connected to her, through her, to everything, together beating as one heart

"I'm cold," she murmured, snuggling closer. Her coat was open and covering us, mine beneath, but our bodies' natural cooling mechanism after such exertion had kicked in, and we were slick with sweat

"We need to go back," I gasped, still out of breath, not wanting to even say the words. "We're not supposed to be out on the beach after dark. We could get arrested."

She giggled. Then she laughed, and I did, too—how absurd it all was, how insane, how delightfully, crazily funny. Laughing was better than crying, although we did the latter as well, tears streaming down our cheeks as we howled into the night, fumbling to reassemble our clothes. She couldn't find her underwear—and I wasn't about to tell her that I had them tucked into my coat pocket, along with her photo. For some reason, the loss of her panties somewhere in the sand made her laugh even harder as we made our way up the beach toward the house.

Mother knew. I saw it in her face as we burst through the door, still laughing, still glowing, our cheeks red from more than just the cold. Naomi apologized for running out, and my mother accepted with a wave of her hand, suggesting that perhaps we all should get some rest, but through it all, I saw the look in my mother's eyes and I knew she knew. Perhaps she had looked out the window and had seen us in the moonlight. Perhaps it was only a mother's intuition, a knowing, that she sensed a change in her only son.

Whatever the reason, she knew. And it changed everything.

* * * *

I had to ask her as I stood, waiting to put her back on the bus. Did she regret it? There was no other opportunity, although I don't know if we would have taken it. Breakfast was just oatmeal, a simple meal compared to last night's feast, and a quiet one, too, all three of us lost in our own thoughts. I dreamed and fantasized about the night before, stealing glances at the face of the woman sitting at the table. Naomi had her hair pulled back and up for traveling, and I realized she must have let it down just before she got off the bus the day before. She'd let it down for him—and he hadn't been there to meet her. Instead, it had been me, and somehow I'd known what was going to happen the moment I saw her picture.

She hugged me tight, whispering, "I could never regret you," into my ear. Then she kissed me. It was no small peck on the cheek, no little sister's kiss. This one was just as passionate, maybe more, than the night before, and my body responded instantly to the soft, wet cavern of her mouth, reminding me of the moist, deep recess I

wanted to sink into below. We were just another couple in the bus station, like the hundred others I'd watched, and people passed us without a second glance.

"Write me," I said, pressing a slip of paper in her hand. She took it, and she looked sad, but she didn't say no.

When the bus pulled out of the terminal, that was it, and I knew it. There was no correspondence, no continued affair. It had been one brief, bright moment in the midst of a world of tragedy, something for both of us to cling to. That moment on the beach had changed me, more perhaps than if I'd been storming another beach in Normandy a few months later, that beach where my father would die, in that last epic battle, and leave me finally, truly alone with my mother.

And my mother...she looked at me differently after that night with Naomi, and would, forever. I was changed, I felt changed, and she felt it too. What I never understood was how my mother knew how to turn it, pivot everything on its end, to give us both what we needed. But she did, and I gave into it, to her, because there was nothing else left to do. No matter how cold it got, we had each other, and the world was nothing but fire after that.

* * * *

"Patrick." It was almost immediate. She heard the door close, and she was calling me. "Did you get the mail? Was there a letter?"

"Yes... and no," I called up the stairs, unwrapping my scarf, shaking the snow off my coat.

"Would you come wash my hair?" Even her tone was different.

I found her in the bath, waiting, leaning back against the tub, her arms supporting her on either side. Her hair was piled up on top of her head, and I saw no bubbles in the water at all this time. Her body was completely exposed to me, shamelessly, almost proudly. Just looking at her made me hard.

“She made it off okay?” My mother inquired about Naomi as she let her hair down, a thick, dark mass unrolling down her back, long enough to begin spreading out into the water behind her like a fan.

“Fine.” I tried to be casual—about Naomi, about wetting my mother’s hair as she tilted her head back and arched, her nipples pointing skyward—but I was feeling anything but. Whatever had happened the night before had changed me, but somehow...somehow it had changed the way my mother looked at me, too.

“It’s hard, being away from your lover that way.”

Lover.

It even changed the way she spoke to me.

I swallowed, soaping up her hair, but didn’t respond. She kept talking anyway.

“You miss their company, of course, but there’s this primal sort of longing that just never goes away.” She shifted in the water, hands behind her, body stretching forward, putting herself on display for me. My gaze was drawn between the swell of her thighs, and instead of wondering what it might feel like, this time I knew—although it didn’t lessen my desire, as I once thought knowing might do. In fact, it seemed to make it worse.

“Is there?” I used my fingers to scrub her scalp, trying to keep my composure, trying to keep up the pretense we always had, when she gave a soft sigh, a small moan.

“Oh, baby, that feels so good,” she murmured, arching more, and my cock jumped in my pants like a snake trying to bite. “Do it harder.”

Oh, hell.

Instead, I took the cup I used to rinse her hair and started pouring water, trying to wash it away, the feelings I knew I shouldn't be having. Her sounds didn't stop, though...she kept on, arching, moaning, mmmmm-ing until my erection was a steel rod in my pants.

“Was that the phone?” I asked weakly as she opened her eyes, flushing the excess water from her hair as she stood. I hadn't heard anything but the sounds of my mother's pleasure but wanted any excuse now to leave temptation behind, because I knew, somehow, where we were headed, and there was just no going back.

“Towel?” She held her hand out for it and I gave it to her as she stepped from the tub, her body deliciously sleek and wet. She rubbed her hair for a moment, looking at me, something in her eyes I'd never seen before, and then she handed the towel back.

“All the hot water's made me faint,” she murmured. “Will you dry me?”

It was the worst sort of feminine excuse, and it worked on me the way it had worked on every man through the eons. I took the towel and tried to look away as I rubbed her dry, but it was no use. The material rubbing over her skin made her nipples hard, and I stared at the puckered circles around them, fascinated by this development. Naomi had been one night in the dark, but this woman's body was mine to gaze upon at my leisure. When I dabbed the towel meekly at the hair between my mother's legs, she put one foot up on the edge of the high tub and a hand on her hip.

“You can do better than that,” she assured me.

I stared—the soft, open pink of her flesh was a siren’s call, and I leaned in closer as if to hear it better. She was right, there was water still beading in the wiry hair, and a wetness inside that glistened in the light.

“Do you like what you see?” Her hand moved in my hair, her nails softly raking my scalp, making me shiver. I felt like an obedient dog who would do anything...anything...

I looked up at her, nodding. “You’re beautiful.”

It seemed to be the right thing to say. She smiled, her hand moving to under my chin, lifting my face. She’d done this a hundred times, a thousand, touched me this way, but never with that hungry look in her eyes. Something had changed—I had changed, she had changed. We were different, and I knew something different was about to happen.

“Do you want to kiss it?”

I gaped at her, everything in me going suddenly silent. I had heard talk of such things, I had even read a little about them, but to be faced with the real possibility, and to have my own mother’s hands in my hair, pressing me ever closer to the sweet call of her core, was almost too much. My cock ached and I pressed a hand there, hoping she didn’t notice. I tried to protest, just for a moment. I knew I shouldn’t, we shouldn’t, but the need rising in me was too incredible to be borne.

“Mother, I...”

“Kiss it.” The words were soft, but insistent, and I did as she asked, breathing in the clean, sharp smell of her as I pressed my lips and then my tongue into the softness of her cleft. Her moans encouraged me, her hands guiding me. I wanted to push my

tongue inside her, taste her as deeply as I could, but she directed me to a hard nub of flesh at the top of her slit, begging me to lick it, faster, faster, oh god, more. I did as I was told, rubbing my cock through my pants as I knelt at my mother's altar and offered her everything I could.

"Oh yes, oh god, that's such a good boy," she moaned, rocking her hips into my face, burying me in her flesh until I couldn't breathe, and I didn't care or want to anyway. "Make Mummy come, sweetheart, oh fuck, oh oh ohhhh!"

And then she shuddered and bucked, her foot slipping off the edge of the tub as she pressed my face deep into her flesh, giving her climax to me in hot, wet waves, just as Naomi had done on top of me the night before on the beach. When she collapsed and sat on the edge of the tub, drooping slightly, breathing hard, I sat at my mother's feet and gazed up at her in wonder, my face still wet, and found myself wanting more.

"Oh, Patrick," she murmured when she opened her eyes to see me looking up at her that way. "My beautiful boy...my poor, beautiful boy. I think we have to do something about that, don't you?" She nodded down to my lap, where my hand pressed the outline of my cock.

I didn't say anything as she led me down the hall to her bedroom. I didn't say a word when she unzipped me and pressed me to the bed, kneeling between my thighs on the floor. But I couldn't help my moans and cries of pleasure when her mouth engulfed the already-slick head of my cock and she began to suck.

Something in me was torn as I watched her head bob up and down between my legs—I couldn't believe we were doing this, that I was in my mother's bedroom, and she was...she was... oh god, what was she doing?

Her tongue moved in circles around the head, her hand stroking the thick length of my shaft as she watched my reaction. My toes curled, my belly clenched, and I moaned out loud when I saw her other hand reach between her legs to rub herself.

“Mother, please,” I whispered as she crawled up onto the bed over me, pushing my shirt up as she went, flicking my nipples—holy Christ!—with her tongue as she divested me of the last bit of my clothes.

“Oh, yes, say it again,” she begged, reaching back and grabbing onto my cock, squeezing, rubbing her thumb over the tip.

“Mother,” I gasped as she slipped the head between her legs, up and down her slit. “Oh god, Mother, please!”

“I’ve wanted this for so long,” she whispered, and I felt that sweet, velvet sleeve beginning to descend over my aching erection. “I want you so much.”

“Me, too,” I groaned as she slid all the way down, and I didn’t want to think about what we were doing, if it was wrong or right or indifferent. I just wanted to feel—the delicious sensation of her flesh against mine, the sweet words she whispered in my ear, the love I’d felt and always had for the woman in my arms.

She rocked on me that way for a moment, offering me the spill of her breasts, which I eagerly took in both hands and mouth, making her moan louder when I squeezed and sucked and licked them at my leisure. But it didn’t last long. Then she was climbing off me, on her hands and knees, her bottom up in the air as she pressed her cheek against the bed.

“Take me,” she whispered, her eyes on mine as I rolled to look at her like that, some obscenely sexy offering, all for me. She shouldn’t have been, she wasn’t mine,

but I found myself wanting yet another woman who didn't belong to me, and the feeling was profanely delicious. "Fuck me, baby. Fuck me good."

Oh. God.

I knelt up behind her, unsure, but she used a hand to guide me where I wanted to go—just where she wanted me, deep inside, buried to the hilt and seeking even more heat. She began to rock, encouraging me, and I started to take the lead, grabbing onto the fullness of her hips, looking down to watch my cock moving in and out of her flesh. The sight was incredible, the wet shaft of my cock burying itself into her flesh like the nose of a pet insisting on attention, please pet me, love me, again, again, more! I couldn't get enough of her.

"That's it!" She moaned and bucked back against me. I felt her fingers underneath, between us, rubbing herself, my sac slamming into her every time thrust. I couldn't get enough of her flesh, I couldn't bury myself deep enough, hard enough, and although I worried for a moment about hurting her, the words she uttered soon had me pounding so hard it rattled us both.

"Fuck me harder!" she begged, hips making circles, forcing my cock to explore every delicious inch of her insides. "Oh yes, baby, fuck me hard, hard, hard!"

Those words, those naughty, nasty words, coming out of my mother's mouth as my cock impaled her onto the bed, forcing her from her knees, down flat, and she grunted and moaned and took my weight, asking me for more, more, more.

"Oh baby, yes, make Mummy come, make me come, make me come!"

Her words were more than enough to push me over the precipice—although I had fallen, really, long ago. I growled and shoved in deep, longing to bury the hot jets of

my seed as deeply as I could, and she took it all, gasping and squirming beneath me, calling my name out loud in her pleasure.

When I rolled off and collapsed beside her, my arm thrown over my eyes, I felt her sigh and then move to find me, snuggling up and tucking her head under my chin, resting her cheek against my chest. It seemed the most strangely natural thing in the world to my put arm around her shoulder, to kiss her hair, to murmur, “I love you.”

For the moment, I wasn’t thinking about the impossibility of having the woman I’d been with the night before, the one I thought I could love. For the moment, I wasn’t thinking about the war, or my father, or the whys and wherefores of my not following in his veteran footsteps. I wasn’t thinking about anything at all, my mind a delightful blank, and it was the best feeling in the world.

“Do you regret it?”

I was startled by her question—the very one I’d asked, just hours before, to someone else.

I gave her the same answer. “I could never regret you.”

And it was the truth.

I never have.

The End

ABOUT SELENA KITT



Like any feline, Selena Kitt loves the things that make her purr—and wants nothing more than to make others purr right along with her! Pleasure is her middle name, whether it's a short cat nap stretched out in the sun or a long kitty bath. She makes it a priority to explore all the delightful distractions she can find, and follow her vivid and often racy imagination wherever it wants to lead her.

This sassy, outrageous author lives with her husband and children in the rural Midwest, all of whom she thinks are the cat's meow. Her writing embodies everything from the spicy to the scandalous, but watch out—this kitty also has sharp claws and her stories often include intriguing edges and twists that take readers to new, thought-provoking depths.

When she isn't pawing away at her keyboard, she loves spending her time belly dancing, attending drum circles, gathering in women's groups, and beautiful pictures of everything beautiful in her world.

Her e-publishing credits include: [*Rosie's Promise*](#) published by Samhain and *Torrid Teasers* #49 published by [Whiskey Creek Press](#) featuring two short stories, *French Lessons* and *I'll Be Your Superman* in August 2008. Her stories and poems are in the following anthologies: [Coming Together: For The Cure](#), [Coming Together: Under Fire](#) and [Coming Together Volume 1](#) and [Volume 3](#). Two stories, [Sacred Spots](#) and [Happy Accident](#), have been published by [Phaze Publishing](#), and her novels *Christmas Stalking*, *Blind Date*, *The Surrender of Persephone* and *The Song of Orpheus* are coming soon. She has also been published online in [The Shadow Sacrament: a journal of sex and spirituality](#), [The Erotic Woman](#), and her story, *Connections*, was one of the runners-up for the [2006 Rauxa Prize](#), given annually to an erotic short story of "exceptional literary quality," out of over 1,000 nominees, where awards are judged by a select jury and all entries are read "blind" (without author's name available.) She can be reached on her website at www.selenakitt.com or email selena@selenakitt.com

If you enjoyed [BACK TO THE GARDEN](#), you might also enjoy:



VARIETIES OF LOVE

By Amicus

A collection of short stories intended to appeal to a wide and varied interest of the reader. If you enjoy group sex, “Four Friends”, will lead you gently to first time discoveries by four college student. If sophisticated and sexy romance is your pleasure, “The Girl in the Limousine”, might offer you a pleasant read. Explicit and sexy Fan Fiction; see if you can guess who the two major film stars might be. If Reluctance is your favorite, “The Girl on a Dusty Road”, and “The Girl by the River”, might make you smile and perspire. If a gentle, first time, non erotic romance might put you in a mood, “The Girl in the Bookshop” might bring a smile and a tear. When Mickie & Mike share a sleeping bag in the backyard, even though they are step brother and sister, they discover more than just each other...

Warnings: This title contains graphic language, sex and incest.

Excerpt From VARIETIES OF LOVE:

She gripped my hand and pulled me away from the sculpture towards an area of shoulder high shrubs and flowering bushes.

She plunged right into shrubbery, pulling me behind her as I glanced around to see if we were being observed. She didn't seem to care.

Then she stopped, looked around for an instant, lifted her skirt and skittered out of her underpants, dropping them at my feet. With her chest heaving, she looked at me and raised her arms. We came together with an audible thump, body on body. My hands were on her breasts and between her legs and anywhere and anywhere I could touch and our mouths were locked together.

Small keening sounds came from her throat as I rubbed through her dress and then her hands were on me and she was squeezing and stroking and yanking on the zipper to my jeans. I pulled the open front of her blouse down, destroyed at least one button and exposed a breast. I took her into my mouth and pulled hard, again and again as she moaned and writhed in my arms.

Then we were on the ground, in the dirt and the grass, rolling and gasping as I raised her skirt and moved over her. She lifted her knees and reached behind me, pulling me down and into her in almost one simultaneous movement. There was no foreplay—she was wet and I felt huge.

She cried out as I plunged all the way into her, coming up hard against her pubic bone and clitoris. She screamed and wrapped her legs around me and sank her teeth into my neck. I grabbed her hair and pulled her head back and then it was two animals in a primordial ritual that exploded into a violent coupling that might have shaken the earth had it paid any heed...

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And look for these other titles from Selena Kitt:



ESCAPING FATE

By Selena Kitt

Sam has an unusual interest in humans—well, considering she’s a fairy of fate whose profession it is to determine their futures, it’s no wonder! But it isn’t just Karma she’s curious about... Sam has what her fairy-pal Alex thinks is an inordinate and rather wanton interest in certain biological aspects of human behavior—most notably, s-e-x.

When Sam’s job leads her into the path of a handsome man who rocks her world, Sam’s interest becomes obsession. Alex reminds her that fairies get one Christmas wish – will Sam consider using hers to become human to experience one night of bliss?

When things become even more complicated—Sam discovers that Drew, the sexy stranger she’s been fantasizing about, can actually see her—Sam finds herself immersed in a complex and tangled web of human experience. She has to make a choice that will teach her a twisted lesson in fate, ultimately change the course of human existence and even reveal the origin of Santa Claus!

Warning: This title contains graphic language and sex.

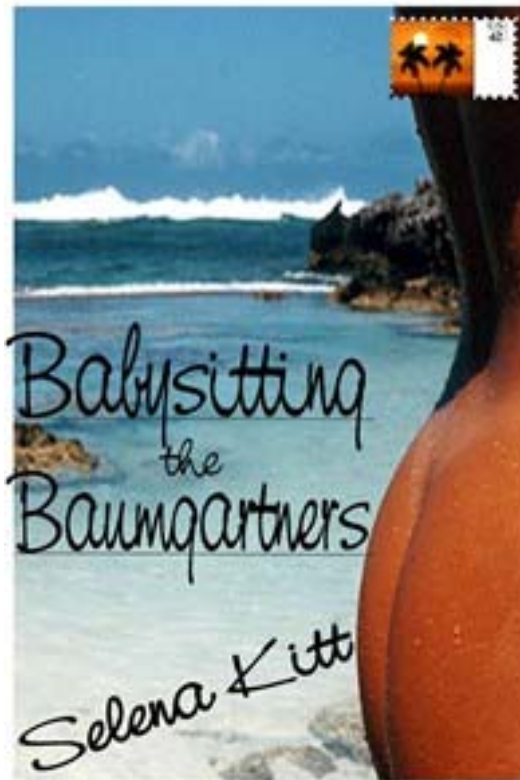


NAUGHTY BITS

By Selena Kitt

David has been brightening up his gray Surrey, England days with the porn collection hidden in his parents' shed, but when he find that his older sister, Dawn has discovered his magazine collection, things really begin to heat up. Their parents insist that their just-graduated son look for a job, but their daughter has the week off and is determined to work on her tan. Distracted David finds himself increasingly tempted by his seductive older sister, who makes it very clear what she wants. Her teasing ways slowly break down the taboo barrier between brother and sister until they both give in to their lust... but what are they going to do about the feelings that have developed between them in the meantime...?

Warning: This title contains incest and anal sex.



BABYSITTING THE BAUMGARTNERS

By Selena Kitt

A FICTIONWISE BESTSELLER!

Ronnie—or as Mrs. Baumgartner insists on calling her, Veronica—has been babysitting for the Baumgartners since she was fifteen years old and has practically become another member of the family. Now a college freshman, Ronnie jumps at the chance to work on her tan in the Florida Keys with “Doc” and “Mrs. B” under the pretense of babysitting the kids. Ronnie isn’t the only one with ulterior motives, though, and she discovers that the Baumgartners have wayward plans for their young babysitter. This wicked hot sun and sand coming of age story will seduce you as quickly as the Baumgartners seduce innocent Ronnie and leave everyone yearning for more!

Warning: This title contains MFF threesome, lesbian, and anal sex.

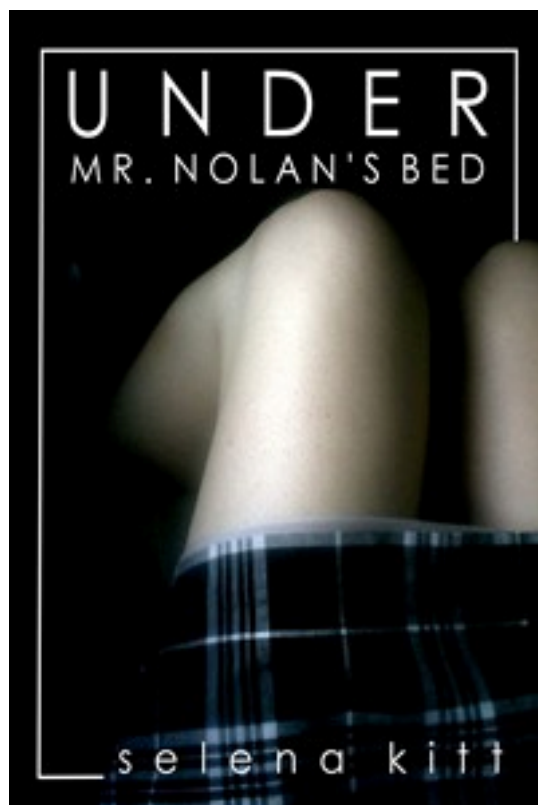


BLUEBEARD'S WIFE

By Selena Kitt

Tara's husband has never shared a fantasy with her, or even masturbated—that she knows of. However, this curious wife discovers a phone bill full of phone calls to sex lines and realizes her husband has been living a double life! Instead of getting mad, Tara's curiosity leads her to begin listening in on John's steamy conversations in hopes of finding out what he really wants in the bedroom. After several failed attempts at bringing fantasy to reality, however, a frustrated Tara turns to her much more adventurous best friend, Kelly, for help. A quick psychology 101 diagnosis from Dr. Kelly marks John as having a classic "madonna/whore" complex, and she quickly sets about making plans to rectify this situation. Tara goes along for the ride, hoping that Kelly may have the answer to bridging the seemingly ever-growing gap in her marriage...

Warning: This title contains a MFF threesome, a daddy/daughter role play between consenting adults, strong language, minor drug use and F/F sex.

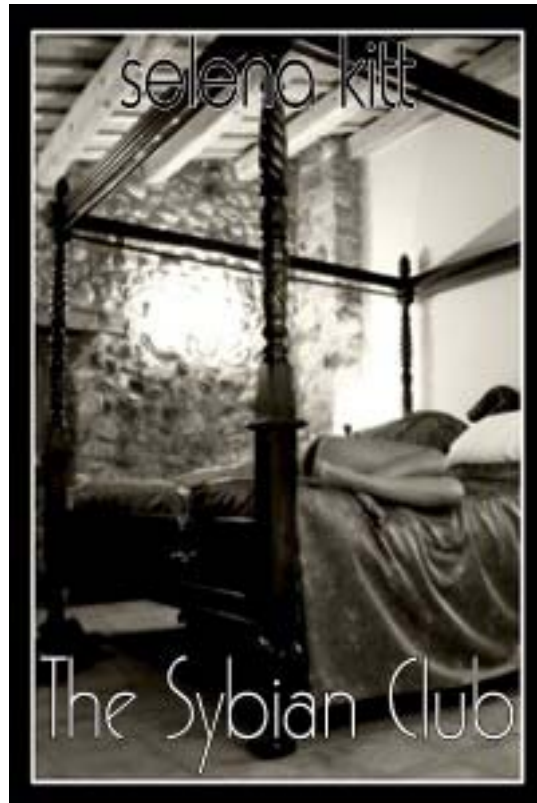


UNDER MR. NOLAN'S BED

By Selena Kitt

Leah and Erica have been best friends and have gone to the same Catholic school since just about forever. Leah spends so much time with the Nolan's—just Erica and her handsome father, now, since Erica's mother died—that she's practically part of the family. When the girls find something naughty under Mr. Nolan's bed, their strict, repressive upbringing makes it all the more exciting as they begin their sexual experimentation. Leah's exploration presses deeper, and eventually she finds herself torn between her best friend and her best friend's father—but even she couldn't have predicted the shocking and bittersweet outcome of their affair.

Warning: This title contains a threesome, lesbian sex and incest.



THE SYBIAN CLUB

By Selena Kitt

Tasha convinces her husband, Max, to buy her a the ultimate female pleasure machine – a Sybian – but he only agrees if she can come up with a business plan to pay for it. Determined to keep her promise, she creates The Sybian Club and begins bringing women to the basement room set up just for her new toy. It becomes so popular, she has to enlist the help of new friend, Ashley, to keep up with the demand, and the women enjoy an exciting ride as the business thrives. But Tasha has developed feelings for Ashley, and doesn't know how to tell her husband that she wants to add more to their sex life than just a new toy...

Warning: This title contains a threesome, lesbian and anal sex.



STARVING ARTIST

By Selena Kitt

Ellie is living the life of a true starving artist in a small efficiency apartment in dangerous downtown Detroit, but more dangerous than her surroundings are the men to whom she pays rent. Denied help by her prosecutor father, who believes his daughter is wasting her life in art school, Ellie finds herself in a precarious position and surrenders helplessly to her predicament. However, a strange twist of fate gives Ellie a chance at revenge. Will she take it?

Warning: This title contains graphic language, nonconsensual and anal sex.



ON CHERRY HILL

By Selena Kitt

Midwife Anne gets pulled over in the middle of the night on Cherry Hill Road. She's on her way to a birth, but her urgency doesn't sway the unsympathetic officer. When the cop discovers something suspicious on Anne's driving record and insists she get out of the car, she knows she's in real trouble. When he cuffs her and bends her over the hood, things go beyond trouble...

But the surprising outcome of this tale gives both Anne and the reader a jolt they never could have anticipated...

Warning: This title contains graphic language and nonconsensual sex.



TICKLED PINK

By Selena Kitt

Who says sex can't be fun - or funny? You'll find more than enough amusing mishaps and uproarious situations to tickle your funny bone—and more!—in this delightfully wicked and delightfully sexy anthology from Selena Kitt.

Warning: This title contains graphic language and sex.



PAPERBACK ROMANCE

by Selena Kitt

Maya's heart yearns for romance and adventure, so that's what she writes about - but James Reardon, her college creative writing professor, insists she's wasting both time and talent. Determined to prove him wrong, Maya stumbles onto the fact that her professor's been keeping secrets - not the least of which is his attraction to her. Faced with a choice, she will have to decide whether or not to reveal his secret to the world—and her own desire for a man nearly twice her age.

Warning: This title contains graphic language and sex.



TAKEN

By Selena Kitt

Lizzy’s friendship with her older boss, Sarah, turns into something deeper and much more exciting one rainy day after work, and Lizzy finds herself drawn into a world she never knew existed. Sarah has a dominant streak, and as she leads Lizzy into the role of a submissive, the two women become closer than they ever thought possible. But while Sarah, hurt too many times, wears a ring, and tells guys she’s “taken,” Lizzy knows she secretly longs for a man. Determined to find one for them both to share, Lizzy is just about to give up when a dark, handsome, virile answer shows up right under her nose. Lizzy may think she and Sarah are going to seduce David—but she underestimates their handsome co-worker, and David turns the tables on them both. But will he be able to tame the untameable Sarah?

Warnings: This title contains graphic language and sex, a m/f/f threesome and mild bdsm elements.