

Bad Girls II

**By
Michelle Carlyle**

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Dedication

For Frank, thanks for always being there to warm
my heart... and my tush

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The Office Prankster

"It was you, wasn't it?" Blake asked.

Words Jenny did not want to hear. Especially coming out of Blake Douglas's mouth. Especially given the circumstances, being alone with the man in his apartment.

Jenny fought to recover. "Me, what?" she asked as innocently as she could.

"You were the one who wrote the email."

"I don't know what—"

"Now I know you're guilty. Everyone read that."

Jenny could only think of escape. She'd only dropped by this evening to give him a file. She had no idea she was walking into a trap.

"Look, Blake, I don't know how you could—"

"You didn't want me near your department. You saw me as a threat when I got transferred. When I have nothing to do with your section, and we only share one secretary."

"That is just wrong—"

"Do you deny you wrote it?" Blake asked.

"Yes."

"Interesting. I tracked the original email to your computer. Dave corroborated this."

"Dave's just mad at me because I dumped him."

"That's not the way he tells it."

"No kiddin', what a shocker."

"So, you deny you originated the email?" Blake asked.

"Yes. Uh, I have to go, you got the file, I—"

"Wait, I'd like you to hear something."

"Really, I'm late to a—"

"Please." Blake reached out and turned on a small tape recorder that was sitting on the coffee table in front of them.

Jenny froze as she heard her own voice coming out of the machine. "So what if I sent it? Who wanted him here?"

Blake said, "This is my favorite part."

Jenny heard herself say, "That fine ass of his does not make up for that superior attitude. I don't care how pretty he is, he deserved that prank."

Blake reached over and turned off the tape recorder.

"That was illegal," Jenny said, shaken.

"So is libel," Blake replied.

Jenny was stunned into silence. Caught. She was caught. She felt like a bunny stuck in a cage with a wolf.

The look Blake was sending her was scary. His gorgeous face turned almost sinister, malevolent. He was clearly angry about the email and wanted revenge.

"You obviously have a plan," Jenny finally said.

"Obviously."

"What do you want?" she asked, resigned.

"Well, for starters, dinner," he replied.

"What?"

"Dinner, you know, as in eating."

"Yes. You're scaring me," Jenny replied.

"I haven't even got to the good part yet," he said, a wide smile overtaking his handsome face.

"I can hardly wait."

"Of course, you can just walk out of here..."

"And then what would happen?" Jenny asked, not really wanting the answer.

"I go to Jacob."

Her heart stopped. "You would."

"I would."

"That would mean my job."

"Would it?" Blake asked, seemingly relishing the thought.

"You're enjoying this."

"Very much. Watching you squirm is delightful."

"So, wait. Dinner with you or I lose my job. What's the catch?"

"I'm so glad you asked," he said, looking like the cat that ate the canary.

"I don't think I'm gonna like this," Jenny said.

"I don't think you are, either. Because after dinner, we come back here, I take you over my knee and spank you into the middle of next week."

Jenny was shocked. "You're serious."

"Quite."

"You're sick."

"Quite possibly."

"That's assault."

"Not if you submit to it willingly. Then it's consenting adults."

"You *are* sick."

"Determined. You crossed the line with me, woman. And for that, you must pay."

An inadvertent thrill went through Jenny. Something about the look in Blake's eye. Primal. Base.

She immediately got angry with her reaction. What the hell was she doing getting turned on by the thought of the man spanking her?

"You're serious about this," Jenny said.

Blake nodded, but the look in his eye didn't waver. Serious, vengeful.

It didn't help that he was so good-looking. Blake was tall, had light brown hair, large blue eyes and an almost perfectly symmetrical face. Killer body, long legs, nice rear end. Lovely smile. And now this other side to him. This dominant, authoritarian side. While it turned her on, it also frightened her. Here was a man she couldn't bully. A novelty in Jenny's world.

But a spanking? She'd never been spanked before.

"So, what's your choice?" Blake asked.

"What will an apology do for you?"

"Not much. I know you, Jenny. You're only sorry you got caught. You enjoyed sending that email out. I personally overheard you gloating about it to Mary."

"Damn."

"So?"

"You know what my choice is," Jenny replied dismally.

"Lovely. Well, come on, we've got reservations at Komiko's."

"You were very sure of yourself," Jenny observed tartly.

"No, I was very sure of you," Blake replied. "Shall we?" he said, getting up off the couch.

"Wait," Jenny said. "Why the dinner? Why not just... spank me now and get it over with?"

"Because I want you to anticipate it. Worry about it. Think about how awful you were to me. I know you won't be able to stop thinking about it when you're sitting across from me at dinner. Nor while you're riding in my car."

"You are a sadist."

"You're very lucky that I am not. But I will greatly enjoy turning you over my knee and swatting you until you howl. You put me through hell for an entire week."

"Oh, come on, no one believed the email."

"Johnson did."

"No, really?"

"Really," Blake replied with an angry edge.

"He's an idiot," Jenny said.

"He's the regional vice-president. He had an investigation done on me."

"He didn't!"

"He did."

"Damn. Okay, that was not my intention."

"What was your intention exactly?" Blake asked.

"Uh... to piss you off. Make you feel unwelcome," Jenny said, feeling bad now that she was facing her true motivations.

"Well, then, you accomplished your goals," Blake replied.

"I can't believe I'm feeling a tinge of guilt here. You're good at this."

"Oh, honey, by the time I'm through with you, you will be very sorry and contrite. Very sorry, indeed. And when you're trying to sit in that

meeting tomorrow, I will be greatly enjoying your discomfort."

Jenny couldn't think of anything to say.

"Regretting your actions, aren't you?" Blake said, smiling at her.

"Starting to," Jenny replied.

"Good, shall we go?"

"Lead the way," Jenny said.

"After you, my dear," Blake said.

As Jenny walked towards the door, she swore he was checking out her behind. Sizing it up for smacking later.

Blake drove her to the newest hot restaurant in town. A Japanese place with private booths, very fancy. Jenny hadn't been there yet, but heard the food was fantastic. However, her mind was not on the sushi, nor on her surroundings, all she could think about was that she'd crossed the wrong man.

They ordered and then sipped on their Sapporo beers.

"So, what's your story?" Jenny finally asked, breaking the silence between them.

"What do you mean?" Blake asked.

"You know, school, career plans—"

"Is that what you really want to know?"

"What do you think I want to know?" Jenny asked.

"My love history."

Was he reading her mind?

"Blake... I—" she sputtered.

"You're easy to read, you know that?" he observed, greatly enjoying her embarrassment.

"Blake—"

"You know what I think?"

"What?" she asked, not wanting the answer.

"I think you're like that little girl in third grade who likes a boy, so she throws a rock at him," Blake said and then carefully watched for her response.

Jenny choked on her beer.

Blake smiled widely. "You could have just asked me out. You didn't need to send a damaging email to get my attention."

Finally, Jenny recovered enough to defend herself. "I wasn't trying to get your attention," she argued.

"Lying to me is just going to make me spank you harder," he stated.

"Look, Blake, sometimes people do things without really thinking them through. Unconscious motivations."

"So, you are attracted to me."

"Blake—"

"Well, I'm attracted to you, too," he revealed.

Jenny felt naked, uncomfortable and excited all at once.

"Uh... Blake—"

"You aren't used to dealing with the truth, are you?" he observed, amused.

"Not like this, no," she said, shifting in her seat. She was finding it hard to maintain eye contact with him.

"I think I like making you uncomfortable. You're cute when you're flustered."

"I need more beer," Jenny replied, taking a large swig.

Blake laughed.

"Wait," Jenny said. "Wait, wait, wait. What—how does this... You're serious about..."

"Spanking you? Yes. You must pay for your crime. Being attracted to you is almost a separate thing. Well, no, it will be much more enjoyable, actually. You were a bad girl. And, I'm a great believer in spanking bad girls. Especially ones with such lovely derrieres as you."

"I knew you were checking out my ass!"

"Um and I believe your direct quote was '...that fine ass of his does not—'"

"Stop! Okay, okay. You win, okay? I capitulate. I submit."

"You have no idea the pleasure you're giving me."

"I picked the wrong guy to harass," Jenny said to herself, resigned, bummed.

"Yes, you did."

They ate a lovely dinner and had mochi ice cream for dessert. As exquisite as the food was, Jenny couldn't help but think about her upcoming spanking. It was making her exceptionally nervous. She'd never been spanked before. Her parents had used grounding as her method of punishment. She had no real idea of what she was facing.

"Getting nervous, aren't you?" Blake asked with a sadistic grin.

"Blake."

"Wondering how hard I'll spank you. Whether or not you'll cry. If you'll beg me to stop."

"Now you're torturing me."

"It's my intention," he said. "You've been a very bad girl, and this is part of your punishment."

"Like the spanking won't be enough?"

"I don't know. It might turn you on."

"Blake!"

He laughed. "Now you're blushing. I'm really enjoying you, Jenny. Such delightful reactions."

"Are we gonna go then?" she responded impatiently.

"Yes, let's," he said, reaching for the bill.

"I'll pay," Jenny offered, hoping it might mitigate her punishment.

"Oh, yes, you will," Blake said with a dark look in his eye. "But not for dinner. I pay."

"Blake—"

"I thought you were submitting to my will."

"Okay, okay," she said.

"Good girl," he said, smiling at her.

They drove back to his place in near silence. Jenny was getting more nervous by the moment. The looks he kept sending her were getting to her. Predatory, victorious, vengeful. And amused. He was greatly enjoying his power over her.

They walked into his apartment. She stood in the middle of the living room, wondering what would happen next. She didn't have long to wait.

"All right," Blake said. "I'm about to give you a choice."

"I pick no spanking."

"No, that's not the choice," he said, smiling. "Here's the choice. Fifty swats with your pants on, twenty-five bare-bottomed."

"Uh..." Jenny said, shifting her weight from foot to foot. This was a hell of a choice. Pain or more pain.

"Choose now or I'll choose for you, and I think you know what I'll pick."

"Blake, I—"

"Choose, Jenny," he ordered sternly.

"Okay, okay... Jeez, this is embarrassing."

"It's meant to be."

"Twenty-five," she blurted, completely unsure of herself.

Blake grinned. "Excellent."

Then he walked over and took a seat on his couch. "Come on, let's get on with this, shall we? Come over here, Jenny."

"You're scaring me."

"I'm glad. Maybe you'll think twice about harassing someone the next time."

"I'm already there, can't we—"

"Jenny, now. Come over here," he commanded.

"I want to run," she said.

"You do, I'll chase you down, pull those pants right off of you and give you fifty on that bare behind of yours. Now get over here. Every second you waste, I'll add five more to your sentence."

Jenny quickly walked over to him.

"Take them down to your knees. The panties as well," he ordered.

"Oh, man."

"Now or I'll do it for you."

"No, I will," she said. She reluctantly unzipped her jeans and then pushed them over her hips and down to her knees.

"And the panties," Blake said, fully enjoying her discomfort.

Embarrassed, Jenny pushed her pink panties down over her hips to her knees.

Blake reached out, grabbed her wrist and pulled her down and across his lap. He pinned her legs with one of his, took her arm and held it tight. Jenny was helpless, vulnerable.

"Oh my, look at this lovely rear end of yours, Jenny. Beautiful, very beautiful," he said, running a hand over her cheeks. "Are you ready?" he asked.

"No."

"I repeat, are you ready to submit to your punishment?"

"Yes, Blake."

"I want you to say these words: I was wrong to send the email."

"I was wrong to send the email," Jenny repeated.

"I willingly submit to your punishment."

"I willingly submit to your punishment."

"Excellent. Are you ready to pay for your crime against me?"

"Yes, Blake."

"Twenty-five it is, then."

She waited, but nothing happened.

Finally, Jenny said, "What are you—"

"Silence, Jenny. Submitting means no talking."

"Sorry."

And then she waited some more, getting more and more frightened as she anticipated her spanking.

Whack! Jenny nearly jumped out of her skin. His hand came down on her poor flesh, hard. Whack!

Whack! Whack! He was really spanking her! This hurt!

"Ow, Blake!" she squealed.

Silently, Blake administered the spanking. He worked one spot at a time until she howled.

"Blake, stop, I'm sorry!" she cried. Whack! Whack! Whack!

Blake began to work on her sit spots.

"Blake! Stop! I won't do it again! Owwww! Please! I'm sorry!"

Jenny began to try to wiggle away which made him increase the force of his swats.

"Oww! I'm sorry! Blake! That's enough! I got it! I got it!"

But Blake seemed deaf to her pleas. In fact, it seemed as if the more she protested, the harder he spanked her. Her ass was flaming!

He spanked both cheeks simultaneously, then concentrated on her high rounded spots.

"Blake, stop!" she cried.

He finished on her sit spots, delivering the last few strikes with amazing power and precision. Jenny was yowling in pain, tears were stinging her eyes. But finally, it was all over. Her butt felt seared! She valiantly pushed away her tears, but she was so shocked, she couldn't help but sob.

"Easy, easy, Jenny, calm down, it's over," Blake said in a soothing voice.

Jenny moved to get up, but he didn't release her. "Wait, Jenny. Not yet," he told her.

She felt him begin to rub her very sore behind. He squeezed some massage oil onto her cheeks and began to rub it in. He released his grip on her arm so he could use both hands to massage her very painful backside.

Jenny finally relaxed.

Blake massaged her rear thoroughly. It began to turn her on. Big time. The spanking had hurt and was most unpleasant, but the lingering tingling she felt on her rear in combination with his touch was an amazing sensation.

Blake stopped, unpinned her legs and helped her stand up. He moved to pull up her pants for her, but Jenny stopped him, grabbed his hand and shoved it into her crotch. She hadn't meant to do it, but she seemed helpless to stop herself. She wanted him so badly.

Blake reacted strongly. He eagerly touched her while he locked an arm around her back and brought her close to him. With a hungry look in his eye, his lips took hers.

Jenny almost came right then. The sexual energy between them was electric. Blake felt it, too. A moan escaped from his lips, emanating deep from within his throat. He thrust his tongue inside her mouth more deeply as his very practiced fingers explored her tender folds.

Blake soon ended the kiss, turned her around and pushed her down onto the couch. With a dark and feral grin on his handsome face, he pulled off her shoes and then ripped off her jeans. He spread her thighs apart and his tongue found her sweet spot.

Jenny gasped and then moaned in absolute ecstasy as Blake tormented her. Blake's prowess in oral lovemaking was astounding. His tongue was so supple and talented; he was doing things to her she'd only dreamed about before. Most guys did a dog-drinking-water move. A cat-taking-a-bath lapping. Not Blake. He gently spread her lips with his fingers as his expert tongue carefully explored her most sensitive inner parts. He toyed with her favorite nerve, running his tongue all around it, teasing it, tormenting it.

He zeroed in on a specific area of her little knob, bestowing many tiny flicks upon it with just the tip of his tongue. Jenny clamped her thighs around his head and thrust her hips up to him, roaring at the top of her lungs as she ripped into an awe-inspiring, epic orgasm that seemed to go on forever.

She was just getting her conscious mind back when Blake moved off of her.

"Take off your shirt and bra, Jenny," he ordered gruffly.

She quickly complied while he stripped naked.

His body was amazing! Six pack abs, narrow hips, wide shoulders, perfectly worked out pecs, but it was his awesome member that drew her full attention. Hard, thick and gorgeous. The perfect size, fully erect with a nice curve and a beefy head. She couldn't wait to feel it inside her.

She expected him to do her right there, but Blake leaned down and scooped her up into his strong arms and kissed her. He carried her to his bedroom and laid her down on his king-size bed. He climbed next to her, took her in his arms and kissed her again.

Jenny took hold of his length and fully enjoyed the feel of it in her hand. His skin was so smooth. And he was hard as steel.

Blake reached for his bedside table and a condom appeared. In a second he had it on.

With a serious and dark look in his eye, he pushed her legs apart and entered her.

Jenny barely knew what happened next. Suddenly, she was propelled into the outer reaches of space and time. She came so hard and violently, she nearly tossed them both onto the floor. Blake had to fight to control her. He grabbed her wrists and pinned them over her head as he drove into her. Being restrained in combination with the amazing things he was doing inside her kept launching Jenny into orgasm after orgasm.

And when he came, it rocked her into a climax that made her feel like her head had blasted apart. Her throat was raw from screaming, but she still managed to let out a bellow that could wake the dead.

Blake gave her some wonderful last thrusts that finished the job. He managed to wring every last bit of fun out of her final orgasm.

What a tremendous lover!

Blake pulled out and began laughing as he flopped onto his side next to her. He took her into his arms and kissed her, tenderly, deeply.

When he pulled away he said, "My God, you're fun."

"You should be doing this for a living," she countered. "You'd make a fortune."

He chuckled, "No darling, it's you. That was... You were... That was impressive. Incredible is what it was, wow."

"Yes, wow is a good reaction. Wow, yes."

"Tell me you don't have a boyfriend," Blake said.

"I don't have a boyfriend."

"Well, you do now."

"You're a big flirt, aren't you?" she said, not believing him.

"Not anymore. I'm serious, Jenny. I've been... I've had a crush on you for awhile."

"Get out of here," she said.

"I'm serious. What? Is this just a fling for you? I didn't think you did one-night-stands," Blake said, looking concerned.

"No, no. Wait. Well... actually, that's what I thought this was. But wait, no I don't usually. But... I couldn't resist you, Blake. Wait. What are you saying here?"

"I'm saying I want a relationship with you."

"My God. Guys are usually trying to get out of relationships, not get into them. And you? All the women in the office want you."

"Well, I don't want them. I want you. I have for a very long time."

"Well, then why didn't you ask me out?" Jenny asked.

"Because I didn't think you liked me. Not until the email thing."

"I'm stunned."

"Am I moving too fast for you?" Blake asked, carefully studying her face. "I mean, you felt it, didn't you? What just happened between us? This isn't a one-sided thing, is it?"

"God, no. I'm just in shock, that's all. I mean, you're the hottest guy around. I didn't think anything with you would be possible. That's partly why I sent that email. I wanted you and was furious I couldn't have you."

He laughed. "So I was right about you."

"Yes, you hit the nail on the head with that analogy about the third grade girl. Didn't really occur to me until you said it."

"Tell me you're serious about this," Blake said. "Tell me you won't be breaking it off with me tomorrow."

"Wait. How do I know this isn't part of the punishment?" Jenny asked. "I allow myself to fall further for you and then you cruelly dump me at the office? Get me hooked on the most awesome sex I've ever had and then cut me off?"

He took her face and looked deep into her eyes. "Because I'm not capable of that kind of cruelty, Jenny. Besides, that would be more a of a punishment for me."

"You're serious."

"Yes."

"God, I hope so, I really like you, Blake. I always have."

"I'm past that phase, Jenny. I've been in love with you ever since the moment I met you. You probably don't remember—"

"Trade show last year. We ate dinner together along with the entire marketing team. I spilled soup all over my coat and you gallantly offered me your jacket."

"You do remember," Blake said, looking very pleased.

"I remember you were with someone. She wasn't too happy about you givin' me your jacket."

"No, she wasn't. It was the reason I didn't act on my feelings. I was still committed to her."

"Are you telling me the truth?" Jenny asked.

"I would never lie to you about something like this, Jenny."

"Oh."

"Am I scaring you?"

"I don't know why, but no."

"Because it's right between us, Jenny. It feels right. You can feel it, so can I. It's love, Jenny. I love you."

All Jenny could do was kiss him. She could feel her heart open to him. She couldn't believe it. Love. Right there, right then. How unexpected. How great. The spanking came back into her mind.

"Wait, so if I upset you, are you going to spank me? Did we just set some kinda precedent in this relationship?"

"You said the word."

"What word? Spank?"

He laughed. "No silly, relationship. So, we're on the same page here."

"Yes, we are. But you didn't answer my question."

"What? About spanking you if you're naughty?"

"Yeah."

"Well, yes. Only if you pull something on me as awful as you did last week. Only if you deserve it. Of course, I'd love to spank you for play."

"That hurt, I—"

"That was a punishment for a very naughty girl. If I spank you during lovemaking, it will be quite different, I can assure you."

"Really?"

"Really," he said, kissing her. Then he abruptly pushed her over onto her belly.

"Blake—" she started, unsure of this whole thing.

He swatted her. It stung a bit, but it didn't hurt. It actually felt kind of good. He reached a hand under her and found her pleasure spot. He began spanking her thoroughly, covering her entire behind with well-placed spans, timing his swats perfectly with his manipulation of her. Jenny came rather quickly, moaning and squealing as she writhed in pleasure.

A couple of hard spansks finished her orgasm. Blake turned her back over and kissed her, the length of his body pressed close to hers. Amazingly, he was rock hard again.

Within a second or two, he had a condom on and was mounting her again.

Jenny was back in sexual nirvana, roaring, screaming and thrashing around while Blake held her fast and thrust deeply inside her.

It was an awesome lovemaking session. When he came, it rocketed her into another spectacular climax that reduced her to tears by the time it was all over.

She clung to him and cried until he pulled out.

"Are you all right, Jenny?" he asked, concerned.

"Never been better," she replied, sniffing.

"Good tears?" he asked, finally understanding.

"Excellent tears," she replied and smiled at him.

"I love you, Jenny."

"I love you, too, Blake."

The Photo

It was a great shot. Jacob was wearing Betty's apron and seemingly nothing else. Standing on the bar, arms outstretched, apparently in the middle of a song. Gail knew she shouldn't do it, but Jacob had been such a jerk to her that night, she found she couldn't help herself. Gail put the picture on the front page of the paper. With the caption: LOCAL COLOR—A NATIVE CELEBRATES THE NEW YEAR.

Gail knew Jacob would be mad, but she couldn't resist. And so far the response had been great. Everyone loved it. Luckily, the circulation of the paper was 10,000 and it only went out to the tri-cities area. Mostly the Burford Bugle contained farm reports and a police blotter that features stories of dog bites and teenage pranks. However, the Bugle did reach the entirety of Gail and Jacob's social circle. Jacob was going to be livid. Which would serve the butthead right.

As it turned out, Gail had underestimated Jacob's reaction. Jacob wasn't just angry; he was on his way to human volcano. Gail heard the day after the photo came out, when her friend Suzie called before Gail left for work.

"Gail! Gail!" Suzie shouted into the receiver.

"What? Suzie?"

"Yeah, it's me!"

"What? What's going on?"

"Jacob!"

"What? He saw it."

"Saw it, you should have heard him last night at the bar. You are dead meat, girl."

"Oh, what is he gonna do, fire me?" Gail scoffed.

"Get this, Jacob said he spent two hours digging through his garage to find his old fraternity paddle."

"What?" Gail asked, mildly alarmed.

"Jacob swears he's going to spank you for this."

"What?"

"You heard me."

"Spank me? What is he, some kinda Medieval—"

"Honey, you pissed him off, but good. If I were you, I'd lay low for a week or so—don't go near the bar."

"I wasn't going to, but I have to be at the shop today."

"Does Jacob know that?"

"Not a big mystery, I do own the shop."

"You're also the editor of the paper."

"Was the editor, that was my last issue," Gail said. "The store is taking all my time."

"Anyway, that's not the point," Suzie said. "The point is Jacob's looking for you, and he's armed with a paddle."

"Oh, like he'd try it."

"Oh, man, yes, he will! He used it on that Horner boy who kept stealing from him."

"That was a boy, and Jacob knew the parents."

"Still, he will."

"Adults. That's assault," Gail said.

"Who are the sheriffs?" Suzie asked.

"John, Bill, Jimmy, Bo—oh."

"Yeah, oh. They all graduated together, remember?"

"Yes, I was there. One year behind them all. Crap. This is what I get for living in a small town."

"Your only hope is to avoid Jacob until he cools off."

"Goddamn Jacob! He started this!" Gail exclaimed.

"Belinda Dare?" Suzie asked.

"Belinda Dare! He made a date with me and was all over her."

"You were all over Mike."

"No, I wasn't."

"Uh, yes, you were."

"Jacob's so full of it, he started it!" Gail cried.

"I didn't get this from Jacob, I was there, girlfriend. I saw you. With my own two eyes. You kissed Mike."

"I did not! Did I?"

"Honey, I hate to tell you this, but you were a hussy that night."

"I was not! I was dumped!" Gail exclaimed.

"Did you eat any of Casey's brownies?"

"Sure, I had a couple. Why? No."

"Yes."

"No, this is not happening to me," Gail said, in shock. "I remember that night distinctly. Jacob was all over Belinda. I was innocent. I don't remember leaving or... wait."

"You were not innocent. You haven't heard any of this?" Suzie asked.

"No, I mean, I don't remember getting home. I did wake up in the bathtub. Thankfully, fully clothed with no water in the tub. But, I know Jacob asked me out and was making out with Belinda."

"No, he wasn't," Suzie said. "Both Jacob and Belinda got named to the town council. They were toasting their new positions. Belinda just got engaged to Brian Tucker."

"She did not!" Gail exclaimed.

"That night as a matter of fact."

"Where the hell was I? Why hasn't anyone talked to me about that night? Why is this the first I heard about it?"

"You haven't been home, and I think your answering machine is broken," Suzie said. "I've been trying to call you for three days."

"No, it's not. It's right here and it's... damn. It is broken. Man, I've been so busy with the shop and the paper. Damn! No wonder I haven't been getting any calls. Jeez! When I woke up New Year's Day, I didn't remember much, but Jacob wasn't in bed with me, so I knew something went wrong. Then, I checked my digital camera and found the shot of Jacob and Belinda hugging. And all these other wild pictures."

"It did get wild. You stripped down to your bra and underwear," Suzie said.

"I did not!"

"You wear black Jockeys."

"Aaaaaugggh!" Gail screamed. "I thought the reason Jacob didn't call me was because he was with Belinda, but it was because he thought I'd dumped him for Mike?"

"No, Jacob hasn't called you because he's mad at you for the photo and for making out with all those guys at the bar that night. Mike, Ben and Pete, as I recall. He knows you're not with Mike because Mike pushed you away."

"No! You are making this up!"

"No, I thought you knew. Casey's brownies got Larry, too. Diane's filed for divorce."

"What?!"

"Well, that's been building for awhile."

"Does Jacob know I ate those poisoned brownies?" Gail demanded.

"No. Casey was gone by the time Jacob got to the bar. Remember the emergency with one of Jacob's horses? He was late."

"Oh, crap. I'm... this is not happening. Then I put the picture in the paper? No wonder!"

"Jacob is going to paddle your ass unless you hide from him. I've never seen him this mad."

"I am dead! Jacob is going to kill me! Oh, God, I thought he dumped me for Belinda. The pictures, they look like that!"

"No, you dumped Jacob for every guy in town."

"Aaaauggghh! I'm dead! I'm dead! I'm gonna kill Casey!"

"Honey, even if Jacob found out about the brownies, that doesn't excuse the picture in the paper. You were completely lucid when you did that."

"Are you on my side or what?" Gail demanded.

"Completely, I'm just letting you know that, honey, you are screwed."

"Or, not screwed as the case may be. Never, by Jacob, again. Damn!"

"Sorry, Gail."

"Me, too. This sucks. Poor Jacob," Gail said.

"No, poor you if Jacob gets his hands on you now. I heard all about it in the bar. He wants to paddle you in plain view of the entire town."

"Oh, God."

"Jacob means it, too. And boy, is the town salivating at this one. Everyone wants to see him spank you. So watch your back."

"Sounds like I have to watch my butt."

"That, too."

Gail worked at her shop all day. At the end of the day, due to the unpleasant information she'd received that morning, she was feeling pretty low and pretty tired.

When Gail went out to retrieve her open sign/sandwich board that sat out on the sidewalk in front of her shop, she happened to look across the street. Her heart stopped. Standing there, next to her car, leaning up against his truck, was Jacob. The worst part? He was holding a large fraternity paddle. And staring right at her. He didn't look happy. He looked determined. A group of people standing in front of the store across the street began making catcalls at the two. They wanted action. Jacob started smacking his hand with the paddle.

"You're gonna get it, Gail, my girl! In front of this whole town! I'm gonna paddle you until you can't sit for weeks!"

Much laughter from their audience.

Gail decided not to retort and dig her hole any deeper. She picked up her sign and carried it down the short driveway and into the shop. Then she closed the door and locked it.

There was only one way out. Through the back window. Jacob didn't know that the berry patches behind the shop had just been cleared. Gail had a perfect way to escape.

Gail climbed out the window and carefully shut it behind her. She took the path that went behind the

little row of shops and ended at the church parking lot. Gail went through the parking lot, crept up by the church and peeked around the corner. Jacob was still across from her shop, waiting.

Gail took a chance and darted across the street to the bakery. She ducked down behind the line of parked cars and slowly began to approach Jacob. She had to get past him to get to her car.

Gail moved up as far as she could without being seen. She crouched down behind Suzie's Ford F150 and waited for Jacob to move. Finally, Jacob got impatient. He walked across the street and down the short driveway to Gail's shop.

Gail made a break for it. She flew around Suzie's truck, running full speed for her car. Some of Jacob's friends were gathered there by his truck.

"Jacob! She's out here!" Billy Green hollered.

"Shut up!" Gail yelled.

"Gail's gonna get a spanking!" Bob Taylor taunted in a singsong voice.

Gail reached her car, jumped in and locked the doors. She had the car started and backed up into the street by the time Jacob came running out of her driveway. She hit the gas and sped away. As she escaped, she could see Jacob in her rear view mirror, angrily shouting protests and threats. What a close call! Gail wondered how long it would be before Jacob cooled off and gave up.

Gail had the next day off. So she decided to take a long walk and clear her head. All she'd been thinking about was Jacob. How she single-handedly ruined their relationship. Well, with the help of Casey's brownies.

Gail walked along her usual trail and came to the place where it crossed the old county highway. She checked the traffic and started across. Midway across the road, she saw him. Jacob. Bearing down on her in his truck. Fast.

Gail's heart leapt into her throat. She sprinted off across the road, hit the trail and kept on going. She heard Jacob's truck screech to a halt behind her.

"Gail Livingstone! You wait!" came Jacob's demand.

Gail ran faster. After a few moments, she heard him.

"When I catch you—!" Jacob yelled from far too close behind her.

Within a minute, Gail found herself tackled to the ground. She tried to get up and run, but Jacob grabbed her leg.

"Oh, no, you don't!" Jacob said, yanking her back towards him.

"Jacob! I'm sorry! I ate pot brownies! I didn't know it!"

"I know you were drugged out of your mind that night, but that doesn't excuse the picture!"

"Sure it does! I thought you were with Belinda!"

"You kissed Pete, Michael—"

"I'm sorry!" Gail pleaded.

"Not yet, you aren't!" Jacob said, trying to get a hold on her.

Gail fought him for all she was worth. "Don't paddle me!"

"You broke the rules, you deal with the consequences, woman. You know me, do you really think I'm gonna let you get away with that?"

"I thought you loved me!"

"I do!"

"Why didn't you call me?" Gail asked as she wrestled with him.

"I did call you, your answering machine is broken."

"Oh," Gail said, stopping.

"Yeah, oh. What's wrong with you, woman?"

"I was drugged, when I woke up all I had was that digital camera. And, the pictures were wild. Pictures of you and Belinda."

"Oh, for crying out loud, Belinda's marrying Brian Tucker."

"I know! Well, I didn't know."

"You should have found out, not gone off half-cocked. And what was up with that picture?"

"Uh... Well, it was a great shot and..."

"Gail!" Jacob railed, grabbing her roughly.

"Let me go!"

"No! You're comin' with me and I'm taking my revenge! On your ass!" Jacob said, standing up and bringing Gail with him.

"Jacob, wait!"

"No, you blew it!"

"Two wrongs don't make a right!" Gail said, fighting him.

"They do in this case!"

"Do you really want to set this precedent in our relationship?" Gail asked as Jacob dragged her along.

"You mean the precedent that if you humiliate me in public, make me a laughing stock in front of the entire tri-city area, that I take you across my knee and paddle you good? Yes, that's exactly the precedent I want to set! Now come on!"

"No!"

"Don't fight me, Gail, you'll only make it worse on yourself."

"No!"

"Okay, have it your way!"

Jacob grabbed Gail and tossed her over his shoulder. With her screaming the whole way, he carried her back to his truck.

Jacob opened the passenger side door and withdrew his paddle. He carried Gail to the back of his truck and dropped the gate. He settled himself on the tailgate, took Gail off his shoulder and forced her across his lap.

Then, in full view of the drivers on the county road, Jacob raised the paddle high into the air and swung down, impacting her rear, hard.

Gail gasped at the strike—it hurt!

"Ow! Jacob, stop!"

"No, my dear Miss Gail, I will not!"

Thwack! The paddle came down again on Gail's poor behind. And again. Gail began to squeal in pain.

"Jacob, please! That hurts!"

"Good! It's supposed to!" Thwack! Thwack!

Gail began to howl. But Jacob would not let up. He threw himself into the paddling, smacking her behind with great enthusiasm. Gail didn't realize how much a paddling could hurt. This was bad!

"Jacob, stop!"

Just then, two sheriffs stopped.

"Everything okay, Jacob? You need any help there? Need us to take over? Arm getting tired?" came the taunt of Bo Crocker, one of Jacob's best friends.

"My arm's getting tired, but I'm having so much fun, it's hard to stop," Jacob said with glee.

"Assault! Assault! I want to press charges!" Gail howled.

"Did you hear anything?" Bo asked.

"No," came the voice of the other sheriff, Jimmy MacIntire, another one of Jacob's gang.

Thwack! Gail shrieked. All the men laughed.

"Maybe next time you'll think twice about the kind of photos you run in that paper, Gail," said Jimmy.

"I'd buy the paper if there was a picture of you getting yours, Gail," said Bo.

Thwack! Shriek! Laughter. Thwack! Shriek! Laughter. It was a horrid little cycle. Gail had never been more humiliated nor in more pain in her life.

"Well, we'd love to stay and watch, but we have criminals to catch. Jacob, take care of that arm," Bo said.

"Okay boys, I'll call if I need back up," Jacob said.

Thwack! Shriek! The sheriffs burst into laughter and then drove away.

Thwack! "Jacob, stop!" Gail pleaded.

Thwack! "I don't think so."

"Jacob!"

"Are you sorry yet?"

"Yes!" Gail wailed.

"Will you ever do anything like this to me again?"

"No!"

Thwack! "Jacob! Please!"

"I'm just ensuring that you understand me and my limitations."

"I understand! I understand!"

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

Gail yowled.

Finally, Jacob stopped. Gail cried with relief. Jacob took her out of the hold and let her off his lap. Gail was so frustrated and in so much pain, that she walloped Jacob on the arm.

"You butthead!" she exclaimed.

"You want more, woman?" Jacob asked, grabbing Gail by the arm and threatening her with the paddle.

"No!" Gail ripped out of Jacob's grip and darted across the road towards home. "Jerk!" she yelled over her shoulder.

"Where are you going? Don't you want a ride home?" Jacob called out.

"No! I don't want to be anywhere near you!"

"Gail!"

"Go to hell!" Gail screamed as she picked up speed.

"Gail!"

Gail ran for a good mile until she was winded. She swore and muttered and stomped and fumed all the way back to her house.

When Gail came off the trail, she saw that Jacob was parked out in front of her house. The jerk!

Steamed, Gail continued on her way. She walked right past Jacob's truck and without a glance his way, she headed up to her porch.

"Gail, do I have to spank you again?"

"No! Go away!"

"I most certainly will not go away, now come back here, we're going to talk this out," Jacob said.

"There's nothing to talk about! Go away!"

"I am going to have to spank you again, aren't I?"

"No! Go away!"

"Do I have to come up there or are you coming out here?" Jacob asked.

Gail decided to ignore him. She went to her door and then realized that in her rush to leave home, she'd locked the door and forgot to bring the key with her. Damn it! So much for storming into the house. Gail turned and walked down the porch to the flower pot where the extra key was kept.

When she stood up, Jacob was right there.

"We're talking about this, Gail. And, we're doing it now."

Gail turned away from him, walked back to her door and stuck the key in the lock.

"No, we're not," Gail replied with a hostile edge as she opened the door. She quickly stepped inside and attempted to shut the door on Jacob. But, he stuck his foot in the door and then pushed his way inside.

"You can't—" Gail said, backing away from him.

"Apparently, I didn't make myself clear before," Jacob said, shutting the door behind him. "I'm your man, Gail. You will not disrespect me. And you will talk to me in a civilized manner right now, or I swear, I'll pull those pants right off you and spank you bare-bottomed like a little spoiled child."

"You jerk!" Gail yelled and then she made her fatal error. She took a swing at him.

Jacob ducked and then lunged forward and took her over his shoulder.

"You asked for it!"

"No!" Gail protested loudly.

Jacob wrestled Gail onto her couch, got her across his lap and into a hold. He pulled her pants and undies down to her knees.

"Now, my dear, I want you to understand something here—"

"Jacob, don't, I'm sorry," Gail pleaded.

"I will not stand for this kind of treatment."

"I know, I'm sorry, I got mad, I'll be good, I won't mess with you."

"Gail, you'd say anything to avoid this, wouldn't you?"

"No!"

"It seems as if I have to teach you just one more lesson here."

"No!"

Gail felt totally exposed. Her skin was in contact with his jeans, and the air was rushing all around her private areas. Why did she have to fight him?

Gail felt the first swat. It was sharp, but not as painful as the paddle. But with her tenderness from the earlier spanking, it hurt, but not horribly so.

"Ow!"

Two more spanks.

"Are you learning your lesson?"

"Yes, Jacob, please, I'm sorry."

"Good, now let's chat, shall we?"

"Let me up. I chat better when I'm—"

Spank! It stung, but it wasn't unbearable. Jacob was being careful with her. Tempering his strikes.

"Ow!"

"I find you much more receptive like this, Gail. Now, we're going to stay together," Jacob said. He began to gently rub her rear. This was better, much better. "And, you're not going to pull any more crap on me like that photo."

"No, I won't."

"No, you won't," Jacob said, increasing his massage. It felt really good.

"I won't, I'll communicate with you," Gail promised. "I won't eat brownies, I won't—"

"I'm going to kill Casey for that. For giving those to you. He knows you don't do anything like that," Jacob said.

"They wasted me."

"I saw." Spank!

"Ow, what was that for?"

"Kissing those other men."

"Sorry."

"You're mine, you know that?" Jacob slipped a hand down between her legs. He gently explored her for a moment, and then moved his hand back up and rubbed her rear.

"Yeah, I know."

"You didn't act like it." Spank!

"I'm sorry."

"You'd better be," Jacob said. He reached underneath her again and touched her very sensitive place. He slipped a finger inside her.

Gail gasped and found herself moving against his hand. Jacob played with her for awhile, then he lightly touched all around her sweet spot. When his wet finger found Ground Zero, Gail nearly went out of her mind.

Jacob increased his pace with his finger, and without warning, Gail came. Yelling and bucking against his hand, she reveled in her orgasm. This turned out to be so fun! Something about Jacob's dominance, his maleness, his authority. It was all such a turn-on.

Jacob spanked her a few more times, but not hard. Love taps. He took Gail off his lap, pushed her back against the sofa and ripped off her pants. With a devilish look on his face, Jacob spread her legs and went down on her.

She squealed with delight as he launched her into four more orgasms. He was proving to be just as torturous with his tongue as he'd been with his hand. The man was a machine. Earlier, he'd been a spanking machine, now he was a love machine. An orgasm machine. And Gail was loving every minute of it.

With a huge grin on his handsome face, Jacob picked her up, carried her to her bed and tossed her on top. In a heartbeat, he was naked and on top of her, pushing her legs apart. After teasing her for

awhile with the tip of his hardness, he entered her, pushing in deeply as Gail opened her legs wide to receive him.

It was a momentous lovemaking session. They began in the missionary position and shifted through several positions; her on top, he took her from behind and they ended where they had begun, with Jacob on top. Gail never had sex like that before. She and Jacob had been together once before, but it hadn't been like this. This was amazing.

Jacob held her afterwards as if she was very precious to him. The man loved her. Gail could feel it.

"Damn you, woman, no more of these misunderstandings. I nearly went out of my mind without you."

"Uh, yeah. I'd say that about describes it for me, too."

"You? I'm still not over what you did to me."

"Oh, God, I'm sick about that."

"I can help you with that guilt. Each time I hear a crack about that photo or find it taped to my truck window, I get to spank you a good one."

"Jacob you spanked me, already."

"Not enough."

"You tenderized me."

"I know. I'm going to wait until you heal, and then I'm going to spank you again. I figure three more spankings ought to do it."

"Jacob!"

"This was a serious transgression. Will you ever do anything like this again?"

"No."

"Then you won't be spanked like this again. But you deserve more than what I just gave you."

"Not with the paddle!"

"No, I hope you'll never earn that again. And, for the next few spankings, I won't spank you nearly as hard, nor for as long. These will be reminder spankings. Bare-bottomed, over my lap.

And, then, my girl, after I spank you, I will tie you to my bed and make mad, passionate love to you," Jacob promised.

"Talk about sending a mixed message."

"It's the same message. I love you, I won't take any guff from you, and I rule this roost."

"Oh, you do?"

"But I rule benevolently and promise to do half the dishes and half the housework."

"Oh."

"And I promise to make you happier than you've ever been in your life."

"This is sounding better."

"And, if you ever step out of line, I promise to spank that little bottom of yours until it's nice and pink."

"I won't do anything bad again. Well, I'll try not to, anyway."

"Aah, there's the truth of it," Jacob said, giving her a squeeze. "But if you pull something on me, I will..."

Jacob suddenly flipped Gail onto her stomach.

"No, Jacob!" Gail protested.

Jacob lightly spanked her a half a dozen times. He reached underneath her and began tormenting her again.

"Jacob, I'm telling you, I'm liking this too much for it to be punishment," Gail giggled into her pillow.

"It's not a punishment for you, it's a reward for me," Jacob said as he brought Gail to her knees again. "And, now, it's time to reward myself again. And drive you wild in the process," he said, reaching a hand around to tease her as he moved in from behind.

"Jacob!" Gail squealed.

The Bad Actress

It felt good, really good, to mess with Drake's car. Hollywood creep. Thought he was so great, Mr. Rich Actor. Mr. Famous. Mr. Liar. Mr. Cheater.

Jean had been so stupid to think Drake wanted her. Those four-hour-long soulful talks on the movie set had deluded her into thinking that the man actually cared about her. All he cared about was what was between his legs. While they hadn't slept together, they talked about it. About being together.

Jean was so dumb she actually thought she had some sort of a relationship with the man. Other than Near Conquest or Future Conquest. Drake led her to believe she'd be the next Mrs. Drake Monroe. The only reason, or the flimsy reason, Drake gave for not sleeping with her yet was because his separation hadn't been filed, and he didn't feel right about dating Jean when he was still legally committed to his wife. Mr. Moral. Jean had fallen for his lies, hook, line and sinker.

Until she saw Drake's duplicity with her own eyes. Heard it with her own ears. Jean had been in an office in downtown Los Angeles and overheard Drake in the next office, telling some woman how much he loved her. How he wanted to marry her. When Jean checked out the name on the office door—Larissa Grey, Attorney-At-Law—it all came clear to her. Drake was a liar and Jean was a dupe.

Thank the Lord, Jean hadn't slept with Drake. They'd shared several very hot kisses, but at least she hadn't gone that extra step with him. Or she'd be feeling really stupid. But he still led her on. Drake wasn't getting away with his lies without payback. Big time payback.

Above all, Jean knew that Drake loved his Maserati. It was his pride and joy. While Jean wasn't going to be too malicious—she wouldn't do any lasting damage to it—repainting his precious car to look horrible would certainly be fun. Give him a

small heart attack. Jean knew the man. Drake had no sense of humor when it came to his car.

However, Jean encountered a few unforeseen problems when painting Drake's car. Number one, the professional painter she'd hired, Buddy, broke his leg in a motorcycle accident and couldn't come. Which was terrible timing because Drake was doing an important scene at the studio that day which would keep him occupied for hours. It was a perfect window of opportunity. Jean knew it could be weeks before she got another. So Jean decided just to go for it. She went to the auto shop and picked up a couple cans of spray paint. She decided the best thing to do was to use primer paint to make the car look it's cheapest and oldest. She also bought a can of paint remover, just in case she blew it and got paint on the tires.

After Jean sprayed a huge swath of the paint on the side of Drake's fire-red Maserati, she immediately noticed something was amiss. For one, the paint seemed to have no color to it. Jean noticed something else. The red paint from Drake's car began dripping onto the pavement. Jean looked at the spray can and then realized what it said: Paint Remover. Yikes! She'd grabbed the wrong can! Jean desperately tried to wipe off the paint remover with a towel, but all she succeeded in doing was spreading it around. Then Jean noticed the deep scratches. Her towel had scratched the surface of the car! Panicked, Jean flew back to the auto store and bought some red touch-up paint and tried to paint over the whole mess. Which didn't work. The end result was fairly shocking. Jean inflicted far more damage to Drake's car than she had intended.

Jean's heart was beating out of her chest when she delivered Drake's car back into his parking spot. She'd worn a disguise so no one would recognize her. But she did attract attention. An entire group of people happened to be walking through the parking lot at the time and saw Jean get out of the car.

Luckily, the group just looked at her and then moved on. It was a movie studio lot, after all, so there were plenty of people in weird costumes wandering around. Someone getting out of a car wearing a ski mask wasn't that strange.

After Jean snuck into Drake's trailer and put the keys back into his pants pocket, she drove to Anaheim to meet her friends in Disneyland. Her alibi. She'd told her friends—and anyone else who'd listen to her—that she was going to Disneyland for the day. Jean was to meet two friends at the Haunted Mansion at three in the afternoon. She'd told them that she'd be at the park all day.

On the way to Anaheim, even though Jean had messed up the prank, she felt triumphant. Jerk. Leading her on like that. The bastard! Drake deserved everything he got. And more.

Drake's reaction was rather strong, to put it mildly. Jean had gotten the call while in Disneyland, not two hours after she dropped off Drake's car. Several witnesses recounted that they'd never seen Drake act that way. He'd had a meltdown apparently. Yelled like a madman. When Jean heard about his outburst, the pit of her stomach dropped. Drake was not one for showing emotions in public. The man had a reputation for self-control. A consummate professional; no tantrums, no prima donna acts, a very polite man. Jean had never even seen him angry before. If he'd been upset enough to lose his cool in front of people, Drake must have been out of his mind. This could be bad. Jean would have to make sure Drake never found out what she'd done.

Later on that day, Drake called Jean. After ranting on about how horrible the person was who vandalized his car and how Drake couldn't figure out why anyone would do that to him, Drake gave her even more horrible news. He told her about a recent audition of his. One that had taken place at his lawyer's office. The audition had gone well, and he'd gotten the part—of a man who falls in love with a

woman and loses her to another man. Drake hadn't been with another woman that day; he was at a damned audition!

Jean felt so stupid and so guilty, she couldn't bring herself to tell Drake what she'd done. Then Drake told her something that sent chills down her spine. Drake hired a private detective to find out who'd vandalized his car.

As Jean reeled from the information, Drake asked her out for a real date. His wife and he had been officially separated, and he was taking Jean out on the town to celebrate. He'd even booked a room at a fancy hotel. While Jean felt terrible about the car, she was thrilled by his news. They were going to finally have sex! Then, the biggie: Drake told her that he loved her. He felt stupid for saying it on the phone instead of in person, but he couldn't help himself. Jean was on Cloud Nine. Drake Monroe loved her!

But after Jean hung up, all her thoughts went to Drake's car. What if he found out? Would he still love her? Had she just put her whole future in jeopardy? She'd been such an idiot!

Two nights later, Jean was in Drake's rented Lexus, headed for their night out on the town. Drake was sweet as usual, but subdued. Jean felt so guilty. She knew his somber mood was probably due to his upset over his car.

On the way to their hotel, Drake did something odd. He turned the car around and drove in the exact opposite direction away from the hotel. Finally, Jean decided to ask.

"Didn't you say we were going to the Ritz?"

"Yes."

"Isn't that the other way?"

"Yes, it is."

"So where are we going?"

"I have to run a small errand first. A very important errand. One that involves you."

"Involves me?"

"Yes, you. Jean Woods, you," Drake said with a fiery look in his eye.

"Uh. You don't look too happy about this."

"I'm not."

"Uh, why?"

"I know. Okay, my dear? I know."

"You know what?"

"Oh, that's going to cost you. Just know, from here on out, every lie you tell me will cost you ten more swats on that lovely rear end of yours. You're already up to fifty, you don't want anymore, my girl, I can assure you that."

"Drake. Could you please tell me what you're—"

"Ten more. Jean, the way you're going, you won't be sitting for weeks by the time I'm through with you."

"Drake—"

"One more lie and I swear, I'll use my belt on you."

Jean shut up.

"Now, you're listening, good. Now, I want your confession. Quickly, tell me all of it. When, how, but mostly why? Why Jean?"

"The car."

"The car."

Jean sighed heavily. And felt horrible. "Uh..."

"Speak up and speak fast, or I'll add more to your sentence."

"Wait. You can't be serious about hitting me."

"I'd never hit you, you know that. How dare you accuse me of that? That just cost you ten more."

"Spanking is hitting."

"The hell it is. It's discipline. For brats who have pushed things way too far."

"Look, I have insurance, I—"

"As if that's the point! You know I'm wealthy! Money's got nothing to do with it, woman! This is about your outrageous behavior! Crossing the bloody line! I don't know why you did it or what possible reason you had for ruining my car, but by God, you are going to pay for it, Jean!"

"I thought you'd been lying to me—"

"What?!"

"I was at Bob Pepper's office next door to your lawyer's office. I overheard you pronouncing your love for another woman, I thought you'd been lying to me. You're a good actor, you know. You had me convinced, so—"

"So you bloody ruined my car?! So what if I was in love with another woman—wait a minute—in love with another woman? Are you crazy? After what we've shared? After all that, you believed that of me? Huh? Are you crazy?"

"Apparently," Jean said, feeling sick.

"Goddamn you, woman. No one's got me fired up like this in years. My first wife did once. I blistered her behind good for it, too. Just like I'm going to do to you. She was a hellion, all right. But, I had no idea you were, too. This surprised me, Jean. I didn't think you capable."

"I'm sorry, I thought I'd lost you. I..."

"There's no excuse for it, even if I'd been lyin' to you. That was a felony, woman. You caused two thousand dollars worth of damage to my car!"

"Oh."

"Have you ever done anything like this before?"

"Uh..."

"Jean! When?"

"Not this bad. I... it's been, like, ten years."

"I had no idea. Then it's doubly important I send this message to you."

"I got the message, you don't have to spank me."

"The hell I don't! I want this to be the last time you ever consider doing anything like this."

"Oh, I won't—"

"Why the hell didn't you just come to me? Huh? Why all this running around and sneaking around and lying to me on the phone? Huh?"

"I was afraid. I've never seen you mad before. It was... it was..."

"You have no excuse, do you? What you did was so abominable, even you can't come up with an excuse, can you?"

"Uh. No."

"Crazy woman! Well, we're going to my house. Where I'm going to pull those pants and panties off you and give you the most righteous hiding you've ever experienced. This is going to be the last time you ever even think of doing something this stupid again. You hear me, young lady? The last time!"

"Wait. I already feel bad. Believe me, I've been punishing myself. You don't have to—"

"Oh, you'd love to talk your way out of this, wouldn't you? Well, it won't work, sweetheart. No, it won't. Because I can't wait to see your lovely bare ass over my lap, can't wait to see those little white cheeks turn redder than a beet. I'm going to thoroughly enjoy spanking that deserving behind of yours. You'll never think of crossing me again. No, you won't. Because, damn you, woman, I'm in love with you, and you are going to be my wife someday. And no wife of mine is going to go off half-cocked with stupid schemes like this one. No sir, you will conduct yourself like an adult at all times or by God, I will come down on you like thunder. I had no idea you were capable of such horrible behavior! You've shocked me, Jean. Shocked me."

"Look, I'm sorry. We're rational adults. Can't we discuss—"

"No, no discussion. I want you to anticipate this. How much it's going to hurt. How embarrassed you'll be to have your trousers pulled to your knees, squiggling on my lap like a child, taking your punishment. My firm hand impacting that delicate backside of yours. How many spankings have you had, Jean? How many?"

"None, but look—"

"Good, then I get the pleasure of being your first. Just as it should be. You obviously needed a strong man in your life and by God, I'm more than

up for the task. My Maserati? You know how much I love that car! It was in mint condition—"

"I'm sorry! I know how much you love it, that's why I targeted it. It wasn't supposed to be like that, it was supposed—"

"Now she's going to give me excuses!"

"No, okay, I won't. I won't. Just don't spank me."

"Too late. You're getting a hiding, and you're getting a good one. And, no, you won't like it and you'll be very, very sorry you ever made that decision in the first place."

"I'm already sorry."

"Well, you're about to be a lot sorrier."

"What if I run away?"

"I'll hunt you down, drag you to my house, strip you naked, tie you to my bed and use my riding crop on you."

"What if I get away?"

"You won't."

"You can't just do this to me."

"The hell I can't. Who's going to stop me? You?"

"It's against the law."

"So is vandalism. You want to call the police or shall I?"

"Drake, you don't have to spank me."

"Yes, I do. And, if you try to get out of it again, I'll give you more."

"So why are you telling me? Why didn't you just spring it on me later?"

"Because I'm hoping your anticipation of the punishment will be just as horrible as the punishment itself. You're wondering how hard I'll spank you. Whether or not you'll cry. You will, by the way, I'm going to make sure of that. For me, for what you've done to this relationship, to our trust and, most of all, to my car. You're going to pay, my girl. I want you to think about it. I want you to fear it. I want you to hate this whole thing. Because I want to make sure that this never happens again."

Jean was very scared now. She had no idea Drake had this side to him. But weirdly enough, as much as Drake was upsetting her, he was turning her on, too. She had no idea the man was this strong. This masculine.

As Drake escorted her to his door, he kept looking down at her with dark, angry looks. Jean was so nervous, she was sweating.

Drake took her by the arm and led her into his house. He took off his coat and instructed her to do the same.

Drake grabbed her arm again and began leading her towards his living room.

Jean thought about running. Drake glanced down at her sharply. "Don't even think about it," he said. Had he read her mind?

Jean didn't stop, but she wasn't going easily. Drake got a better hold on her and dragged her to his sofa. Then, with one quick move, Drake seated himself on the couch and tossed Jean across his lap. Jean really began to fight. But Drake pinned her good with an arm across her back and then yanked her pants and panties down to her knees.

Before he began, Drake repositioned Jean to make her rear more vulnerable. He maneuvered her over his knee so her ass was high in the air, and her face was planted into his sofa.

Drake drew back his arm and said, "Let the punishment begin." Allowing the full weight of his arm to power his down swing, he smacked Jean soundly across her bare bottom. The impact was a shock. But Jean wasn't going to cry; she wasn't going to give in to him. He drew back and swatted her again, only harder this time. She tried not to, but she let out a little squeak.

"Oh, Jean, you are going to have to take much more than that, sweetheart. This is for my Maserati!"

He thundered into her exposed flesh with amazing strength and precision. Jean shrieked in pain. So much for not giving in to him! He increased

the intensity and frequency of his strikes. Like a machine, Drake began spanking her with a torturous rhythm. One after another, his sturdy hand spanked every square inch of her raised behind. And then he covered it again. And again.

Crying and squealing, Jean did everything in her power to get away from his horrible tormenting hand. But Drake had her in an inexorable hold; his arm was like a steel band across her back. She was helpless; her rear poised high, no defense against his punishing swats. He was making mincemeat of her poor, tender rear!

Smack! Whack! Thwack! The slapping, swatting and spanking went on forever. Tears streamed down Jean's face, she sobbed and wailed and begged Drake to stop. Pleaded with him to stop his torment. Promised she'd be good forever, if he would only stop.

Finally, after Jean's bottom felt like it had been seared with branding irons, Drake stopped. But she kept yowling and crying and sobbing. It hurt so much! It was so humiliating! Being spanked bare bottomed at twenty-seven? Horrifying!

"Quiet now, Jean. Quiet down. It's over."

Drake yanked up her pants and took her out of the hold. He sat her on his couch, got up and left the room while Jean sobbed. The pain was beginning to fade, but she couldn't believe how mad she'd made Drake and how stupid she'd been. They'd never even had so much as an argument before this. And just look what Jean had caused him to do. Shameful!

Drake came back into the room and handed Jean a whiskey and a box of tissue. Jean blew her nose and threw back the shot.

Jean looked up at Drake, and he smiled at her. "Good girl," he said.

"I'm sorry, Drake. I feel so ashamed of myself."

"Good, you should, you blew it. You won't do anything like that again, will you?"

"Never."

"Good girl."

"I have no idea why you still want to go out with me."

"Because I'm in love with you."

"Well, even after—"

"I'm in this for the long haul, Jean, and you should know that. Just because you had a total lapse of judgment doesn't mean I pack up and leave. It means I stay, and we work this out. And, I'd say we just worked it out. You understand me and my limitations, now, and you know what types of behavior I will and will not tolerate. Messin' with my Maserati, now that tops the list of offenses that merit a sound spanking."

"But, you sounded so real."

"You should have walked in or asked me. I'm going to be your man. You have to trust me. Just because I'm a popular actor doesn't mean I'm cheating on you. You're popular as well. You got that Oscar nod."

"I'm not where you are. You work with the most beautiful leading—"

"Josh Coogan."

"You can't be jealous of—"

"The hell I can't."

"It was one kiss."

"Lasted five bloody minutes on the screen. And I know how many times you had to kiss him and how long you spent doing it."

"Because you do it all the time," Jean said.

"I know. Doesn't mean I like you doin' it."

"Oh."

"How could you ever think I'd do that to you?" Drake demanded.

"Because I'm so in love with you, I'm afraid I'm going to lose you."

"That's nonsense."

"Everyone I've ever loved left me. If I really opened up and believed them, they either dumped me or died. My parents died when I was a kid, my grandmother died when I was a teenager, my

husband left me after five years of marriage, I'm a little gun shy, I guess."

Drake sat next to her and put his arm around her. "I'm not like them. I'm not going to die, and I'm not going to leave you. Come here, come here and let me hold you."

"I mean, we haven't even done it yet. I thought you might have gone for someone who—"

"Stop that and stop it now. I love you, you know that."

"I know, but—"

"You obviously don't. I have to prove it to you, don't I?"

"Drake, I—"

"Okay," Drake said, and then he kissed her.

Drake's kisses were always magnificent. But somehow, after the spanking, his possession of her was even more tantalizing. He was so strong, so manly. The first man in her life who didn't let her run roughshod over him. Quite a turn-on.

Drake pulled away with a serious and dark look in his eye. "I was going to make our first time tender and sweet, but woman, you've got me all fired up. I'm taking you, and I'm taking you now. And you're going to let me."

"Drake, I—"

Drake pushed Jean back onto the couch, grabbed her pants and yanked them off her. He ripped off his own shirt, stood up and took off his pants with a vengeful look in his eye. He looked angry, but also more sexy than she'd ever seen him. Jean immediately got wet.

He knelt down between Jean's legs, pulled her up off the couch and took off her top almost tearing it in the process. He pushed her back down, grabbed her arms, pinned them up above her head, pushed her knees apart and entered her.

"Now, you're gonna take what I'm givin' you woman, you hear me? You're mine. And, I'm takin' what's mine," Drake said as he began to thrust into her with a dark and feral look in his eye.

Jean came immediately. She screamed and shook and shuddered and cried as Drake thrust into her with strong and sure strokes.

"That's it, Jean, you take it, you take what I'm givin' you!"

All Jean could do was scream.

Drake made love to her with a punishing rhythm. Again and again, he plowed into her; pummeling her into submission with his thick and hard maleness. The man was relentless. And dead sexy.

Finally, after Jean was sure she could take no more, Drake exploded inside her, thrusting so deeply that she gasped and launched into another tremendous climax.

Before Drake withdrew, he leaned down and kissed her. An intense, hungry, possessive kiss. Jean moaned deep in her throat.

When Drake pulled away, he said, "Let that be a lesson to you, girl. You mess with me, you're gonna get more than you bargained for."

"Promise?" Jean asked coyly and then smiled.

Drake's serious expression broke and he laughed. "Yeah, I promise. Now come here," he said, moving off of her. He scooped her up into his arms and set her onto his lap. He kissed her again.

When he pulled away, Drake said, "Now, woman, I want no more nonsense out of you. No misunderstandings, no hurting my vehicles, no sneaking and above all, no lying to me. You got that?"

"Yes, Drake."

"Good. Little spitfire."

"I love you, Drake."

"I love you, Jean. More than anyone in such a long time. And, once we get this wild streak of yours under control, I think we can look forward to a long and happy life together."

"I just want to know one thing."

"And that is?"

"Even if I'm good, will you make love to me like that again?" Jean asked hopefully.

Drake threw his head back and laughed, then got a lustful look on his face. "I'm sure that can be arranged, my darling brat. Now come here," he said and he kissed her again.

The Hide Out

Chapter One

Carlos looked suspicious of her. Was it her imagination? Were her fears getting the better of her?

Jenny walked towards him from the airport gate, forcing a smile. Nervous, that was it; she would tell him she was nervous. She could cover her insane nervousness by feigning regular nervousness. After all, she was meeting the man for the first time. Well, in person. She just prayed he believed that she was the woman he'd been emailing for the past six months.

"Carlos?" Jenny asked hesitantly.

"Barbara?" he asked. He had a beautiful voice. Which went quite well with his beautiful face. The man was a knockout. Big, dark brown eyes, lean face, strong jaw, and nice white teeth. Gorgeous. A textbook Latin god. At least she wouldn't have to act pleased about his looks.

He walked up to her and broke into a wide smile. "Barbara," he said again. He took her hands in his and leaned in and kissed her on the cheek. She almost fainted. The man was beyond handsome, beyond adorable. He smelled divine and was so chivalrous!

"Carlos, I can't believe I'm finally meeting you in person," Jenny couldn't help but gush.

He seemed quite flattered. His smile widened. "I've been looking forward to it. May I take your bag," he asked graciously.

"If you insist," she said.

"I do," he said. He leaned down, grabbed her overnight bag and gestured ahead of himself. "Shall we? I have the car ready at the curb."

"Lovely," Jenny said. So far, so good.

As they walked towards his car, he said, "You look a bit different than your photo, and your voice is... deeper I think, than the last time we spoke on the phone."

Don't panic! "I hope you're not disappointed," she said. She checked him carefully for his response.

"Not in the least, I'm just a bit surprised," he said. He gave her a quick head-to-toe examination. She couldn't tell what he was thinking.

"I... I guess I'm a bit self-conscious about my voice. I get mistaken for being a man on the phone a lot. It's embarrassing. I try to compensate by speaking in a higher voice. I guess I was worried you'd think you were talking to a guy."

He laughed; a wonderful, musical laughter. Deep and rich. She was entranced with the man.

"I understand," he said.

"And my photos never do me justice. I get that all the time, even from my own family. Well, when I had one."

"I was so sorry to hear about that plane crash. I understand why you were reluctant to talk about it."

"Thanks for being so understanding, Carlos."

He smiled. "Not at all, Barbara," he said. They reached the car, he opened her door for her, and she got in. So gallant!

He put her bag in the trunk and then got in alongside her. Aiming another devastating grin her way, he started the car and pulled away from the curb.

She'd passed the first test! Thank the Lord. Now she'd have to see if she could keep up the act. She had to hook the guy. She had to get him to invite her to stay.

As they drove towards her hotel, he pointed out various landmarks and tourist attractions. He had such a wonderful speaking voice she felt she could listen to him all day. And those eyes, wow!

Jenny checked into her hotel, and Carlos suggested lunch at the hotel restaurant. They sat at a private table in an enclave overlooking the sparkling pool.

"So what do you think of our town so far?" he asked.

"It's wonderful. I've never been here before."

"Really? I thought you said you'd visited here in recent years at a convention?"

Gurk. "I meant, I'd never been to this particular hotel," she quickly corrected, flustered. Blowing it! Shape up, Jenny!

Doubt flickered behind his dark brown eyes. This man was no dummy. She'd better watch it. She thought she'd studied those emails, but there was no way to know what they'd spoken about on the phone.

"Ah, yes," he said.

"And you know, when you're at conventions, you could be anywhere. All I was thinking about was work."

"Yes, I understand," he said. "So what will you have?"

"The steak salad sounds marvelous."

"I thought you were a vegetarian," he asked, looking concerned.

"I was," she stated firmly. "I finally realized it was just too hard to deal with food restrictions like that. And a few weeks ago, I took a bite of steak and realized just what I'd been missing."

He laughed. "I have heard that often from my ex-vegetarian friends. Usually it is bacon that seduces them back to meat-eating."

"Bacon is very seductive."

"I'm hoping I am, too," he said, sending her a devastating smile.

Zing! Wow, was he hot! She flushed and choked into her napkin.

He burst out laughing. "Delightful. Very delightful, Barbara. I didn't take you for being coy. Not with what we shared the other night."

What did they share? Phone sex?

She looked down, playing into the shy routine. "Well, Carlos, I suppose I'm more brave on the phone. Meeting you in person like this... I..."

"How delightful you are. Please don't be nervous, my dear. You have nothing to be afraid of in me. I... am a very patient man."

"Thank you, Carlos. You're so gracious. I mean, you always were on the phone, but... it's just so different meeting you here like this."

"Yes, it is. I knew you were beautiful, but I have to say, you take my breath away." He gazed at her with a very predatory, very seductive look in his large brown eyes.

All she could think about was jumping him. She could feel her face turn bright red; she looked away. He laughed again.

"I'm not used to compliments," she finally said.

"That's too bad. I'm hoping after you've been around me for a while, you'll get more accustomed to them. You deserve them, Barbara."

"Thank you, Carlos. You have to be the most handsome man I've ever met," she said honestly.

He beamed. "Thank you. Now, shall we order?"

She hadn't even noticed that the waitress was right there. Carlos was so distracting, so handsome!

Something was wrong with her. Carlos could not put his finger on it, but there was something amiss. Was it the look behind her eyes? She was hiding something about herself. They'd only been chatting on the phone for a few months, so he had anticipated some surprises. But her syntax was different, her voice inflections, her turns of phrase, all very different. What was behind the change?

Well, he didn't know, but he'd find out. He had too much to protect. He hoped she hadn't done the in-depth background check on him that he'd done on her. Or she'd know how rich he was.

All he knew about Barbara Stenneman was that she was a successful marketing executive for Raycom Computers, she was divorced, she'd graduated with honors from an Ivy League school and had lost all her family in a plane crash seven

years before. She loved tennis, mystery novels and gardening. And she was an extensive reader. He also knew her to be charming and quite sexy on the phone.

But the woman he sat across from now didn't seem at all like the woman he'd spoken to on the phone. While charming and beautiful, she had changed. Perhaps she was just nervous. He'd watch and see. If she wasn't who she said she was on the phone, he'd find out. By the time she left at the end of the weekend, he'd know it all.

"So, did you like the books I sent you," he asked.

"Oh, yes," she replied immediately.

"What did you think of Carl Hiaasen's latest novel?"

"Loved it. Wait. I read so much, which one was that one?"

"*Sick Puppy*," Carlos replied.

"Oh, yes. It was very entertaining. But he always is."

Carlos knew she hadn't read it. Her eyes had darted away, a dead giveaway. Now she was directly lying to him. This was not good. What else had she lied about?

He shouldn't get ahead of himself. There were plenty of reasons people lied. She'd probably been busy. Maybe she hadn't had time to read it.

"You didn't have time to read it, did you," he asked.

She looked caught. Then she shrugged. "I didn't want to disappoint you."

"The only way you could ever disappoint me would be by lying to me," he said, careful to look her straight in the eye.

She immediately looked away and turned red. "I'm sorry, Carlos. I so want to make a good impression on you. I shouldn't have lied. I won't make the same mistake again."

"Don't worry, I just wanted you to know that I have problems with liars. I can forgive almost any indiscretion except for lying."

"Well, I think you know me well enough to know that I wouldn't lie about anything important."

"Everything you say is important to me, Barbara," he said with a stern edge.

"Well, I'll make sure to tell you the truth about absolutely everything. You must forgive me; the main thing you learn in marketing is to stretch the truth, but I won't let my work affect our relationship again."

"Good," he said.

Thankfully, their food arrived. When he caught her in that lie, Jenny thought she was going to die. The man had a serious moral streak. No nonsense about him. She'd have to watch what she said more carefully. She decided to stop talking about herself and ask him more questions. Most men preferred to talk about themselves anyway. Once they went back to his place, she'd seduce him. After they slept together, he wouldn't be asking any more questions.

She dug into her steak salad, and it was delicious. He had the halibut. They finally relaxed and began discussing movies they'd seen recently. He seemed to have the same taste in films as she.

Right when her guard was lowered, he said, "I didn't think you liked action films. I thought you said you preferred women's films."

Yikes! "I do. I like them both."

"But I specifically remember you mentioning you didn't like violence."

"Well, not Tarantino violence, but big explosions and Jackie Chan and Spielberg stuff, I like that. I just don't like graphic violence."

"Oh, I see."

Goddamn this! What the hell had they talked about on the phone? She thought she'd known

almost everything about their communications. This was ridiculous!

Just then, at the next table over, which was a fair distance away, a burly man in his sixties began choking. They continued their conversation, but the man's choking became more exaggerated. Jenny finally checked the man, and his face had turned blue. He was choking to death.

Without thinking, Jenny leapt out of her chair and ran to the man. She performed the Heimlich maneuver; a chunk of meat shot out of the man and flew across the room. He began breathing normally then, and the emergency was averted. Instinctively, she took the man's pulse and checked his eyes. Waiters appeared; the maître d' was suddenly next to her, and the man's companion was on her other side.

"You'll be fine. Are you feeling better?" she asked the hefty, balding man.

"Yes, yes, you saved my life, how can I ever thank you?"

"Thank you, Miss, thank you so much," said his companion, a stout woman in her sixties.

The maître d' said, "Madam, may we get you something on the house? We must thank you for your quick thinking. Are you a nurse?"

"Yes, I am," she said without thinking. She noticed that Carlos was standing there looking at her quizzically. "I mean I used to be. I'm... I'm a marketing executive now. Actually, I was never a nurse. I just know CPR, that's all," she added quickly. Blowing it! "And don't worry, nothing on the house is necessary. I... just wanted to help."

"Well, my dear, I can't thank you enough," the balding man said.

"Yes, thank you, Miss, thank you so much," the woman gushed.

"It was no problem. If you'll excuse me," Jenny said, turning and leaving.

"Madam, your lunch is on the house," the maitre d' said, escorting her back to her table.

"Please, I did what anyone would have done," Jenny stammered, worried that she'd drawn too much attention to herself.

"No, my dear, you did not, I insist," the maitre d' assured her. "Shari? Please give these people the dessert of their choice and send me the bill. Again, madam, my most humble thanks."

"But... I..." Jenny said, feeling uncomfortable.

"Barbara, you saved a man's life. Let them reward you," Carlos said.

"I feel awkward about it," she said, completely freaked out that her nurse's training had taken over. She couldn't let Carlos know her true occupation!

"I'm impressed, don't feel awkward," Carlos said.

"I just did what had to be done," she replied quietly.

"You did well."

She shrugged and continued eating.

Carlos hadn't missed a second of the exchange. Barbara acted just like a nurse would. Not the Heimlich maneuver, but the way she checked the choking man's pulse and eyes afterwards. She did it naturally, and there was no hesitation, no awkwardness. A routine examination. As if she performed them all the time. While he was truly impressed with her, her actions had just raised more questions. Where had this medical background come from? There had been nothing in the report about anything remotely to do with medical training. Not even a CPR certification had showed up.

After dinner, Carlos drove her out of town.

"Aren't we going to your home?" she asked.

"Uh, yes. It's just a bit out of town."

"Good, good."

They pulled up to a gate in a large stucco wall, which seemed to surround a large estate. He took

out a garage door opener and pressed a button, which opened the gate. He drove through, and she sent him a questioning look, which he returned with a smile.

They drove for at least a quarter mile on a small one-lane paved road lined with lush vegetation. They came around a corner and a huge colonial mansion stood there. It was gargantuan.

Jenny was completely confused. He said he lived alone in a three-bedroom rancher.

"Where's your house," she asked.

Carlos parked the car in front of the house and turned to her. "Uh, remember when I said I despised liars?"

"Uh... yeah."

"Well, I should have come clean about my own lies."

"You lied? You're married?"

He laughed. "No, no. This is my home. I'm afraid I'm quite a bit wealthier than I told you. Before you say anything, hear me out. I—"

"You're tired of gold-diggers."

"Well, yes. I wanted someone who wanted me for me, not because of my money."

Jenny was wholly perplexed and taken aback, but not displeased. Had she hit the jackpot or what? "Wow."

"So, since I am coming clean with you, I want you to feel free to do the same. If you have any secrets or anything you haven't told me, now is the time to do it." He sent her an intense stare.

She felt like a butterfly pinned to a wall. "Uh... no, no. Nothing," she lied smoothly, her gaze never wavering from his. "I mean, not that I can think of right now. Nothing big. Like hiding my wealth from you or children or a husband or anything. I'm pretty much who I said I was."

"Except for the medical background."

"I have no medical background."

"Interesting," he said. "The way you handled the examination of the choking man certainly led me to

believe otherwise." He leveled that same intense gaze at her.

She tried not to, but she got flustered. "Like I said, I am CPR certified, just took a refresher course recently."

"Was that before or after the conference?"

"Before."

"You were so busy, it's amazing that you had time for that."

"I did it on a Saturday."

"Right, right."

"Why so many questions, Carlos? Don't you believe me?"

"Certainly, I do. There are just some anomalies about you that I'm trying to clarify."

"I suppose we didn't cover everything in those conversations. Certainly, you misled me where your money was concerned. What do you do, anyway? Are you really a real estate agent?"

"Uh, no. I'm a broker."

"Oh, my God. Moreno Properties? You're that Moreno?"

"Guilty as charged," he said with a grin.

"Jesus Christ. You're... really, really rich."

"Not that rich," he said.

"To me you are."

Carlos said, "You make a few hundred thousand a year."

"Not what you make."

"Your house is very nice."

"It's not a mansion."

"Does this all bother you?"

"No, I'm just having difficulty getting my head around it."

He grinned. "Let me show you around."

The place was magnificent. Twenty rooms, a ballroom, an Olympic-sized pool, extensive gardens, tennis courts, a theatre, a bowling alley.

"A bowling alley," she asked, when Carlos showed her the room.

He shrugged. "The previous owners put that in. I didn't have the heart to take it out. My nephews love it so much."

"Too funny."

He escorted her to a beautiful patio with a fountain surrounded by lush foliage. Wine and appetizers were set out on a glass-topped table.

"This is so beautiful, Carlos."

"You are what's beautiful, querida," he said, his eyes heavy-lidded with lust. This was promising.

He raised his glass to her. "May our relationship continue on its very promising path," he said.

"I'll drink to that," she giggled. They took sips of their wine. Carlos got up, drew her out of her chair and kissed her. She nearly swooned.

When he pulled away, he was clearly pleased. "You are very special, Barbara." He kissed her again. She couldn't help herself; she went for it. She wrapped her arms around him, felt his strong back, and ran her hands down to cup his high, rounded rear.

He breathed in deeply, his kiss hardened, and his tongue explored her mouth more urgently. He brought her closer to him, and she could feel his hardness press against her belly. She wanted this man. She wanted him badly.

When he pulled away, she could barely catch her breath.

"I... wanted to wait," Jenny said. "I don't want you to get the wrong impression of me, I..."

"Shhh, querida, shhhh. I would never think anything badly of you, not for wanting me."

"I want you so very much," she whispered.

His grin widened. "My guests always get what they want," he said. He took her by the hand and led her upstairs to a gigantic master suite. His king-sized bed was up on a dais, adorned with silk sheets and a silk comforter.

But Jenny wasn't thinking about that, all she was thinking about was getting naked with him. He began to slowly undress her, but she couldn't wait.

She undid his belt, pushed his pants off and dropped to her knees. He had a beautiful member. She took it in her mouth and luxuriated in the feel of it. He gasped and took her hair in his hands, groaning with pleasure.

He pushed her away, picked her up and threw her on the bed. He ripped off the rest of his clothes and undressed her, fast. He was on top of her and inside her before she could think. She nearly passed out from pleasure. They fit perfectly. She threw herself into the lovemaking with wild abandon. He eased her from position to position, and she was so lost in sensual oblivion that she was barely aware of anything but her own joy. When he finally came, she was launched into an unbelievable climax, a toe-curling explosion of ecstasy, one that shook her to the foundation of her soul. Who was this guy?

Afterwards, he held her so sweetly and kissed her on the temple, and on the cheek. She'd never had a lover like him. And she'd never felt guiltier in her entire life. Why had she thought this was going to be so easy? She hadn't counted on him being this good in bed, nor this kind, nor attentive. She thought she'd hide out for a while, maybe get some money out of the deal and be on her way when the heat was off her. She had no idea she'd like the man. And beyond liking him, she could tell that she was falling in love with the man. Talk about inconvenient!

"What are you thinking, my love?" Carlos asked.

"About how wonderful you are. How happy I am," she said.

"You don't look happy; you look troubled."

"No, I'm happy."

They were quiet for a moment.

He rattled off some long phrase in Spanish and then turned to her.

She stared at him blankly. He repeated himself. Or, at least, it sounded like he repeated himself.

"What? What did you say," she asked innocently.

He got quiet. Very quiet.

"Are you all right," she asked.

"Not really."

She could feel his body stiffen next to her.

"What? What's going on?"

"Before we go any further, I have to make a point with you," Carlos said, a serious look in his eye. "After that wonderful lovemaking, I can tell we are headed towards some sort of a commitment, a relationship."

"Then why do you look so upset?"

"You told me that you spoke fluent Spanish. We even spoke in Spanish a bit. You weren't that good, but you could understand me. Did you have someone translating for you?"

Mayday! Mayday!

"I... uh."

"I need to make something very clear to you, Barbara. If we are to proceed with this, I need you to understand something about me. I do not tolerate lying. I gave you the opportunity to come clean with me, but you didn't take it, which is regrettable. You know what it is to please me; it's time to learn what it is to disappoint me."

"But, Carlos, I—"

Before she could process what he was doing, he sat up, swung his legs over the side of the bed, grabbed her and pulled her across his lap.

"Carlos, what are you doing?"

"Teaching you a lesson about lying to me."

And with that, she felt the first swat. Carlos was spanking her? What the hell?

"Ow! Carlos, that hurt!"

"It is supposed to. It is a deterrent. Never to lie to me again." Then he really let her have it. His open palm slapped her bare butt with vigor and force. It was shockingly painful.

She tried to get away, but he held her more firmly.

"You (spank) need to understand (spank) something about me, querida, (spank). I (spank) do

(spank) not (spank) tolerate lying (spank, spank, spank)."

"Ow! I got it, I got it, Carlos!"

"Is there anything else you'd like to confess?" he demanded, thundering into her poor bare flesh with awesome strikes.

"No! Owwww!"

"Now is the time, querida! Now, not later!" He swatted her mercilessly. She never knew a spanking could hurt this bad. No one had ever spanked her before, and this was awful!

"I don't have anything to confess," she cried. Tears began to stream down her face.

"Are you sure? The next time I won't go so easy on you, I can promise you that!"

"No, no, I'm sure!" My God, if Carlos only knew!

He smacked her a few more times for emphasis, then stopped. He let her up and swept her up into his arms.

"I am falling in love with you, querida, and I cannot and will not have anything spoil that. Do you understand me now," he asked.

"Yes, yes, Carlos, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have misled you."

"I forgive you, querida. But now you know my boundaries, yes?"

"Oh, yes."

"So never cross them again, all right?"

"Yes, yes," she assured him.

"Good girl," he said, bringing her to him and kissing her. He wiped the tears from her eyes. "Be a good girl, and I'll never do that to you again. But you must never lie to me, do you understand?"

"I understand, I understand," she said, rubbing her flaming rear.

"Let's forget it for now. Here, let me help you. Lie down on your stomach, querida, and let me make you feel better."

She hesitantly did as she was told. Carlos began gently rubbing her very sore backside. Quite soon, the pain diminished. And her lust grew again. While

she hated the spanking, she'd never met such a forceful man in all her life. He was so hot! While she didn't like his disciplinarian streak, it made him more masculine somehow. Definitely a take-charge guy.

And while she was more attracted to him than ever, she was also very afraid of him. What if he found out her true identity? She shuddered. She would just have to make extra sure he never found out who she was. She couldn't imagine what he'd do to her.

The Hide Out

Chapter Two

As Jenny lay there, her backside stinging, listening to the gorgeous man doze next to her in bed, she worried. The man had just spanked her for a lame lie about being able to speak Spanish. What would he do if he found out that she wasn't Barbara Stenneman? That she was Jenny Dover, an outlaw? She shuddered. He'd spank her into the middle of the next century and then dump her.

She hadn't intended to get emotionally attached to the man. That surprised her. But this man was incredible. Absolutely incredible.

She felt terrible. Why did she think this stupid plan would work? She hadn't thought at all. Her only thoughts were on avoiding jail. Now, in retrospect, jail didn't look so bad. At least she wouldn't have this wrenching pain in her gut. Damn the man, anyway. Why did he have to be so handsome, charming and nice? Why couldn't he have been a jerk? Why did he end up being rich, handsome and successful? Not to mention the best lover she'd ever had. This sucked!

She looked over at him. She could leave. She should leave. She should get up and go and never look back.

But how could she leave him now that she'd found him? She'd been looking for a guy like this her whole life. And now, when she was in the middle of pulling the biggest scam of her life, now is when she meets him? Her target? Horrible!

Just then, he stirred beside her. He ran a hand over her shoulder and pulled her to him. "Querida, did I fall asleep?"

She gazed deep into his amazing dark brown eyes. "Yes, Carlos. You look so handsome when you sleep. When you're awake, too. You're just the most handsome, charming and nice man I've ever met in my life."

He pulled her to him and kissed her. When he pulled away, he raised an eyebrow and asked, "And you say that after I spanked you?"

She reached up and stroked his face. "I know you did it because you liked me. Because you were making a point. You wanted to set your limits right off the bat. Which is good. I didn't like the spanking, but I understood what you meant."

He grinned. "And I may never have to spank you again, know that, my love. I don't take my punishments lightly. Mostly, if I spank you, I want it to be fun for you. For a love game. But if you cross me, I will set limits."

"Got that."

He smiled. "I'm glad. Come here," he embraced her, pulling her close to the length of him. He was ready again. He slipped inside her and made fantastic love to her once more. Jenny was in heaven.

Carlos insisted that she spend the night, and they made love at least four more times. Carlos was a sex machine. The most fun she'd ever had in bed.

But the next morning, her guilt began to get the better of her. This was not right. Carlos thought he was making love to a marketing executive, not a nurse disguised as a marketing executive. A nurse who was evading the police for robbery. This was all so unexpected. She thought he'd provide an easy hide-out for her until all that business back at the hospital was settled. She knew if she stayed away long enough, Marge would drop the case. Bad publicity for the hospital when an employee gets caught stealing from patients.

Not that what she did was that bad. She only picked people who died and who were rich. Then she'd go to their house under some pretense, (she had a million reasons and personas to accomplish getting into the home) then she'd steal something. Not much, but a few things. Things that would never be missed by anyone. She'd been doing it for

four years and quite successfully. She never heard a thing about the missing objects.

Never in a million years did Jenny ever think she'd become a thief. Only dire circumstances brought her to the breach in her integrity. It was the only way she'd found to pay for her grandmother's nursing care—seventy-five hundred dollars per month. She'd already sold her house and her grandmother's to pay for it. But Grandma had lived fifteen years now after her stroke. She was still going strong and needed full-time care. After Jenny had sold her house, she became desperate. The manager of the nursing home threatened to kick Grandma out unless Jenny paid. The same day Grandma was to be evicted, a rich woman came in to the Emergency ward with a heart attack and died. The woman was wearing tons of expensive jewelry. Jenny took a diamond bracelet. The woman was wearing five of them, so Jenny figured one wouldn't be missed. It wasn't. And that began a four-year burglary spree. Jenny's luck had been incredible.

Problem was, her luck had recently run out. The month before, Jenny had stolen a wad of hundred dollar bills from a patient. The deceased's relatives figured out the money was gone, and a police investigation was underway. Jenny knew they'd eventually figure out it was her. She knew she wouldn't have many more chances to steal, so when Barbara Stenneman died in their Emergency ward—victim of a car crash—Jenny jumped on it. She went to Barbara's house, stole her computer and fled. It was then that she discovered the email romance between Barbara and Carlos. She knew they'd never met, and she knew she bore a striking resemblance to Barbara Stenneman. She seized the opportunity.

And now here she was in love with her target. So awful. In hindsight, it was no wonder her plan had failed, it was horrible. This man was a real man, a flesh and blood person. How could she have thought this was okay? Just because the system

was violating her, didn't mean she should hurt someone else. This wasn't like her. She was better than this. If Grandma knew what she was doing, she'd be ashamed. There had to be another way.

Jenny knew she had to get out. She had to get away from Carlos before he found out who she really was. She could not hurt the man any longer. It was time to run.

She got up, careful not to disturb the sleeping Carlos. Thank God, he didn't wake up. She crept to her clothes, put them on quickly and fled.

She was on a plane before ten that morning. She flew to the place that got her the furthest away for the cheapest price. She ended up in Dallas, Texas, far enough away from San Jose, California and Carlos' home in Massachusetts. She checked into a hotel under an assumed name and sat on her bed, wondering what the hell to do next. She had to come up with money in one month's time or Grandma would be kicked out of the home. Her life was such a mess!

Carlos was beside himself. When he'd awoken alone, he knew something was wrong. When he found her clothes gone, he was convinced. He'd known it all along. Something was wrong with her. At first he thought she might have been a thief, but after he checked his whole house, he found nothing missing, only Barbara.

He called her hotel; she hadn't been by since she'd checked in. He called his detectives and got them on her trail, and then he checked his email. He had a message from Barbara's sister, informing him of her death. The sister explained that Barbara's computer had gone missing, but the sister knew about the rendezvous and found his email address on Barbara's desk.

Carlos was floored. Not only was his beloved Barbara dead, an impostor had come in her place! An impostor that he'd fallen in love with.

He'd known something was wrong, those lies she told! Not knowing Spanish, her CPR techniques. He knew she was a medical professional. The way she'd handled that choking man at the restaurant, he'd known something was up. Damn her! Who was she? And where had she gone? Moreover, why had she gone? She'd obviously planned on seducing him and using him. What had caused her to flee? Couldn't be a conscience. She probably figured he'd find out that the real Barbara had died.

All he wanted was to get his hands on her. He wanted to wring her neck for toying with him! She was obviously a professional. She'd done this same thing before. What had she hoped to gain? She hadn't known he was rich. Maybe she had. Maybe she'd found out somehow. He wouldn't put it past a professional thief to know everything about her victim.

Over the next few days, Carlos stewed over the impostor. His detectives hadn't found anything other than that she'd flown to Dallas, Texas the morning she left him. He had three men there now, but they hadn't come up with any leads. He also had detectives checking out San Jose, where the impostor must have met Barbara.

A week after she'd disappeared, Carlos got the call. His detectives had found her in Texas. He also got a call from California, his men had found out who she really was. She was Jennifer Dover, a nurse who worked at the hospital where Barbara died. She was wanted by the police on suspicion of burglary. So that was it! She'd wanted to use him as a hide out. A way to evade the police. So horrible!

Carlos hopped the next plane to Texas. Within hours, he was headed to her hotel room. His detectives had just seen her arrive at the hotel, so he knew she was there.

Jenny was in tears. Grandma was to be kicked out in less than three weeks, the police were after her, and she was all alone without resources in Dallas, Texas of all places. She had no idea what she was going to do.

As she wailed with sobs, someone knocked on her door. She'd paid the hotel people, why was someone bothering her?

"Go away!" she yelled.

"Madam, I'm the bellhop, some mail came for you," came the reply.

"For crying out loud," Jenny grumbled, getting up from the bed. She walked over, opened the door and was stunned to see Carlos standing there, glaring at her.

"Carlos? Carlos!" She tried to shut the door, but he stuck his foot in the way.

"Not so fast, Miss Jennifer Dover," he said in a deep, menacing tone. His eyes were pure fire. Jenny was terrified. He pushed his way into the room and closed the door behind him.

She didn't know what to do, so she ran for the balcony. She was on the ground floor, so she could make a run for it. She flung open the door, ran out and tried to leap up on the railing, but Carlos caught her by the shoulders and pulled her back. She twisted out of his grip, pushed him back, leapt over the balcony and onto the lawn below. Then she took off running for the parking lot.

She had no idea where she would go. Carlos found her? But how? How did he find her?

"Jennifer!" he called out too close behind her. Damn it, anyway! The man was strong and fast. As she reached the end of the lawn, Carlos tackled her to the ground.

He got her into a hold, picked her up and flung her over his shoulder.

"If you scream for help, I will have you arrested!" he warned in a fierce growl.

People began to gather to see what the commotion was all about. As Carlos approached the

side entrance to the hotel, a hotel security guard stood in his way.

"My wife and I were playing games, I'm sorry, it got out of hand. Here," Carlos said, shoving a few bills into the man's hand.

The security guard said, "No problem, sir, have fun."

Carlos carried Jenny like a sack of potatoes all the way back to her hotel room. He set her down at the door and glowered down at her.

"Open it up," he ordered brusquely. "We are going to talk here or the police station—your choice."

Jenny reluctantly got the key out of her jeans pocket and opened the hotel room door. Carlos pushed her inside and closed the door behind him.

"Now, no more nonsense, Miss Dover," Carlos ordered. "Sit down on the bed there and I want the whole story. All of it. Don't miss one thing."

Jenny shuffled over to the bed and sat down, miserable. "Why are we bothering with this? I'm going to jail, my grandmother will be in some county hospital where she'll die, and nothing matters anymore."

Carlos paced the room. "What are you talking about? I want to know what you did to Barbara."

"What do you mean, what I did to Barbara?" Jenny demanded. "I tried to help save her life. But it was too late. She got into a car accident. I'm sorry, by the way."

"You were the emergency room nurse," he told her rather than asked.

"Yes."

"And you stole her laptop."

"Yes."

He stopped just in front of her, hands on his hips. "You went to her house to do this?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

Jenny replied, "I needed the money, that's why."

"You don't make enough as a nurse?" Carlos asked.

"Not to pay for my grandmother's nursing home, I don't."

He snorted in disgust. "And you expect me to believe this?"

"No. Why would you? I'm a liar. I lied to you. I don't know why you're even bothering to ask me anything. I wouldn't believe me if I were you."

"I don't. Now tell me everything, from start to finish. I warn you, I will have everything you say checked out," he informed her.

"Why bother? I'm going to jail. My grandmother will die. Nothing matters anymore."

"It matters to me. Why did you contact me?" he asked.

She answered him, but could not look him in the eye. "Because I needed a hide-out. So I could figure out what to do to get more money because the cops figured out someone has been ripping off the patients at the hospital."

"And that was you."

"Yes."

"And you say you did this for your grandmother's sake," he said. He pulled up a chair and sat opposite her. He crossed his arms across his chest and leveled his dark stare at her.

Jenny nodded. "Yes. I already had to sell my house and hers to pay for her care. No one expected her to live this long. She needs full-time care, and it's seventy-five hundred bucks a month. I only make four thousand a month. There's no one else but me left in the family. I didn't know what to do."

"So what about me?" Carlos asked.

Jenny didn't understand what he was driving at. "What about you?"

He studied her face carefully. "Do you have any feelings for me at all?"

She found it difficult, but finally looked up at him. It was hard to do. The look in his eye showed

his pain and upset. She'd never meant to hurt him. This was awful. "Of course I do. That's why I left. My plan was stupid. I forgot to take into consideration that I was taking advantage of a human being. You're a super nice guy, and you didn't deserve me. And I'm very sorry about Barbara."

He narrowed his eyes at her. "You say you have feelings, yet you stole from all those people?"

"Yes. I only stole a little bit, I only stole from the rich, and I only stole from dead people."

"So this makes it all okay?" he demanded.

"No. It makes it pathetic," Jenny said, shifting on the bed. "I'm pathetic. But I wasn't about to let my Grandmother die in some county nursing facility. Have you ever been inside one of those places," she demanded, gesticulating dramatically. "They're warehouses for old people. Grandma wouldn't last a minute in one of those places. She's doing great at the place I have her in now. She has friends, a great doctor and nursing staff, but I can't afford it. I already spent all my money and hers, I have fifty thousand dollars in debt on my credit cards, and I had no one else to turn to. I didn't know what to do."

There was silence for a while. Carlos stared at her, and Jenny stared at the carpet, head in her hands, miserable.

"Did you know I was rich?"

"No."

"Were you planning on stealing from me?"

"Initially, maybe. But not after the first couple hours. I couldn't. I may appear to be a horrible person, but I'm not. I'm just pathetic, that's all."

"What is your grandmother's name?" he asked. "And the address where the nursing home is located."

"Bessie... Elizabeth Anne Dover, and she's at the Sunset Assisted Living facility in San Jose, California," Jenny replied.

Carlos got out his cellphone and punched in a number. "Jenkins? Carlos here. I want you to check something out for me." Carlos gave the man all of Jenny's grandmother's information. Then he hung up.

"Now what?" she asked.

"Now we wait," he replied.

"What if I'm telling the truth?" she asked.

"We'll see."

"What if I'm lying?"

"Then you're going to jail," he clipped, a flare of anger in his eyes.

Jenny shrugged. "I'm going to jail anyway. I did steal from all those people, and the cops know about the cash I stole a month ago. I'm wanted for questioning."

"I know."

"I don't know why you're bothering with me. My life is over. My grandmother's life is over. It's all over."

"Not yet."

Carlos' cell phone rang. He answered it. "Carlos here... I see... I see... All right. Thank you, Jenkins. No that will be all for now." He closed up his phone and regarded her. A head-to-toe examination. She couldn't tell what he was thinking.

"So?" she asked.

"So it appears you were telling the truth."

"So now what?"

"Now I do some thinking," he said rather cryptically.

"About what?" Jenny asked, sighing heavily. "I'm going to jail, my grandmothers going to county, my life is over. What does it matter? Look, Carlos, I'm sorry for getting involved with you, okay? I mean, if you want to press charges against me... wait. All I did was impersonate some woman, I didn't hurt you—wait, I take that back. I hurt you, I hurt me with all this deception, but I didn't take any money from you. I don't think what I did to you was illegal, just rotten."

"I will agree with you there, it was rotten."

"I know, so I'll pack up and head back to San Jose and go to the police. I have to get this over with. I don't know why I ran. It was stupid."

"It was. But you love your grandmother very much, don't you?"

"She raised me, and I love her more than anything. But that doesn't help. Love is not money."

"No, it's not." He stroked his chin thoughtfully, and then his huge dark brown eyes rested on her. "I think I have a solution to your problems."

"There is no solution."

"Oh, there is one."

"No, there isn't."

"There is, but first, you and I need to straighten something out."

"What is that?"

Carlos moved over and sat next to her on the bed. She looked over at him with surprise. "What?" she asked.

He grabbed her, pulled her across his lap and twisted her arm up behind her back.

"Carlos, what are you doing?" she demanded.

"I told you, querida, what would happen to you if you lied to me again, didn't I?" he asked.

"But I'm going to jail."

"No, you're not. But you may wish you were there in about thirty seconds," he pronounced. He pulled down the back of her pants and pulled her panties down to her knees.

"Carlos, I'm sorry, I had to take care of my grandmother!" she cried.

"You hurt me, querida, and for that, I hurt you back. You need to be punished for what you did to me. And what you did to those people."

"But I didn't know what else to do!"

"There are always solutions that don't involve breaking the law."

"But I didn't know any."

"Pity," he said. Then she felt the first spank. The man wasn't fooling around this time. This time he meant business. The swat hurt like hell!

Carlos began rapid fire spanking her bare butt. The pain was tremendous. Jenny cried and yelled and kicked her legs, but nothing would stop Carlos from his job. His firm hand spanked one cheek until she yowled and then he worked on the other. He swatted both buns together, and then he increased the power of his swats and concentrated on her sit spots until she shrieked in pain.

"Carlos, stop!"

"Not yet, querida. You crossed a line with me. Nobody deceives me like this and gets away with it. You will be learning a lesson here today, a lesson in picking on the wrong man," he stated, swatting her hard.

Tears spilled from her eyes, Jenny's rear felt like Carlos was grilling it. Sharply, he spanked the backs of her thighs, up to her rear again, then down. The man was careful to be thorough.

Finally, when she thought she could take no more, he stopped.

As she wailed and cried, Carlos pulled her up and set her in his lap, with her pants still around her knees, her bare flesh in contact with his jeans.

"Shush, now, querida, shush now," he said, wiping the tears from her eyes.

"I'm so sorry, Carlos, I didn't mean to hurt you. I didn't want to hurt anyone, I just didn't know what to do," she cried.

"I know, I know, calm down, just calm down," he said. He rubbed her back and kissed her on the cheek. To her absolute shock, he ran a hand up her bare thigh to between her legs.

She looked up at him, stunned and confused. Their eyes met for a second, and all she could see was his lust. His mouth covered hers. While his hand explored her sex, his tongue explored her mouth. Jenny was quickly out of her mind with desire for the man. She kissed him back eagerly.

She pushed her pants down to her ankles and spread her legs so he could get better access.

A groan deep in his throat rewarded her. He played with her and kissed her until she was crazed with longing for him.

He pushed her back on the bed, pulled her pants off and unbuttoned his jeans. She ripped off her top, pulled off her shoes and helped him take his clothes off.

Now naked, Carlos came between her legs, pushed them apart with his knees and with a dark, seductive look in his deep brown eyes, he entered her. Jenny gasped at his sudden entrance, lifted her hips to meet his thrusts and raked his back with her nails as she writhed in ecstasy underneath him.

Carlos drove deeply inside her; she brought her legs up to allow him further inside. He grabbed her wrists and pinned them up above her head while he plowed into her with almost a violent edge. Jenny lost control and began screaming as she climaxed. Carlos didn't slow as she came, he picked up his pace until she exploded again and again.

Carlos threw his head back and roared as he spilled his seed inside her, his final thrusts pushing her into an even more violent orgasm. As he finished, she began sobbing and crying, clinging to him as if he were her lifeline.

He withdrew, took her in his arms and held her close.

"I don't want to lose you! I'm sorry, Carlos, I'm sorry! Please forgive me, I never meant to hurt you, I didn't know what I was doing," she cried. "I'm horrible."

"You are not horrible, Jenny, Jenny, calm down. Listen to me, I'm not leaving you. You'll be fine. I'll take care of everything. I'll talk to my lawyer, and he will settle everything. He'll pay back all the money you stole. We'll make full restitution, and I'll make sure your grandmother stays in her nursing home. It's all over. It's all over, querida. I'll take care of you, don't worry."

"What?" Jenny asked, finally coming out of her fit.

"I said, I will take care of everything, don't worry. I'll pay for your grandmother's care."

"Why would you do that?" she demanded, staring up at him through her tears.

"I would do anything for my future wife," he said, grinning down at her.

"What? Your what?" Jenny demanded.

"My wife," he said simply and then he kissed her.

Jenny burst into tears again and clung to him. "I love you, Carlos!"

"I love you, too, querida," he said, kissing her.

The Bodyguard

Craig Muller thought he'd guarded the worst of the worst. He'd had drug addicted rock stars, grumpy congressmen, snooty, rich men, spoiled wealthy starlets. But, nothing had prepared him for Chloe DeWinter.

Craig had been warned. His buddy Kyle could only withstand two weeks of the famous heiress. Craig's boss, only a week. A co-worker who was a Navy Seal for six years—a guy who'd single-handedly taken on thirty Viet Cong one night—managed only two days with the lady. If you could call her a lady, to most she encountered she was Hurricane Chloe. A human disaster.

Problem was, everyone seemed to like Chloe. At least, when she was sober. And, most understood—at least somewhat—that Chloe had had her share of bad luck in recent years. Once a top editor at a fashion magazine, Chloe had lost her career and most of her friends during a scandal involving her ex-husband. Her ex had slept with—and then subsequently stole from—nearly every married woman in Chloe's social circle. David also turned out not to be a member of Danish royalty as he had claimed, but a two-bit con man from Australia. Compounding Chloe's problems, David had set up a fraudulent business that Chloe helped him promote. Chloe attracted the big investors, David fleeced them, and then the Feds got involved. They prosecuted both David and Chloe and tossed them both in jail after a protracted court case. The jury just couldn't believe Chloe could be that naive.

Ever since Chloe's release from jail, she had gone wild. Drinking, carousing, destroying bars, picking up strange men. She'd broken the rules of her parole several times, but her father managed to bribe the right people, so the incidents didn't count against her. But, nothing, not even the threat of jail would stop Chloe.

Soon, Chloe's self-destructive streak became a pattern. Which left her father with only one choice: to hire a bodyguard to protect Chloe from herself. In the two years since she'd been released from jail, Chloe had gone through thirty bodyguards. No one wanted to work for a client who didn't want them there. All Chloe wanted was to be left alone, so she could drink and cause trouble.

Craig knew on his first day that the woman was going to challenge all of his skills. He'd come on shift at noon and taken over from his friend, Kyle, who'd had enough of the heiress.

"Princess is still asleep," Kyle told Craig when he arrived. "Good luck, buddy. My advice? Don't get lulled. She's sweet as hell and then third drink in? Watch out. Chloe turns into a different woman."

"Thanks, I'll keep that in mind."

When Craig finally met the human mess, he couldn't believe that all the fuss was over this little slip of a gal. About five foot two and thin, Chloe DeWinter was in her mid-thirties. Shoulder length blonde hair, cute nose, sweet lips, pretty face. Well, if you looked past the reddened green eyes and the dark circles under them. Once a remarkably beautiful woman, Chloe's drinking was taking a toll on her looks.

But, indeed, Chloe had been nice.

"Oh, hi. You're new, huh?" Chloe said when the maid let Craig into Chloe's bedroom.

Chloe was sitting up in bed on pillows, sipping coffee and reading the paper. She looked completely normal to Craig. Then he noticed the torn and stained gown tossed onto a chair in the corner of the room.

Kyle had said that Chloe had gotten away from him the night before and ran into a nearby park and climbed a tree. Just as Kyle had reached her, she fell out of the tree and into his arms. Kyle had been very glad it was his last night on the job.

"Yes, I'm Craig Muller, Miss DeWinter."

"Chloe, please. May I call you Craig?"

"Certainly."

"So, Kyle had enough?"

"Apparently."

"Too bad. I liked Kyle."

"He liked you, too, Miss."

"Yeah, I know. Poor guy. Well, Craig, I apologize in advance to you. I... oh, you've heard it all. And, if it were up to me, none of you would have to be subjected to me. But Daddy's taken that decision out of my hands. So, good luck, my dear. I'll try to go easy on you. I'm afraid I don't seem to have much control over myself these days."

"I'm here to do a job, Miss DeWinter—Chloe—and I will do it to the best of my ability."

"I'm sure you will. If you're hungry, please have Maria make you whatever you want. It's part of the deal. I don't get bad until after six—most days."

"Ma'am, if I might. If you know—"

"Why can't I stop myself, is that it?"

"Yes."

"I don't know, Craig. If I did, I'd stop."

"Okay, Miss."

"The shrinks have tried to help me. I've gone through fifteen so far. All want me on drugs. But, alcohol is my main problem, I don't see how drugging myself further would help anything."

"Have you tried them?"

"For a week, once. All I did was sleep. I couldn't think straight. I do like to enjoy my sober part of the day. Well, hung-over part of the day, anyway. I haven't found any good solutions to my problems, so my father hired you men. The wealthy do find strange remedies. If we were poor, I would be free to degrade myself any way I saw fit. But, as an heiress, I'm not allowed to self-destruct the way I'd like to."

"Why self-destruct at all?"

"I don't know. I suppose I really don't like myself. But, when I drink, let loose, I feel happy. My only bits of happiness come then. Sick and sad, I'm sure there is some deeply psychological

explanation for it, but I haven't cared to look. None of it matters, anyway. You live, you die, not a lot of control there. I suppose I don't find much meaning in my life nowadays."

"Meaning in life is only what you bring to it."

"Bodyguard and philosopher, I like it. I like you, Craig. I think we'll get along fine. Until you get sick of me."

Craig couldn't help but be lulled by her lucidity. Then it happened. Chloe's third drink. Then Craig met the other Chloe.

Craig was sitting in the nightclub, off in a corner, observing Chloe when suddenly she let out a war whoop and charged out onto the dance floor. Craig sat in complete shock as he watched the heretofore staid Chloe transform into a pole dancer. Suddenly, Craig felt protective of her. Not only was his professional side alarmed, his male side wanted to grab her and drag her off the dance floor. Chloe was making a spectacle of herself!

However, it was Craig's job to observe until she was in true danger, and then rescue her. Craig quickly understood why the others had only lasted a short time. Chloe was a nice girl caught in a self-destructive cycle, and the guards were only paid to perpetuate the cycle, not to end it. And watching Chloe hurt herself was no fun.

Craig quickly understood that his presence and the father's interference were somehow contributing to the situation. The father should either interfere completely, by providing negative reinforcement for Chloe's behavior, or the father should leave her completely alone. Let her hit rock bottom. Too bad Chloe didn't have to work. As it was, she could misbehave all she wanted and retain the same standard of living. Chloe had no consequences for her actions. She had no incentive to stop. And, Chloe needed to be stopped.

Over the next month, Craig became even more convinced something needed to be done. After fishing Chloe out of a fountain in front of a posh

hotel, after rescuing her from two young men she had encouraged and after carrying her home after she'd passed out more than a dozen times, Craig knew he may be her only hope.

Because when Chloe wasn't drunk, she was delightful. Funny, sweet, thoughtful, intelligent—excellent company. But, she was also melancholy, directionless and lost. Chloe wanted to be saved. It was apparent from their talks that this was what she wanted. But, she kept telling Craig that she needed to save herself. Become an adult again. She admitted she was acting like a fool. But, Chloe would say that and go out and do it all over again.

Craig was torn. He liked Chloe. Too much. He thought of her constantly, even when he wasn't working. Craig was sure he was falling in love with her. And, because of that, it was killing him to watch her hurt herself. So, Craig decided to do something. But first, he needed her father's permission. If the father didn't go along with his plans, Craig would have to walk away.

"Muller," Chloe's father said after Craig outlined his plan, "when you first opened your mouth, I thought you were just another ne'er do well after my daughter's money. But, I can see the passion in your eyes. And, I can hear the truth in your words. I've thought the very same things myself, but had no idea how to go about it. I mean, she's too old to spank."

"Don't be so sure of that, sir."

The old man laughed. "I like the way you think, my boy. I like the way you think."

"Someone's got to put the wood to her, sir, and I'd like that man to be me. And, if she goes along with it, I'd like to be more to her. I'd like your permission to date your daughter. That is if she accepts my offer and is still interested in me after my aversion therapy, if you will. After Chloe suffers some consequences, we'll see if she still wants to date me."

"My boy, you have my full permission to date her, spank her, to do whatever you will to her, just get her to stop hurting herself."

"Thank you, sir. I'll do my best."

"I expect you will. My daughter's very lucky you came into her life."

"Let's see if I can turn her around."

"Best of luck to you, my boy. Chloe is a handful."

"Two handfuls, sir."

The old man laughed.

"What?" Chloe asked Craig when he walked into her room later that day.

"I just saw your father," Craig replied.

"Oh, I hope he paid you well. You've been working hard from what I understand."

"Yes, about that. Your father and I discussed a new... uh, plan. Concerning my duties."

"New... plan..."

"Yes, I feel it's my obligation to inform you of the change."

"What change? I don't get it."

"All right, I'll make it plain. You need to be stopped."

"Stopped."

"From your acting out."

"What does it matter?"

"It matters to me and your father."

"I don't—"

"Damn it, Chloe. You're going to self-destruct if someone doesn't help you. Stop you. Well, I'm going to try, and you're going to accept whatever I decide to do to help you."

"What are you talking about?"

"Negative reinforcement."

"What?"

"Negative reinforcement, aversion therapy. You pull something, you'll pay for it."

"Like jail?"

"No, not like jail. That helped cause all this."

"Well, then what? You gonna ground me?" Chloe asked, looking amused.

"No, I'm going to spank you."

Chloe laughed.

"I'm not kidding. You dance in a fountain, woman, you'll pay for it."

"You're serious."

"Very."

"You'd spank me."

"I certainly will," Craig assured her.

"You're not kidding."

"Try me."

Chloe studied Craig for a moment. "You're different than the others."

"You got that right."

"Huh."

That night, Craig took Chloe to her favorite nightclub and then he sat back and watched. And waited.

It wasn't long before it happened. Chloe had her fifth drink and dashed out of the club and into the street. Before Craig could stop her, Chloe grabbed a bicycle away from a young man on the street corner, jumped on it and rode it straight out into traffic. Craig barely stopped her from colliding with a car. He grabbed her, tossed her over his shoulder and handed the bike back to its startled owner. Craig carried Chloe to the car and tossed her in the back.

After fighting with Chloe all the way home, Craig finally got her back into her apartment. By this time, Chloe was out of her mind with anger.

"You've gone too far! I'm in charge, not you! I say! Not you!"

"Not anymore, young lady!" Craig fired back at her.

Craig grabbed her and dragged her over to the living room couch. He quickly got her over his lap and pinned her there. He pulled up her dress, pulled down her panties and let loose on her behind,

peppering her very attractive rear with nice, hard spanks.

To be expected, Chloe was outraged. She ordered him to stop. Fired him. Threatened him.

Chloe's threats had no effect on Craig. "This is what you get for misbehaving!" he told her as he whacked her soundly on her shapely rear. "You are going to stop all this nonsense or face the consequences! Chloe! You hear me?!"

"Stop, Craig!"

"No! Now, there's a word you don't hear too often, isn't it, Chloe?! NO!"

Whack! Whack! Whack! Chloe's delightful, rounded rear was turning a nice, deep shade of red. She kicked and pleaded, her howls echoed throughout the apartment. Very satisfying.

When Chloe began to bawl like a baby, Craig knew she'd had enough. He stopped and let her cry for a while. Then he let her up. When Chloe went to slap him, he grabbed her arm and yanked her towards him.

"You want more?! I'll give you more, little girl!" Craig warned.

"No!"

"Now you're going to bed, young lady! No two ways about it!"

"You can't do this to me!" Chloe cried.

"I can, and I will! Now get in that room!"

"No!"

"Oh, so you do want more!"

"No!"

"Then get in there and go to bed!"

"I hate you! I hate you!" Chloe cried as she ran into her room and slammed the door.

Craig heard her lock it. He heard her throw herself on the bed and begin wailing. After about twenty minutes, she stopped crying. Then it was quiet.

Chloe was still a bit sulky the next morning. But when Craig didn't mention the night before, she

warmed up and soon they resumed their normal banter.

But that night, right on schedule, four drinks in, Chloe ran out of the bar and into a park. She got part way up a tree when Craig grabbed her and pulled her off. That's when Chloe slapped him.

Furious, Craig grabbed her and dragged her back to the car. But he didn't get in the front, he got into the back and pulled her along with him. He yanked Chloe across his lap, pulled her panties down and gave her a good, hard spanking.

After Craig reduced Chloe to a squalling, crying child, he stopped. When he pulled her off his lap, Chloe tried to hit him again. Craig's reaction was swift. Once again, Chloe was across his lap, subjected to an even harder spanking. Finally, after a good, solid five minutes of begging and wailing on her part, Craig stopped. This time, Chloe didn't attempt to fight him or get away. She just allowed him to take her home, where he marched her straight to her room and ordered her to go to bed.

The next morning, Chloe was very unhappy.

"This has to stop," she told Craig.

"I agree."

"You can't be spanking me and dragging me back here."

"Sure, I can."

"How long is this gonna go on?"

"As long as it takes."

"Look, Craig, I like you, but my father—"

"Knows and condones what I'm doing. Call him if you don't believe me."

"Daddy? Condones this... treatment?"

"Encourages it."

"But you came up with it."

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because I like you, and if you ever straighten out your act, I might like to start dating you. But not until you learn your lesson and stop all this nonsense."

"Wait. You like me? You want to go out with me?"

"Eventually."

"But I've treated you horribly."

"Yes, you have. That's why I'm spanking you."

"You still like me enough to date me?" Chloe asked.

"If you stop. No girlfriend of mine is going to act out the way you do. I won't tolerate that type of behavior."

"Oh. I'm going to have to think about this."

"Good. You should."

That night, Chloe deliberately downed five shots of tequila—she even toasted in Craig's direction—and then, after glaring up at Craig, she picked a fight with a young woman. Craig couldn't believe her audacity.

Craig dragged Chloe out of there and took her screaming back home. This time, it was personal. Chloe had made it personal.

Craig took off his belt, took Chloe over his knee, yanked down her panties and whipped her good with his thick leather belt. Crack! Whack! Crack! His belt put some nice red welts all over Chloe's helpless little rear end.

And boy, did Chloe howl this time! She squealed, shrieked, kicked and flailed, but this time Craig was making sure to be thorough.

Finally, when Craig was sure he'd made his point, he stopped, picked up Chloe by the scruff of the neck and pushed her into her room, closing her inside. Leaving her wailing in tears.

A half an hour later, Craig knocked on her door.

"Go away!" Chloe cried.

"Chloe, come on. I've got something that will make you feel better."

There was silence.

"Chloe, I won't hurt you. It's all over. Let me come in."

"Oh, okay," Chloe said, reluctantly.

Chloe was lying on her bed on her stomach in her pajamas looking miserable. With her Spongebob Squarepants pjs and the petulant look on her face, Chloe looked adorable. Like a chastened thirteen-year-old.

Craig brought in a tray with him that held a bottle of Solarcaine, a mug of hot chocolate and some scones Maria had baked that day.

Chloe looked encouraged by the contents on the tray. Then curious.

"Why are you being nice to me?" she asked.

"Because I like you."

"Got a hell of a way of showing it."

"You know, Chloe, everything I do around here is for you. Because I like you, and I believe in you. I believe you're a good person and that you want to stop all this nonsense. You just don't know how. I'm here to provide a solution. Because I know you want it all to end."

"So why do you care? None of the others did."

"I told you why, I like you."

"Okay."

"I want to rub some of this lotion on your behind. Will you let me?" Craig asked.

"Solarcaine, okay. Oh. I have to pull these down, don't I?"

"I've seen it before."

"Don't remind me. Okay, okay. It's embarrassing, but okay."

Chloe carefully pulled her pajamas down.

Craig loved the way her rear end looked. Even if it was red with welts, it was a perfectly shaped behind. Chloe was so cute.

Craig sat next to her on the bed, poured out some lotion into his hands and gently began to rub it into her sore behind.

"That feels good," Chloe said, relaxing.

"I'm glad."

There was a pause. Then Chloe said, "You're not gonna let me get drunk and be wild anymore, are you?"

"No."

There was silence as Chloe thought about it, and Craig ministered to her rear end.

"If I keep on, you'll just keep spanking me, won't you?"

"Yes."

"I'm kinda too old for this."

"You're too old for all this misbehavior."

"I suppose so. Do you still like me?" Chloe asked.

"Very much."

"You still want to go out with me?"

"Only if you promise to stop drinking."

There was quiet. Chloe finally said, "I don't really like drinking that much. This hot chocolate tastes better."

Craig laughed. "You are adorable, Chloe, very adorable."

"You think so?"

"Yes."

"So, why haven't you kissed me?"

"Because you were either drunk or hung over."

"Yeah. Not exactly attractive behavior."

"No."

"So, if we did get together, and I blew it, say I relapsed. Would you dump me?"

"No. But, I'd spank you and put you to bed."

"Even if we were together?"

"Especially if we were together. I'd spank you much harder and for a much longer period of time. In fact, if we get together, I'm buying a paddle. A nice, thick, long, hard wooden paddle. And I'll hang it on the wall as a reminder to you."

"You wouldn't."

"I would, and I will. I don't enjoy it, you know. Well, some. You pissed me off pretty good tonight. Very satisfying, hearing you howl after you taunted me like that. But no, I don't want to spank you, Chloe. I want you to act like an adult."

"Good, me, too."

Craig finished up on Chloe's rear and then stopped. Chloe pulled up her pajamas as Craig put the top back on the lotion.

"Thanks, Craig," Chloe said. "For everything."

"You're welcome."

"I have been doing some thinking, you know. I was actually praying a few months ago for something to stop me. That was right before you started working here."

"Be careful for what you wish for."

"Yeah. No. I'm glad. I... I want to get better. I want to stop all this. I want it all to end."

"Only you can end it."

"I guess... I just haven't wanted to look at it. At what I was doing."

"Having a team of people enabling you wasn't helping you, either."

"Yeah. I still can't blame anyone but myself."

"It's a start."

"I have no idea why I've been... it's just so embarrassing. I guess I don't want to deal with it during the day and since I can't remember much... and with Daddy deciding I was out of control. It's upset me, actually, quite a bit, to have a guard around me. I needed a few weeks of self-destruction and then I would have turned it around. I was on the verge when Daddy brought in the cavalry. Then, because he didn't believe I'd get better, I didn't believe it. And it's easier to ignore it all. But not with a sore butt," Chloe said, shooting Craig a look.

Craig laughed. "You needed a wake-up call."

"Yes. I did."

"Well, I'm going to say good-night," Craig said.

"Oh, before you go, could you come over here?" Chloe said.

"Surely, what is it?" Craig said, coming up close to Chloe.

Chloe caught him by the hand and pulled Craig down on top of her. She kissed him.

Craig pulled away with a very lustful smile on his face. "Don't tempt me, woman. I'm still on duty. Teasing me like that could get you another spanking."

"It wasn't a spanking I was aiming for," Chloe said, kissing him again.

Craig took over and took control of the kiss. Of Chloe. They quickly became lost in each other. Chloe had Craig's shirt off and was pulling off her pants when Craig came to his senses.

"Wait, damn you, girl. I'm on duty. I can't do this."

"You're fired, now come here."

"Chloe, don't make me turn you over my knee."

"Look, it's midnight, you're officially off-duty."

"I'm off at two, that's when you usually get home."

"I'm home now, you've got the night off, now come here."

"Chloe, I—"

Chloe grabbed Craig and pulled him on top of her. By then, it was all over. Soon, they were naked, and Craig was entering her. It was better than either had imagined it would be.

Afterwards, they were lying in each other's arms, glowing.

"God, Craig. This felt... I feel. Do you really care about me? Are you just here for—"

"Ssshhh. Chloe, I love you. I've loved you since that first week I was here. Why do you think I tried to help you? I care so much about you."

"Oh, thank God. Me, too. I mean, I... I love you, too, Craig. And, it scares me. The only guys I've gotten close to—"

"That's all over. You're with me now. I'm going to take care of you and you are going to take care of me. And yourself. You realize there's no going back now, Chloe. You're mine and as such, you will hold yourself to higher standards. I wanted to wait a bit. Let you get your head together because darlin', if you mess up now, those little spankings I

gave you were nothing to what I'll do to you. You just took on more responsibility than you have in a long while. You realize that, don't you?"

"Yes, Craig. And thank God. I'm gonna make it, aren't I?"

"Oh, yes, darlin' you are."

"I love you, Craig."

"I love you, Chloe."

The One-Woman Wrecking Crew

Lizzie saw John coming towards her with a determined look in his eye. He couldn't have found out, could he?

Just then, Maggie came up to where Lizzie was sitting. "Lizzie! John knows! I just saw him, and he's trying to find you!"

"I think he's found me," Lizzie said.

Maggie followed her friend's line of sight. John was now just fifty yards away from the women.

"Oh, God, run, Lizzie!" Maggie said.

"Okay, here's my beer," Lizzie said, handing off her mug to her buddy.

Lizzie crouched down behind the people sitting in front of her and made a beeline out of the seats.

It was the weekend of the town festival; everyone was gathered at the small fairgrounds, listening to music and partying with their neighbors.

Lizzie kept down low until she reached the last seat in her row. Then she darted across the aisle, towards the craft and food booths. Ducking around a booth selling plants potted in old boots, Lizzie headed for the kid's area, tucked away in a far corner of the festival.

Once into the kid's area, Lizzie began to run. She ran past the large bounce house, past the basketball throw, past the train ride and out onto the main street.

Lizzie began to run down the street when up ahead of her, she saw the tall, sandy blonde head of John O'Connell, searching for her. Even from a distance, the man was gorgeous. Angular, chiseled face, amazing blue eyes, deep laugh lines, a nose that had been broken a few times in his earlier years as an amateur boxer. A man's man.

Lizzie ducked into a booth on her right, one a friend of hers, Diane, was manning for a local charity.

"Hide me! Hide me, Diane! John found out, and he's after me!"

"Under the table!" Diane hissed, pointing directly underneath her at the table that fronted the booth.

Lizzie dove for Diane's feet and landed on the dusty, weedy ground, just as she heard John's voice.

"Diane, have you seen Lizzie?" John asked.

John's voice was deep and had a slight Irish lilt to it. He'd come to the States in his early twenties to set up a farm in their small community. Twenty years later, John had a thriving business in artichokes and Brussels sprouts.

"Uh, no, John," Diane said. "Well, yes, I saw her earlier. Have you checked up by the bandstand?"

"I was just there, and the little witch ducked out on me. You heard what Lizzie did, didn't you?"

"Uh, no. I don't think so," Diane replied. "Does it involve the Clock Tower?"

"No, no. This was worse. Lizzie was drivin' home drunk from McCarthy's the other night, veered off the road, into my field, destroyed some irrigation pipes and didn't come and wake me up to tell me. By the time I found the mess in the morning, half the field was underwater. I lost half a seeded field because of her."

"Oh, dear. Are you sure it was Lizzie?"

"I found her license plate stuck on one of my pipes in the next field over. Lizzie lost it on her way out, apparently."

"Oh, dear," Diane said.

"Lizzie's lucky I didn't find it until today," John said. "If I'd found it that morning, I would have driven to her house, grabbed her by the scruff of the neck and dragged her back to my place to help clean up the mess."

"Gee, John, I can see why you're angry."

"Then, the little witch sees me just now and runs from me!" John seethed. "When I catch up to her, there's gonna be hell to pay! Tell her if you see her, she's payin' for what she did to me. And tell her I'm takin' it out of her hide!"

Lizzie prayed John didn't lift up the material covering the table. She was so close to him, she could reach out and touch his pant leg.

"I'll tell her, John, if I see her," Diane said. "Or when I see her. She has to be around here somewhere."

"She does, and I will find her," John said. And then Lizzie heard him stalk off.

A few seconds passed, and Diane said, "The coast is clear, Lizzie. Come on out."

Lizzie finally emerged, a bit scared. "Jeez, Diane, did you hear him? He really sounds mad."

"Well, you destroyed his field. That had to cost him."

"I didn't mean to."

Diane started laughing. "You get yourself into the worst fixes, honey. Well, you do keep us all entertained, I'll give you that."

"I'm glad everyone else is enjoying my fiascos. Damn it, I was wondering where my license plate went. Talk about leaving crucial evidence behind."

"Why didn't you wake him up?" Diane asked.

"I didn't want him to know it was me! Jeez, the Clock Tower thing had just blown over, and you know I've had a crush on the guy for the past twenty years. My God, and with his wife leaving him just last year, I was hoping to butter him up and get him over to my house for dinner."

"John is hot, all right. And, from what I heard from Gill, John has a secret crush on you, too."

"Did. He *did* have a secret crush on me. I know, Gill practically drove straight to my house once John told him that."

"Which was probably why John told him that."

"Yeah, but that was two days before I destroyed John's field. Damn it. My only hope had been that he wouldn't find out it was me. Now, I've ruined my chances with him. Crap!"

"Sounds like John wants to take a piece out of you, now," Diane said.

"Great. No wonder I'm single."

"You'd better hightail it out of here. Maybe if you can avoid him for a week or so, it will all blow over."

"I knew I should have walked home that night."

"Yeah, your feet would have done a lot less damage to his field than your truck," Diane said.

"You oughta see my truck, too," Lizzie said. "Poor thing. I never should have bought something that big. Even when I'm sober, I run into things."

Diane laughed. "Again, honey, you're some of the only entertainment this town provides."

"Well, I gotta calm down. I can't afford any more of these stupid fiascos. The Clock Tower thing cost me a grand."

"You're lucky it was only a grand. If you'd broken off one of the arms on the clock, it would have cost you more."

"I know, I know. Ben Green put me up to that one. It's all his fault."

Diane laughed. "Yes, he put a gun to your head, I did hear that part."

"Oh, shut up. And thank you for hiding me. I'm gonna run home and hope to avoid Mr. Farmer John."

"Good luck, honey," Diane said.

Lizzie poked her head out from the booth and didn't see John anywhere. Good. She took off and ran all the way home.

Early the next evening, Lizzie was enjoying the cocktail hour at McCarthy's bar: the normal meeting place for the locals. She was regaling two friends who'd been out of town with the Clock Tower story.

"So, I climb up and I'm clinging to the tower, like, thirty feet above the ground, tryin' to spin the hands of the clock so I could get the thing to sound off early, so I could win that bet with Ben Green. That's when my feet slipped out from underneath me, and I find myself hangin' by one arm of the clock. Instead of spinning it forwards, I spun it backwards and almost killed myself in the process. What I didn't realize is that the arms don't go backwards, and I ended up breaking the

mechanism. Cost me a grand to get it fixed, *and* I lost the bet!"

Lizzie's audience was laughing so hard, they were in tears.

Just then, Lizzie felt a hand on her shoulder. When she turned around, she gasped. John O'Connell. His blue eyes were piercing through her. "Uh..." she stammered.

"No more runnin', Lizzie. You're comin' with me."

"But... I haven't... uh... finished my beer."

John reached out, took the half-finished beer from Lizzie's hand and chugged it. He slammed the mug down on the bar and looked her straight in the eye. "Now, you're done."

The tall man took Lizzie by the arm and dragged her out of the bar.

"Wait, John, I... Wait. Where are you taking me?"

"You know where I'm takin' you, and you know why I'm takin' you there," John replied without a smile. He was determined, focused and not a little annoyed.

John pulled a reluctant Lizzie all the way to his truck, opened the door for her and practically threw her inside.

When John got inside, Lizzie asked, "John, what is this all about?"

"Don't play innocent with me, Lizzie Brown, you know why I'm pissed at you. Now, don't go addin' lyin' onto your already long list of transgressions against me."

"John, honestly—"

"I can't believe you used that word, woman," John said as he pulled out of town and headed for his farm.

Lizzie decided to play silent. Once they got to John's farm, she'd make a break for it.

John pulled into his driveway and then turned right onto the dirt road that lined the field adjacent to his farmhouse. He drove in about fifty yards, just

before the road became thick with mud from the flooding. John stopped the truck.

"Get out, Lizzie," he commanded.

"John, look, I don't know what you think I did, but—"

"Young lady, out of the truck, now!" John ordered, loudly.

Lizzie got out of the truck.

John got out and said, "Now, come over here."

Lizzie walked around in front of the truck to where John was standing. She had a couple ways out. She could run back around the truck, cross the ditch and get out on the main road. Then run across the road, through Musso's yard, onto Stage Road and then back home. Lizzie knew John had trouble with his knees so she could probably outrun him.

"You see the field here?" John asked, indicating the very soggy field in front of them.

"Uh, yeah."

John reached down to the ground, picked up Lizzie's license plate and held it up to her. "And what do you think this is?" he asked.

"Uh, my license plate."

"How do you think it got here?"

"Uh... I don't know?"

"Lizzie Brown! You mean you are going to stand there and tell me that you don't know how this license plate got into my field?! Nor how my irrigation pipe got broken?! Nor how my field got flooded?! You're just going to stand there and deny it?!"

"Oh, God, okay, okay. I'm sorry, okay? It was not my intention to run off the road and destroy your field, it... it... it just sorta happened."

"Just sorta happened, I see. What I want to know is why in God's name didn't you wake me up? I could have shut off the valve and saved the field! Now, as it stands, I have to wait two weeks for it to dry out enough to replant it, and that's pushing the harvest date two weeks into rainy season! Are you mad?! What the hell is wrong with you?!"

"I... didn't want you to know I'd done it."

"Like I wasn't going to find out?! Everyone knows what everyone does in this town! Why in the hell did you think I wouldn't find out?!"

"I was drunk, okay? Brains do not function well on alcohol. Look, I will pay for the damages, I'll pay for the irrigation pipes, for the seed, for the—"

"I don't want your damn money, woman, I want you to get some sense! Last week it was the Clock Tower, the week before it was Bob Mellon's tractor, two months ago it was Daisy Bickford's apple tree. You're a menace! To yourself and to this whole town! Someone's got to stop you, and it looks like that job has fallen to me!"

"Look, I'll pay for—"

"I don't want your money, Lizzie, I want a piece of your hide! I'm gonna drag you to my woodshed over there and tan that little misbehaving hide of yours! And when I get through with you—believe me—you will be thinkin' twice about pullin' these kinds of shenanigans again!" John pronounced.

"John, John, calm down. Wait a minute, tan my hide? You have to be kiddin' me here, look, I'll write you a check and—"

"Your money's no good with me, woman, only one thing will satisfy me! And that's the wails that'll be comin' out of you once I get you over my knee! You'll think twice about crossing anyone in this town again—and especially crossin' me! Now, come on!" John said, reaching for her.

Time to escape! Lizzie jumped back, turned and got about five steps away when she felt John grab the back of her shirt.

"Oh, no, you don't, Lizzie Brown!" John said as he yanked her back towards him. He clamped his steel-like arm around her shoulders. "You're not gettin' away from me again! You're gonna take what's comin' to ya! And, I'm just the man to give it to ya!" he promised her as he began forcing her along with him, taking long strides towards the woodshed.

Lizzie struggled against John as he pulled her along. "You can't do this! It's assault!"

"I defy you to find one sheriff in this entire county who would prosecute me for what I'm about to do to you. Someone should have done this to you, years ago. But, no man has got the balls to stand up to you, you little spitfire! But, I do. You've crossed the one man who isn't afraid to take you across his knee and teach you a lesson! A lesson your parents should have taught you years ago! My God, woman, you're near forty years old! You should know better!"

"John, look, I'm an adult. Adults handle situa—"

"The hell you're an adult, Lizzie Brown! You're a misbehaving brat! A reckless troublemaker! A one-woman wrecking crew! But, that all stops here and now, you hear me?!"

They were almost at the woodshed behind John's farmhouse.

"John, wait—"

"No, Lizzie, I'm not stoppin'! Not today! You're gettin' it, and you're gettin' it good!" John promised her as he reached out and opened the door to his woodshed.

Lizzie began to fight him more fiercely, but John was much stronger than she and twice her size. He easily twisted her arm behind her back and marched her inside the woodshed. Once inside, he pushed her forward until they reached a small bench placed in front of a large pile of stacked wood.

"John, no!"

"Oh, yes, little Lizzie, time for you to learn your lesson!"

John sat down and with one powerful tug, Lizzie spilled across his lap. John pulled up her arm behind her back and then, to her utter horror, he grabbed the back of her pants, and with it her underpants, and yanked them both down to her knees.

"John, no!"

"It wouldn't be a proper hiding if I didn't deliver it on your bare bottom, Lizzie! Now, this is for my field!" John announced, full of vengeance.

Whack! The first strike was shocking. John's strong hand delivered a blow that impacted both of Lizzie's vulnerable buns at once.

"Ow! John, stop!"

"Stop? I haven't even started yet! That was a just a warm-up! This is what you get for messin' with John O'Connell!"

John began to rain down on Lizzie's poor rear with a storm of well-placed swats. Lizzie cried and howled and begged John to stop, but he ignored her protests. Whack! Crack! Smack! Lizzie kicked her legs and tried to wiggle off his lap—anything to get away from that damn punishing hand of his—but John just increased his grip on her and whaled away on her butt. All Lizzie could do was yowl in pain and frustration.

John had arms like solid steel pipes; his hand was the size of a small platter, the impact of his strikes, impressive. Lizzie had never been in such pain before. Not to mention more humiliation. She was being spanked by one of the biggest hunks in town, a man she'd spent quality time fantasizing about. But in none of her fantasies had John spanked her.

While Lizzie was in agony, a part of her was drawn to John's inner strength. No man had ever dared to stand up to her. Even Lizzie's parents had given up on any form of strong discipline with her. Everyone in Lizzie's life let her get away with whatever she wanted. Until now. To have her strong will met with an even stronger will put Lizzie onto a whole new playing field. A playing field upon which she could not get her bearings. Lizzie couldn't figure out which was more shocking, the pain or the fact that some man was actually spanking her as a consequence for one of her stunts.

"John! Please stop! I'm sorry!" Lizzie cried, as tears spilled down her cheeks.

But John was relentless. His strong and very long arm swiftly delivered series after series of very powerful smacks to her bare behind.

Finally, when Lizzie thought she could take no more, John stopped. But he didn't let her up.

Lizzie continued bawling.

"Hush, Lizzie, hush now."

"I-I c-c-can't! It-it-it h-hurts!"

"Of course it does, that's why it's called a spanking. Now look, woman, you are going to stop all this nonsense now, you hear me?"

"Yes, I hear you!"

"You aren't going to drink and drive any longer. If you drink at the bar, you walk home or have someone drive you. You will stop climbing Clock Towers over dumb bets, you will stop ruining people's farm equipment to satisfy your curiosity over whether or not tractors can crush old Volkswagen Beetles!"

"Okay, okay!"

"And, young lady, you will never, ever, drive over someone's irrigation pipes, break them and not inform the farmer that you've done so!" John punctuated his command with three more solid spanks to Lizzie's now very tenderized rear.

"Ow! I won't! I promise! Just stop!"

"Because if I hear you've done anything—and I mean anything—in the near future, I swear, I will come find you and drag you right back here and next time, I won't go so easy on you, you hear me?! Next time, I'll have you cut me a switch, and I'll stripe this fair ass of yours like a candy cane! You hear me, woman?!"

"I hear you! I hear you!" Lizzie cried. Go easy on her? John went easy on her? Lizzie wouldn't be sitting for a week! She couldn't imagine hurting any worse. Why did she cross John O'Connell? Why?

"Good, good girl," John said, calming. He rubbed her rear end a bit, which made it feel better. "There, now. Just calm down. It's all over, and I

think you'll be the better for it." John pulled up her pants, let go of her arm and helped her stand up.

Lizzie stood there, tears running down her face, miserable. John couldn't help but laugh at the sight. "Now come on, girl. I'll take you into the house and clean you up. Give you a beer and send you on your way. You learned a lesson here today, didn't you? You heard me, didn't you?"

"Yes, John," Lizzie said, sniffing.

Lizzie allowed John to take her by the hand and lead her into his house. He took her into his master bathroom and grabbed a washcloth. He began, very tenderly, to clean up her face.

"I got make-up all over," Lizzie said as she saw herself in the mirror.

"You'll clean up fine," John said, looking at her fondly.

All the anger in him was gone. John even looked like he liked her or something. Lizzie figured with the irrigation pipe fiasco, John had written her off his list of potential dates.

"I'm... I'm sorry, John."

"Now, now, that's all over. I've made my point, you won't be crossin' me again, now will you?"

"Uh, no. Never."

"Good. That's the only point I wanted to make. Just to wake you up and stop your recklessness. Now that I've done that, we're even," John said, dabbing at her face.

"I'll pay for the damages."

"Not necessary. You only cost me time and about twenty-five dollars worth of seed."

"I... I just didn't want to wake you up, I mean, I... damn it. I just blew it. You knew I liked you. You knew I wanted to... I wanted to have you over for dinner. And, then—when I wrecked your field—I didn't want you to know how horrible I was. I wanted... well, I blew that. And, I'm sorry. Believe me, I'm more sorry I just ruined my chances for ever dating you."

"Believe me, Lizzie, you haven't ruined anything. Why do you think I spanked you? I wouldn't have done that if I didn't like you. I just wanted you to know—from the onset here—that I'm not going to take any of your guff. I'm not a man you're going to railroad; I'm not a man who will accept your lies and carousing. You go out with me, you stop all that."

"You surely can't want to go out with me, now?" Lizzie asked in disbelief.

"I sure as hell could. And can. And want to. You know how much I like you, Lizzie. I have for years."

"But you were—"

"It wasn't a real marriage, not for the last five years. I honored my commitment, but when Carrina gave up on the relationship and kicked me out of her bed four years ago, well, I'm a man. Of course, I developed attractions to other women. Well, woman. You. I gave my marriage all I had to give and then Carrina finally ended things. By that time, you were involved with Martin—"

Lizzie snorted. "Martin's a jerk."

"Yes, he was. But, you're not with anyone now, right?"

"No."

"And, neither am I. Convenient, ay?" John said with the cutest smile on his handsome face.

"Are you serious? You're not playin' with—"

John brought her to him and kissed her. Lizzie felt a bolt of lightening strike her. From the top of her head to the tips of her toes, electricity jolted her entire body.

John pulled away and Lizzie gasped. "Whoa, did you feel that?" she asked, breathless.

John grinned from ear-to-ear. "I sure did, girl. Wow, Lizzie. I knew it would be special with you. I just didn't know how special."

"John—I—"

John silenced her with another kiss. This time, John ran his hand across her cheek and down her

neck, touching her with mastery as he kissed her. Lizzie practically fainted in his arms.

John pulled her closer as he began to explore her mouth with his experienced tongue. Lizzie was so dizzy, John had to hold her up. Which made him laugh, deep in his throat, as he kissed her.

John gently cupped a breast through the material of Lizzie's t-shirt. Lizzie's breath turned ragged as she arched up against him, encouraging his wonderful touch.

John pulled away. "Lizzie," he growled. "I'm afraid if we don't stop soon, I won't be able to stop myself. I've wanted you for so long, my need of you is so strong, but I want to take things slowly. I want to be a gentleman. I don't want you to think that I just want to bed you. I really care about you. I want to see where this goes. But if we don't—"

"John, I couldn't get the wrong idea about you. And, I don't usually jump into things this fast, but with you, this just feels right. Please, don't stop. I don't want you to. I want you. I want you, now. I want all of you, now. I want to feel you inside me, I want—" was all Lizzie got out.

John kissed her, picked her up and carried her to his bed.

Afterwards, as they lay in each other's arms, John said, "That was the most perfect first time I've ever had with anyone. Tell me you're not leaving. Tell me we can do this forever. Tell me you love me as much as I love you, Lizzie."

"Oh, God, John. I've loved you ever since I first met you. Your strength, your intelligence, your wit. And, now that you've proven to be the best lover I've ever had, I will never, ever, let you go. I love you, John. I love you so much, it hurts."

"My Lizzie," John said as he brought her close to him.

The Permission Slip

"I want your permission to spank you."

"What?"

"In the future, if this happens again. It's been happening too much. You gotta stop. I want to provide some consequences, so you get this. Because you aren't gettin' it. I mean, you tell me you won't go into that neighborhood, then you go."

"I should have been able to do that without attracting the attention of those gang members."

"Ariana, don't. You know what I'm sayin' is the truth here. I need to know you're takin' me seriously. Because you have not been takin' me seriously, this relationship seriously, your lyin' is not givin' us the foundation we were talkin' about setting. You know? That big talk you gave me the other night? About setting a foundation for our future?"

"Yeah, yeah, I remember it."

"So? You want me to play by the rules, but you don't have to?"

"No. Okay, no, that's not fair."

"That's twice you lied to me. Two times too many, Ariana."

"I know. It's just you keep forbidding me to do stuff."

"Forbidding you, Ariana, you almost got killed! Those guys weren't fooling around!"

"Don't you think I know that? Don't you think I wasn't frickin' terrified enough?"

"Don't talk back to me. You are in no position to argue with me. I warned you, you promised me, then you broke the promise and almost got killed in the process."

"I know, Dominic. Okay, okay. I'm sorry, I'm totally traumatized from that. That was punishment enough. I don't need you spanking me on top of it."

"I'm not talkin' about now. I'm talkin' about the next time. If it happens again. I just don't want it happening again. It's your life on the line here,

honey. I just don't think you get that. You are in a whole new world. I warned you when you got involved with me, didn't I? I told you some of it wasn't pretty. Well, you made that choice and now you're my woman and with that comes certain restrictions."

"I know that. Well, I didn't know that. I didn't quite get what I was signing up for. Not that I could have done anything else. I just love you so much, honey."

"And I love you and respect you. But that respect is earned. You have to stop breaking promises, you have to stop lying to me. You have to get this. I mean it, it could be your life."

"I'm getting that."

"I'm not sure you do. That's why I want your permission to spank you."

"What is that gonna do?"

"Make my point clearer. You got a tanned bottom, you might listen to me next time."

"So you're gonna save my life by spanking me? Is that it?"

"Don't get sarcastic with me, honey. Damn, those looks you get on your face. Honey, look, I would never spank you to abuse you—"

"God, I know that. This is your patriarchal domineering side coming out."

"Ariana, don't piss me off."

"Sorry, sorry. I just don't want to get spanked."

"Easy, then don't lie. I don't know why this is so hard for you. You plan on lying that much?"

"No. No, not at all. Never again."

"Well, then, why the problem with giving me permission to spank you?"

"Uh, no problem."

"I don't get your reluctance. If you're tellin' me the truth right now, why would you have a problem with this? I'm starting to think you've been lyin' to me more than I know about. Is that true?"

"Oh, Christ. Wait, okay, fine. You want to spank me, please, blister my ass."

"You lie to me again, I'm gonna take you up on that one, babe," he said, narrowing his eyes at her.

She went up and hugged him. He was a bit hesitant, but soon melted.

"Honey, I'm sorry," she said. "I never meant to betray your trust. I... I get impulsive. I don't really mean to lie. I just get..."

"Impulsive. This is the part of you that needs a good spanking."

"Sounds like you kinda want to spank me right now."

"Now? No. Last night? It took every bit of my personal strength not to rip those pants off you and bend you over my knee. I'm tellin' you, you pissed me off, babe. Throwin' all that crap at me because I was worried about you. Because you almost got killed."

"Sorry, I was... still out of it. I... I'm sorry, honey. You're right. I've been wrong. I won't do it again."

"Good, good. I don't wanna be spankin' my girl. I mean, when we're not makin' love," he said, sending her a lustful look.

"You'd better not stop doing it there. It's just... man, you've spanked me a couple times right on that edge. I can't imagine if you were really spanking me."

"It would not be pleasant, I can assure you. You'd be cryin' babe, cryin' by the time I got through with you."

"Remind me never to lie to you again. You actually kinda scared me right then. You got a look in your eye... No problem. Lying over with. Uh, can we do it now?"

"You..." he said, shaking his head. Then he kissed her and it was all over. They did it right there on his office couch.

Dominic Slade was the most beautiful man she'd ever seen in her life. He was tall, had long dark

hair, intense blue eyes, a prominent nose, angular cheeks, a strong jaw, mustache and soul patch. One of the most powerful and dynamic men she'd ever met. Always dressed in Armani or Gucci. She's met him by accident in front of a restaurant when she'd gotten caught in a hail of bullets directed at him. His men had mistaken her for his girlfriend and protected her and helped her escape. She'd thought she was being kidnapped. When it was finally all cleared up, Dominic decided he liked her and seduced her. That was six months before. Just two weeks before, she'd moved into his palatial estate.

Her only problem with her new boyfriend was that he was a criminal. A crime boss, specifically, from what she'd gathered. She'd never even so much as dated a tax cheater before. But after their wild meeting, she'd fallen for him, hard. But she had no concrete idea of what he did. He had warned her in the beginning of their relationship that he wouldn't be discussing his business dealings with her. Ever. So far, she'd found out by eavesdropping that he was involved in the black market and gambling. But that was it. At first, when she moved in, she thought she could turn off her curiosity. That not knowing about his work wouldn't bother her. But two weeks into living there, it was killing her. There had to be a way to find out without him knowing.

She planned and plotted for an entire day and ended up with two plans, both of them were incredibly risky. One involved hiding in his office, the other underneath his office window where she would be planting bulbs. She also entertained thoughts of bugging his office. But that was crazy talk.

At around five in the afternoon, she was doodling, drawing up plans of his office in her room when her phone rang.

"Hello?"

"Ariana, this is me, could you come into my office, please?"

He sounded weird.

"Sure, are you okay?"

"Uh, yeah. Could you just come in here, please?"

"I'll be right there."

"Good." Click.

She had an uneasy feeling in the pit of her stomach. What had she done wrong recently? No lies that she could think of. Nothing. She hadn't proceeded on any of her plans on spying on him. She'd obeyed all his rules.

When she walked into his office, he was leaning up against his desk, looking rather stern and troubled.

"Could you shut the door, please?" he asked.

"Uh... yeah," she said, and did as she was asked.

Something was wrong with him. What was going on?

She turned away from the door and walked over to him.

"What is it?"

He took hold of her arm with a dark look in his eye. She was in trouble, it was clear. The pit of her stomach dropped.

"Remember your promise to me?" he asked.

"About not lying?"

"That's the one."

She started to pull away, he held her tighter.

"I haven't been lying," she said, now worried.

"No? Ariana. Did you or did you not promise me you wouldn't smoke pot here?"

Oh, crap! He'd found out! She'd been breaking that promise so much, she hadn't counted it as a lie!

"Uh..."

"I thought so."

"Look, I—"

"You promised me you'd never smoke it here."

"I..." she said, looking down. Busted. Damn it!

He shook his head. "Okay, baby, you asked for it, come on," he said, sitting back on the desk and pulling her in the direction of his knee.

She resisted him. "Wait, look, I was stressed out over—"

"Ariana! Did you or did you not promise me?"

"I did, but—"

"Then that's it, isn't it? You lied. Now you know what you're gonna get, don't you?"

"Wait! You don't wanna do this, look, I'm sorry, I'll—"

"No more! No more, Ariana! No more chances! You'll just do it again. You don't get this. I don't tolerate lying. I don't!"

"But, Dominic!"

"No! And this is not just comin' from me. When we were first talkin' about our relationship, you're the one brought up lying first."

"I know. I know, I did."

"So, it's time to take your medicine, girl. Now come on," he said, pulling her across his knee.

"No, Dominic!"

"Yes, my dear Miss Ariana, you earned this. Now stop struggling, you gave me permission to do this—"

"No, Dominic, wait—"

"Oh, no, no more waiting, this is it, this is where the buck stops."

As she tried to wriggle away, he increased his grip on her and pulled her further up on his knee.

"Stop fighting me, Ariana, you're only gonna make me mad," he said, grabbing her flailing arm. He held it behind her back and then took the back of her pants and panties and pulled them both down to her knees.

The stark realization of her fate struck her. She was terrified. Dominic was a very strong man. And, at the current time, a very angry man, this was going to be—Smack! The first sharp slap to her bottom. It stung like all get out! This was no fun!

The second one was harder; she let out a little yelp. The third one was on her sit spots, another yelp. She thought it might be over, but then he began firing into her behind with awesome strikes. He wasn't holding back. The man was clearly trying to make a point.

"No more lies, Ariana! This is it!" Whack! Crack! Smack!

"Ow, ow, ow! I got it, Dominic!"

"Not yet, you don't!" he said as he peppered her behind with a ceaseless and torturous rhythm.

This was nothing like their play spankings. Nothing like them. She thought maybe he'd pushed it a few times during sex. Not. This was incredible pain. He was tenderizing her. Blistering her poor behind. Doing some serious damage to her ass.

His spanking grew even more intense. She began bawling at the top of her lungs, shrieking with each strike. And still, he continued his punishment. Finally, she begged him, screaming, to stop. After a few more, he stopped.

Ariana could not stop sobbing. It hurt so badly! Why had she lied to him?! It was all so intolerable!

He released her from the hold, turned her over and swept her up into his arms.

"Shhh, shh, baby, it's all right. It's over, baby. It's all over. Stop crying, honey, it's all over," he said, rocking her gently.

She tried to stop crying, but was in such shock, it was hard to stop.

"Good girl, you took your punishment and you learned a lesson here today, didn't you?"

She nodded emphatically. "Y-yes," she managed to say.

"Good girl. You'll never lie to me again, will you?"

"N-no. No way."

"Good, good girl. Now, honey? I want you to do me a favor."

"W-what?"

"Go into your room, take off your clothes and get into bed, on your tummy, I'm gonna take care of my baby. You were bad, you got punished, now I'm gonna take care of you, okay?"

"O-okay."

"Good," he said, standing her up. He pulled up her pants, which smarted like hell as the waistband rubbed across her throbbing rear end. "Now go on, honey, I'll be right there."

"O-okay," she said, sniffing.

She walked to her room, each step brought more pain. Wow, that hurt! She got undressed and was just about to get into bed when she noticed her spy plans sitting on top of her desk. Yikes! She quickly ditched them in her desk drawer, then ran and got into bed.

As soon as she settled herself, she heard him come into the room. Whew! That was close!

"There's my girl," she heard him say. She felt his weight on the bed. "Ooo, I got you good, didn't I?" he said, reaching out and gently rubbing her butt. Her rear was very tender, but his touch felt good.

"Yeah."

"Well, I got somethin' here that might help with that," he said. She jumped when she felt something cold being applied to her buns. "Take it easy, take it easy, it's just Solarcaine," he said, rubbing in the lotion.

"Oh, that does feel better."

"There we are. There's my girl," he said, carefully working the lotion into her blistered skin. "Now there's an easy way to avoid this in the future, isn't there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ariana, I just want what's best for us, honey. I love you to death, but I won't put up with your crap, girl."

"I got that message."

"You'd better. I don't wanna be spankin' my girl, not when it's not for fun. As much as you deserved

it today, I don't wanna be puttin' the hurt on you. I want you to follow through on your promises. I don't want you lyin' to me."

"I won't."

"Good. Now there's nothing else you want to tell me now, is there? I won't spank you if you tell me now. I want all of it. Anything you haven't told me. All of it, out on the table. I don't ever want to have to spank you because you were bad again."

"No. There's nothing I can think of." She was burning those stupid spy plans as soon as he went to work the next day. And there was no way she was telling about those. He may say he wouldn't get mad, but she knew him. And there was no way she was risking another spanking. He'd killed her ass.

"You sure, baby? I don't ever want to do this again."

"Me, neither. Believe me, I don't ever want to risk another one of these again. I had no idea. I'm not gonna be sittin' for a week."

"I know. I meant to hit you that hard. I want this to be a reminder for the rest of the week. What it means to let me down. To go against me."

"Got it. And I'll keep gettin' it. Man, this hurts."

"You brought it on yourself, Ariana."

"That concept is fully understood."

"Good. Good," he said, rubbing her ass some more. He slipped a hand in between her cheeks, a finger found her sweet spot.

Within a second, she was on fire. This man, what he could do to her. Just a finger had gotten her into a hormonal frenzy. She was on her back in thirty seconds. Where he proceeded to teach her another lesson. This one was in the limits of how many orgasms she could withstand during the period of one sex session. The man was incredible.

A week later, they'd made love as usual in her bedroom, and she went into the kitchen to get them a snack. They usually made love in her room—he

called it The Sex Den—and then they slept in his room. She was carrying their food back into her room when she noticed that Dominic wasn't in bed. She put the snacks down and then saw him seated at her desk. He was looking at some papers. When he looked up at her, his expression said it all.

Holy moly! The spy plans! She'd forgotten all about them. She'd been so focused on avoiding sitting on hard chairs, she'd completely avoided her desk that week.

Her expression had been a dead giveaway. His eyes narrowed, his face darkened.

"Ariana?"

"Uh... look, I—"

"Goddamn you!" he said, throwing down the papers onto the desk. "Spying on me?!"

"I didn't! I didn't do it! I mean, I was going to, obviously, but you got through to me, really you did! I'm sorry, I was gonna burn those, but I didn't get to it! You gotta believe me, I wrote those two weeks ago!"

"What did I say the other night?" he said, getting up from the desk, looking furious. "Did I or did I not ask you if you had any other things you had neglected to tell me about?"

"Uh, yeah, but—"

"Get over here, now!" he ordered.

Panicked, she couldn't believe what she did next. She ran for the door.

"Ariana!" he bellowed at the top of his lungs as she darted through her doorway. "Goddamn you! Come back here!"

She kept running. She raced through the large entry hall, looking for a hiding place. She quickly chose a closet. She jumped inside and shut the door behind her. She tried to stop breathing. Had he seen her? Would he find her?

"Ariana Elizabeth Sutter! You come back here, and you come back here now! If you don't come out and come out now, what I did to you last week won't even compare to what I'll do to you now! Now

you get out here and take your medicine! You blew it, Sutter! You blew it! I gave you a chance! I even gave you a chance, and you didn't take it! Oh, girl, are you gonna get it now! Now you get your ass out here and you submit to your punishment or I swear, I'll take my belt to you! Ariana! I mean it!" he roared as he walked through the entry hall.

"Ariana, goddamn it!" he yelled from right outside the closet door.

She stood there in the closet, frozen in fear. She didn't move, she didn't breathe.

"Ariana?! You come out now! I'm countin' to three, you don't come out now, I'm taking my belt to you! One!"

A few seconds later she heard him moving outside of the closet. Her heart was pounding out of her chest.

"Two!"

The door knob moved. She nearly screamed. She had to put her hand over her mouth. The handle movement stopped.

"Three! Okay, have it your way!" he said, now further away from the closet. "But you're gettin' it now, girl! I'm gonna get you, but good!"

She waited about fifteen minutes, but she didn't hear anything. Tentatively, she tried the doorknob. Still no sounds from outside. She twisted the knob and pushed, but the door wouldn't open. She pushed again. Nothing. It was stuck. She pushed harder. It didn't even budge. Holy crap! She was stuck in the hall closet! This couldn't be happening to her.

"You want out of there?" His voice on the other side of the door. She nearly jumped out of her skin.

"I know you're in there, Ariana, I saw the door knob turn. Now do you want out of there?"

"I don't want to get spanked, I just healed up!"

"Well, that's too bad, because that's what you're gonna get. How bad is up to you now. You come out of there and submit to your punishment, willingly,

I'll just spank you with my open hand. You fight me, I'll take my belt to you."

"Dominic! I'm sorry! I was gonna get rid of those plans!"

"That is all a moot point, now, honey, because you made sure this was gonna happen. You got in the car and drove yourself here. So, don't blame me, I'm just holding you to your promises. Which seems to be very difficult for you."

"I'm sorry!"

"Not good enough. Belt or hand? You choose, now."

"Hand! Hand!"

"You gonna submit to me?"

"Yes," she said, defeated.

"You run on me, girl, I swear, I'll stripe that ass of yours with my belt until it's covered in welts, you hear me?"

"I hear you! I hear you!"

She heard the chair move, and then the door opened. Dominic stood there, looking like an executioner.

"Now you, follow me," he said curtly. She did as she was told. He led her to her room. He stopped at the door and gestured her inside. She went in front of him, feeling like she was on death row. She did not want to face this! How stupid was she?

"Drop the robe, bend over the desk."

"But, Dominic, I—"

"Now, Ariana, or do you want the belt?!"

"No, no!" she said, dropping her robe. She walked over, her heart pounding and bent over her desk. It was cold!

"Dominic, it's cold," she complained.

"Good, I don't want you comfortable. Brat! Runnin' from me. You're lucky I'm calm right now."

"I'm sorry."

"Not as sorry as you're about to be. Now bend over more," he said pushing down on her back. It forced her upturned ass further into the air. She'd

never been more scared in her life. She knew how bad this was going to be.

"This better be it, girl, this better be the last time I spank you. Because next time, honey, no more Mr. Nice Guy, next time, you're gettin' the belt. And I mean it. Runnin' on me? Plottin' against me? What's wrong with you?"

"I'm sorry, I just wanted to know—"

Whack! The first blow. And it was so painful, the tears started immediately.

"What did you want to know?" he asked.

"About your business."

Whack! Whack! Whack! He laid into her ass with thunderous smacks. It was awful!

"What did I say about that? Huh?" he asked, spanking her extra hard a few times. Excruciating.

"Oww!" she cried, sobbing. "Not to ask questions!" she yelled.

"Exactly!" he said. He delivered a series of incredibly blistering strikes to her sit spots. She yowled and started to put her hands up to block his blows.

"Ariana Sutter! You put those hands flat on that desk, or I swear, I will get my belt!"

"Dominic!" she wailed. "You're hurting me!"

"You shoulda thought about that before you lied to me! Again!"

He spanked one cheek until she yelled, then he worked the other one until she was begging him to stop.

This time, her begging went unheard. This time, Dominic was being thorough. This time, she could tell, no matter what she said or how pathetic she sounded, he had his own agenda. He was spanking her so hard!

Finally, when she began howling at the top of her lungs, he stopped. She kept crying. It hurt so badly!

He put a hand on her back. "It's all over, baby. Calm down, just calm down," he said. She moved to stand up and he stopped her.

"No, not just yet. You stay that way. I want you to get this. I want you to understand something. When I say something, you do it. You make a promise to me, you keep it."

"I got it," she sobbed. "I got it."

"Not yet, you don't. Now you just stay there, like that. I like you like this. Bent over, that blistered red ass of yours in the air, that contrite look on your face. Yeah. This is good, baby. You're gettin' just who I am. You're understanding just what I will and will not put up with."

"Yes, Dominic."

He sat behind her, watching her for the longest time. Her bottom was so sore! All she wanted to do was rub it.

He startled her by speaking. "Spread your legs for me, baby."

She did as she was told. This was promising.

He waited a while longer. She heard him get up. He touched her inner thighs. She gasped. He began to stroke underneath her. Soon his fingers were inside her, teasing her. This was much better!

Then he entered her. He did her like that, up against her desk, until he gave her over a half a dozen orgasms. She was worn out and exhausted when he finally came, but sooo much happier.

Afterwards, he stood her up, turned her around and kissed her for a long time while he gently cupped her breasts.

When he pulled away he asked, "You got the lesson, baby?"

"Yes, Dominic."

"That's my girl."

The Bad Decision

"I know you're in there, Gabrielle! You'd better come out now and you'd better bring my money!" came Jake's bellow from the front yard of the cabin.

Holy moly! He found her! That was quick!

Gabrielle ran through the log cabin and darted out through the back door. If she could get to the safety of the woods behind the cabin, she might be able to hide well enough to escape Jake.

"Goddamn you, girl! You'd better stop and get the hell back here! Don't make me come chase you!" he roared from somewhere behind her.

Jake must have heard the back door slam! Damn him!

Gabrielle ran for her life. She had no idea what he'd do to her if he caught her. But how did he find out about the money? Who had ratted her out?

"Girl! You stop now or I swear, you won't be sitting down for weeks!"

Well, that was clear. The man had been rumored to be a spanker. Apparently, the story was true.

Gabrielle picked up the pace. Finally, she made it to the woods. Soon, she was leaping over ferns and dashing around trees in her efforts to flee the man.

Jake MacNeil was a man she'd been flirting with for the past six months, ever since he moved to their small town. One of the most gorgeous men she'd ever seen. Tall, built like a football player, warm brown eyes, curly brown hair, mustache, dimples, lovely smile. Finally, he'd asked her out on a date, just the week before.

She'd been thrilled by Jake's invitation until the day afterwards. When she'd found out that Jake had bought a piece of land that she'd been working on purchasing for a year. Gabrielle had been buttering up the owner, fixing the old man dinner, mowing his damn lawn—for an entire year—trying to get him to sell it to her.

Gabrielle had been so enraged when she learned what Jake had done, she immediately concocted a plan of revenge. She knew his house well because she'd lived in it many years before with an old boyfriend. There was a secret closet in the house, built into the master bedroom wall. She had no idea what she'd find stashed there, but she figured she'd find something she could use against him.

What Gabrielle found was two thousand dollars in cash. On a whim and against her better judgment, she'd stolen it. In her mind, it was a small token compared to the good hundred thousand dollars she surely would have made on the property deal.

But now Gabrielle wasn't so sure it had been a good idea. How had he found out? Jake knew she was mad at him for the land deal, he'd even called her to try to explain his actions. But she'd hung up on him.

Of course, none of this mattered at this point. What mattered was escaping him.

"Gabrielle! Stop!" Jake ordered, his voice mere feet behind her.

"Go to hell!" she yelled back, darting around a large redwood tree.

"I'm giving you one more chance, girl, stop now and I'll go easy on you! But if you don't stop, girl, there's going to be hell to pay! I'm gonna beat that little behind of yours until it's redder than a berry!"

Gabrielle ran faster. She burst through the trees and into a large open meadow of flowers. She tore across the glen, happy she was a daily runner. She wasn't even tired yet.

Then her fatal mistake. Gabrielle didn't hear him, so she took a quick look behind her. Unfortunately, he was right on her tail. When she turned back around, she saw the fallen log below her, but had no time to react. She tripped over the moss-covered log and landed flat on her face.

Jake was on her in a heartbeat. He grabbed the back of her sweatshirt and yanked her up and off

the ground. He sat down on the log, pulling her with him. Before she knew it, Gabrielle was across his lap.

The man was incredibly strong and twice her size. He easily wrestled her in place over his knee. He pinned her legs and held her arm firmly behind her back.

Jake grabbed the back of her track pants and pulled both the pants and her panties to her knees. Gabrielle was horrified. The cold forest air rushed over her bare behind and thighs. How did she let this happen?

"Caught, girl, you're caught. And, you know what I'm going to do to you now?" Jake taunted.

"Wait! I'm sorry! I lost my head! I'll return the money!" What was she doing? She'd just confessed! "Son-of-a-bitch! I just confessed! Goddamnit!" Gabrielle exclaimed, furious with herself.

Jake belly laughed. "Oh, girl, you are smooth. I didn't even have to beat the confession out of you. Now I can just concentrate on your punishment," he gleefully informed her.

"Wait! Jake! Really, I'm sorry!"

"Not yet you aren't, but you will be, baby, you will be. Now how many should I give you, I wonder? Let's see, breaking into my house—that's worth ten easy—"

"Jake!"

"Hush now or I will just add more," he warned.

"Jake!"

"That's five more. So we got ten for breaking and entering, five for talkin' when I told you not to. Then you took my money, that's worth fifteen or even twenty. Then you ran on me when I told you not to, that's worth fifteen easy. I think I'll make it a nice round fifty."

"Jake, no!"

"That's right. I forgot the formality here. You must agree to what I'm about to do to you, so it's not considered assault in the eyes of the law."

"I don't agree! I don't agree! Assault! Assault!"

"No problem. Now, I'm just gonna tie you up in the house there while I call the police. I'm sure they'd be interested to know that the chairwoman of the community council broke into a house and stole money from a respectable new member of their fine town."

There was a pause as his words sunk in. "Good God. I'm screwed," Gabrielle discovered in shock and dismay.

"Maybe later, but for right now, honey? I'm gonna beat your ass. Which is a mighty fine specimen, if I do say so myself. And, I gotta tell you, I'm really looking forward to making love to this fine body of yours, but that's later. Right now, baby, it's down to business. It's payback time."

"How dare you even consider that I'd sleep with you!" she railed.

"Oh, honey, you want me. And you want me bad."

"You conceited jerk! How dare you assume that!"

"Do you really think it's a good idea to be callin' me names at a time like this?"

"Uh, probably not."

Jake laughed. "Oh, girl, I surely do like you. Which makes it doubly important that I make this point with you. Now listen to what I'm telling you. I am a man you do not cross."

He smacked her a good one. His large, dinner-plate-sized hand impacted the whole of her rear at once. Both the sharpness and the force of his strike shocked her. This hurt!

He continued. "I am not some kinda doormat." Whack!

"Ow!"

"Some kinda city-fied man that takes crap from headstrong women." Whack! "Wildcats like you." Whack! "I am a man who holds people accountable for their actions." Whack! Whack! Whack! "And honey, you just messed up in a big, bad way."

Jake administered several more hard spanks to her vulnerable and now flaming rear.

"Oww! Jake! I'm sorry! Please, stop! I'll give you double the money! I'll clean your truck! Anything, just please, stop!"

"Listen to her plead and beg. Do you really think you're in any position to bargain with me, girl?" he demanded, swatting her a few times. "Huh?" Whack! "Do you?" Whack!

"Noooo! Jake! Stop!"

"I don't think I will," he said. He delivered a series of hard spanks, concentrated solely on her sit spots. Gabrielle howled and desperately tried to get away from him.

"Stop fighting me, girl! I can go on like this forever! Don't make this worse on yourself!" he roared, punctuating each sentence with a hard spank to her poor rear.

Her behind was killing her! She'd never been spanked before, this was awful!

Finally, all Gabrielle could do was howl and cry. Jake covered every square inch of her behind with thunderous spanks.

Finally, her punishment seemed to be over.

"You sorry yet, girl?" he asked.

"Y-yes! I'm sorry, Jake! Very sorry," she exclaimed, her cheeks wet with tears. It felt like she'd been branded!

"Now, why on Earth did you think that stealing money from me was a good idea?" Jake asked.

"I didn't. It was a heat of passion thing. I... questioned it, but I couldn't seem to stop myself."

"Why didn't you come to me, then?"

"Because I didn't want you to know that I'd taken it."

"You left your penknife behind."

"That's where I left it! Damn!"

"Not a very good thief, are you?"

"Are you going to let me up?"

"Not yet. I'm not through with you, yet."

"Jake, I'm sorry, I—"

"Hush now. I'm the one who's asking the questions and you're the one who's answering them."

"I can answer them better if I'm facing you."

Whack!

"Ow! Jake!"

"Don't be questioning my authority now, baby, or I will gladly wail on this pretty little ass of yours all day long."

"I'm sorry!"

Whack! "You'd better be."

Oh, her rear stung! This man was a torturer! No man had ever stood up to her like this. Come to think of it, no man had ever stood up to her.

"Now how did you get into my place?" he asked.

"Through a window on the top story."

Whack!

"Ow, I'm telling you the truth!"

"I know you are, Gabrielle, I'm spanking you because it was dangerous, you idiot!" Whack! "You could have got yourself killed!" Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Jake! I'm sorry!"

"Damn, woman. Not only do you have terrible judgment, you're a flagrant risk taker. Now what would your employees have done if you'd died, huh? Without you, there would be no business."

"Look, you made me crazy. I've never done anything like this before in all of my thirty-four years—"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Jake! Ow! Wait!"

"That's for lyin' to me about your age. I found out, honey. That you're thirty-eight. The plaque outside the high school? From your class?"

Whack!

"Ow!"

"Do you really think I care? I'm forty-two, why the hell would I care whether you were thirty or fifty? Huh?"

"I don't know, you're cute. All the women in town want you. I... damn it."

"Well, from here on out, no lying to me, you got that, girl?"

"Yes, sir. I got that one loud and clear."

Jake laughed at her response. "Damn, you're cute. Okay, now once you got in the house, how did you break into my safe?"

"You left the combination in the drawer in your bedside table."

"Damn. Okay, score a point for you."

"That was pretty easy, Jake, I gotta tell you."

"I thought thieves only checked the underwear drawer."

"Apparently not."

"Damn. Okay, so where's my money?" he asked.

"At my house."

"Where at your house?"

"In my underwear drawer."

They both burst out laughing.

Finally, gratefully, Jake let Gabrielle up. He helped her pull up her pants and then he took her by the arm and led her back towards the house. Her rear was on fire; every step hurt.

Jake led her into the cabin and said, "Go lie down on the sofa there, on your belly. And wait for me."

She gave him a questioning look, but he just jerked his head in the direction of the living room.

Gabrielle did as she was told. She walked over to the giant overstuffed leather couch and lay down on it. She didn't want to sit, anyway. She wasn't even sure if she could.

She heard him rustling around in the kitchen; the refrigerator door opening, jars clinking.

"Damn, girl. You were gonna hole up here for a couple days, weren't you?"

Jake must have noticed all the food she'd brought.

"Yes. How did you find me?"

"Bob saw you come up here."

"Damn him!"

"I would have found you, this is your aunt's place," Jake said. "And only your brother uses it during the summer."

"Damn it."

"And, I know you own a part of it, too."

"Jeez, I hate small towns."

Jake walked out of the kitchen and he had a pack of frozen peas in one hand and a bottle of lotion in the other.

He walked over and gently placed the frozen peas onto her very sore behind.

"This will help," he said. "In a bit, I'll let you take some ibuprofen."

"Thoughtful, weren't you?"

"I whaled on you pretty good. These things won't stop your discomfort, but they will help."

They were quiet for a moment.

"I suppose I almost deserved this," Gabrielle muttered as the peas began to cool her hot cheeks.

"Almost?"

"Yes! Okay! Fully deserved it!"

Jake laughed. "That's better."

"Damn. I had no idea what I was getting into here."

"You're just used to running roughshod over your men. I've heard the stories. No man in the town can stand up to you. I've heard it all. You just never met anyone like me before."

"No, I have not."

"So, what do you think?"

"I think you frighten me."

"Nah, I didn't really hurt you."

"You should be in this body feeling this ass when you say that."

"You'll be fine. It's better than the alternative."

"You could have let me go."

"Now what kind of a man would that make me? A wuss. Well, my dear, I'm no wuss. You've just never encountered a real man before. Never been

held accountable for your actions before. And it was high time someone took the wood to you."

Gabrielle was quiet.

"You didn't respect them, did you? Any of the other men in your life."

"I don't know."

"Sure you didn't. Because you pushed them and every time, they bent over to accommodate you. Even if they didn't want to, they were too afraid to stand up to you. So they let you do what you wanted and then they resented you for it. Because they were wusses. Well, honey, I will never resent you for anything. Because if you piss me off, you're gonna hear about it. And if you push me like you did this time, well, baby, you're gonna find yourself over my knee quicker than you can say 'I'm sorry'."

"If you're trying to date me, talking about beating me isn't exactly the most enticing thing you could be baiting me with."

"I would never beat a woman. Spank them, yes. Especially one as ill behaved as you. But, I'm hoping this never happens again. I'm hoping you never push me this far again."

"I won't."

"Then I won't ever have to spank you again. Well, not in anger. In fun, maybe."

"Don't even talk about that right now, my ass is killing me."

"About that. Now I'm going to suggest something. It will make you feel better."

"What?"

"Take those pants off and let me rub some lotion into your behind."

"Are you nuts?"

"It's for you, honey. Sure, I'll enjoy it, but it's more for you."

"Oh. I don't know."

"No skin off my nose, I just thought it might help."

"You were the one who made me this sore, now you want to help me?"

"Sure I do. I like you. A lot. I want to start dating you. And I already care about you. That's why I spanked you. You needed that. And now I can tell you're sorry for what you did and so now I want to take care of you. It's pretty simple."

Gabrielle didn't know what to say. She really liked him, too. That's why she'd been so mad about that land deal. The land deal! She felt her anger rising. She'd completely forgotten about that! Damn, him!

"Forget it," she bit out tersely. "I'll give you your money, you can go now."

"Whoa, where'd that come from? Suddenly, you turned on a dime and now you're mad at me for something?"

"Yeah, I remembered why I stole the money from you in the first place. You started this whole thing," Gabrielle said, sending him a glare.

"Me?"

"You stole that land right out from underneath me."

"Yeah, and it wasn't easy, either."

"What?"

"Honey, you were gonna get reamed. I've already re-sold it. To the state. I bought and sold it for half of what you were going to pay for it. That old man was playing you for a fool. You didn't know they were planning on putting the new highway through there, did you?"

"That's a stupid rumor."

"I've talked to the guy who's gonna put it in. It's no rumor."

"But old man Jenkins said... oh, good God. That rotten old coot. He lied to me! You know he had me mowing his lawn?"

Jake burst out laughing. Gabrielle felt so stupid. That old creep. All the pieces suddenly fell into place. Now she knew why the old man had been so cagey. Why he kept getting the parcel numbers confused. That jerk!

"How did you get him to sell it to you so cheap?" Gabrielle asked.

"I told him that I had evidence that he was trying to cheat you. And that I had a friend in law enforcement who had it in for him. Which was true."

"Cheat me? Why didn't you tell me?"

"I didn't want to tell you until I'd done the deal," Jake explained. "I figured your pride would get in the way and you'd go over there half-cocked and beat on the old man. And by the time I tried to tell you, you weren't speaking to me."

"Oh, man," Gabrielle said, her face turning red. She put her head down on the couch and couldn't look at him anymore. She felt like a total skunk. She'd fully deserved that hiding. Fully deserved it. How humiliating.

"You should have picked up the phone when I called you," Jake said.

"Yeah..." she said, feeling miserable. "I'm... I'm... ashamed of myself. Thanks for not turning me in to the cops. Thanks for... well, I'm not going to thank you for that spanking. I'm not going to be sitting comfortably for a very long time, but certainly, it was deserved."

"I would never take you over my knee without it being fully deserved."

"I see that now. I'm sorry, Jake. Really, I'm very sorry."

"You're forgiven, Gabrielle. I know you're still having problems with trust because of that damned ex-husband of yours."

"Yeah. No one has tried to be nice to me in a long time. Then when someone does, I frickin' break into their house and steal money from them." She started laughing at her own folly. "It's just so bad. How could I have done this?"

"Because you like me. And, you were afraid that I'd hurt you and your fears got the better of you."

"How do you know so much?"

"Because I've done the same thing, reacted the same way. A very special lady taught me otherwise."

And I will always be indebted to her. She taught me to see beyond people's actions, to determine their intent, their motivations. Once you figure out people's intent, you begin to realize that most of the bad things people do are motivated by pain, misunderstandings and hurt feelings. If they'd been able to communicate effectively with the person they wronged, they probably wouldn't have hurt them in the first place."

"I feel like an adolescent. You took those lessons to heart. I admire you."

"Just tryin' to avoid a bunch of pain. You deal with things head on, it saves you a lot of heartache in the long run. But I learned the hard way, too."

"Thanks, Jake."

"You're welcome, Gabrielle. Now how 'bout you let me rub that sore behind of yours? It'll feel better," he promised.

The only reason Gabrielle didn't want Jake to touch her was because she was so turned onto him. To find out how much he cared about her? His take charge attitude? The way he stood up to her? Not to mention he was the most handsome man in the universe. But she was not ready for him to know her true feelings. Not yet. It was all so new. She had given up on him. And now here he was, telling her that he still wanted to date her? Mind-boggling.

"Gabrielle?"

Before she could stop herself, she pulled her pants down to her knees.

Jake pulled up a chair. He poured some lotion into his hands and rubbed them together. He gently made contact with her very sore behind. He carefully and tenderly began to rub the lotion into her rear. He was right, it felt much better.

She felt him apply the frozen peas to her behind. "Wow, that's cold."

"It'll help with the swelling," he said.

After a few moments, he removed the frozen bag and rubbed her rear end again, nicely, sweetly. She had no idea he had such a tender side to him.

He was built so large, she'd thought he'd be a rough touch. But he was lovely. And she was getting so turned on.

"Uh, you'd better stop," she said.

"Why?"

Gabrielle couldn't think of a good excuse.

"Why?" he repeated.

"Because... I can't tell you."

Jake laughed softly, pulled her up off the sofa and took her into his lap.

He kissed her. And what a kiss! His mouth possessed hers. The scent of him, his strong arms around her, Gabrielle was in heaven.

Jake let his hands explore her. He ran his hand up her thigh, over her rear and gave her bun a nice squeeze.

He touched in between her legs and began to explore her, very tenderly. His finger found her wetness and he easily slipped it inside.

Gabrielle gasped and arched against his hand. Impatient with the pants around her knees, she reached down and pushed them off and her shoes as well.

Jake looked at her with longing; taking in her naked legs, feasting upon her with his eyes. She tore off her t-shirt.

Jake became transfixed upon her chest. With a hungry look in his eye, he finally allowed himself to fall into them—burying his face between her breasts. He took one mound in his mouth, then the other while his hand continued to explore the soft folds between her legs. With one talented finger, he honed in on her very special place.

Gabriella quickly launched into a mind-blowing orgasm, moaning and wailing as she bucked up against him.

Jake could no longer stand it, he picked her up and set her down onto the couch. He stripped. What a body! Ripped chest, huge arms, narrow waist, his member thick and hard. Beautiful form, incredible tool. He reached inside a pocket of his jeans and

pulled out a condom. In a heartbeat, he was wearing it.

Jake climbed on top of her, she eagerly parted her legs for him. With a dark look in his eye, he entered her.

Gabrielle felt like she'd been shot to the moon! She cried and moaned, whimpered and then screamed at the top of her lungs as she exploded into a thunderous orgasm. But her ride didn't stop there. One after another, in rapid succession, Gabrielle came. More times than she ever remembered. Catapulted by Jake's magnificent technique into orgasm after orgasm.

Finally, with a mighty cry, Jake came, driving so deeply all she could do was roar with pleasure.

They both finished, grinding against each other, trying to get the last bit of pleasure out of the stupendous act.

Then they both started laughing.

"Wow, that was—damn, boyfriend, you rock," Gabrielle exclaimed.

"Oh, honey, that was great," Jake said, squeezing her. "You're great. But I didn't know how great. Oh, yeah, I can see doing this for the rest of my life."

"The rest of your life?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you?" he said, pulling away to look at her.

"What?"

Looking deep into her eyes, Jake said, "I'm in love with you, Gabrielle."

"You're kidding," she said, shocked, on the verge of tears.

"No, baby. I really love you. I have ever since we had that drink a month ago in Barlette's Bar. I knew you were the one for me. I just had to convince you of that. Are you convinced?"

"Oh, God, Jake. Yes. Yes, I love you, too," Gabrielle said, tears springing to her eyes.

"That's my girl," Jake said, grinning, and then he kissed her.

The Rescuer

It got darker much quicker than Tracy thought it would. She thought she'd have time to make it to the waterfall and back out again before nightfall. Apparently not.

After stumbling and falling flat twice in the span of five minutes, Tracy had to face facts. She couldn't see and she was rapidly approaching the hairiest part of the trail. One false move and she could fall forty plus feet to the creek below.

Tracy couldn't figure out if she was more furious at herself or that new neighbor of hers. He'd warned her not to try it. But something about his smug manner and his self-confidence had irked her. Sure, maybe she just moved to the forest, but she wasn't stupid. But then again, he'd been right. She'd ended up exactly where he told her she would. But he'd been so damn arrogant! He actually tried to physically stop her from going. Stood right in her way. She'd finally had to fib to make him let her go.

Sean Bradly was a divorced guy with two kids he saw every other weekend. At least, this is what Tracy had heard from the local grocer. She'd only met Sean formally once, two days after she'd moved in. He'd come over and brought her a basket of apples from his tree. And to think, she'd swooned over him. He was tall, had blue eyes, a strong jaw and a dashing smile. Fit, cute and charming.

However, Tracy hadn't seen him since. Probably because she'd been gone most of the time. She was in the process of making a change in her life; selling her law practice and home in the suburbs and moving to the country so she could concentrate on her painting.

Today was the first full day she'd had at her new house in weeks. Tracy spent most of the day unpacking. Around four in the afternoon, when she looked up at the clock, she figured she had just enough time to take a quick hike to the falls.

It was then she ran into Sean. The exchange started out very pleasant and very promising. Until Sean realized that she wasn't going to listen to him about cutting her hike short. Then he got downright bossy. Tracy had dealt with many pushy men in her life, she knew how to handle them. She told them what they wanted to hear and did what she wanted. Sean seemed to fall for her lies and finally got out of her way. But she couldn't help but be annoyed by his chauvinist routine. As if she needed a big, strong man to protect her? Ha! Who the heck did he think he was? Maybe she didn't want him, after all. Challenging her like that.

However, now, unfortunately, it seemed as if Sean had been correct. Tracy kept hearing his words echoing through her mind. *Don't try it, you won't make it. I don't want to have to come out there and find you, you hear me?*

As Tracy sat there, shivering on the hard and unforgiving forest floor, she found herself torn. Part of her wanted Sean to save her, part of her would rather face hypothermia than face him again. Too bad she had to walk right by his house to get home. Of course, she could try to sneak back home at daylight.

Tracy wished she'd brought a coat. Sean had commented on that, too. Didn't think she'd be warm enough. Which had infuriated her, but now she wished she'd have listened to him. A flimsy t-shirt was no protection against forty-degree temperatures, which was what the forest had been dropping to at night lately.

Tracy thought of the moon. Perhaps it would rise and then she could find her way back. That might work.

Tracy danced in place for awhile to warm up.

Then she heard it, a cracking twig behind her. Then an animal's snarl! Terrified, Tracy darted away from the sound into the darkness. She got no more than fifteen steps away, when she tripped over something and fell. She expected to hit the ground.

She didn't. Horrified, Tracy realized that she was falling through air!

Wham! Tracy hit solid ground, hard, all the wind was knocked out of her. After working to get her breath back, she felt around the ground to get an idea of where she'd fallen. She was on a small ledge, maybe six feet wide by twelve feet long. She could hear the creek, down below her. She had no idea how high up she was. Nor how far she'd fallen.

And Tracy was in pain. When she tried to stand up, she realized that her ankle was sprained or broken. A quick check revealed several places on her body that were bleeding. This was it. She was going to die out there. She had no idea where she was. She was now far away from the trail, so even if someone came looking for her, they wouldn't find her.

Tracy curled up in a little ball and tried to stay warm and think positive thoughts. But all she could picture was her funeral. Sean would be there telling everyone that he tried to warn her, but she wouldn't listen. She thought of all that hard work she'd done to get financially secure so she could devote herself to her art. All of it, for nothing. Now, at forty-one, Tracy was going to die all alone out in the forest.

Tracy had no idea how long she lay there, thinking about dying, before she thought she heard her name being called. At first, she thought it was God, calling her over to the other side. Then she thought it was a hallucination. Then she heard it clearly.

"Tracy!"

"Here!" she screamed at the top of her lungs. "Here! I'm down here!"

"Tracy? Keep shouting so I can find you!" came a voice from far up above her.

"I'm here! Here!" she said, waving her arms.

A flashlight beam found her. "Here!" she cried.

"Oh, God, you're hurt. Can you stand?" It was Sean. Tracy was thrilled to see him.

"Not well, I sprained my ankle or busted it."

"Don't worry, I'm going to get you out of there," Sean called down to her. "You hang on and I'll be right back. Don't move!"

"Okay!"

Fifteen minutes or so later, Tracy saw the beam of light again.

"Tracy, I'm coming down to get you, just hang on."

"Okay!"

Minutes passed and then a rope was thrown down. A couple minutes later, Sean lowered himself down onto the ledge.

When he knelt down beside her, she threw her arms around him. "Thank you, Sean, thank you so much."

He was sweet, but professional. "You'll have plenty of time to thank me later. For now, I need to know how you are. I was a firefighter and paramedic for twenty years, I'm going to check you out, okay?"

"Okay," she said.

Sean felt all over her for broken bones. She yelled when he examined her ankle.

"I think it's just a bad sprain," Sean said. "Other than some good cuts and bruises, I think you'll be fine. Now, come here, I'm going to put you over my shoulder and get us both out of here."

"You sure?"

"Very sure. Now come on, you're going to be fine."

After a very scary ten minutes where Sean had to use every bit of his strength and stamina to get them up the side of the hill, they finally reached the top.

Sean carried her a good quarter mile to where the trail widened and his ATV was parked. Then he drove her back to her place.

Sean carried her into her house and set her down on the couch. He went into her bathroom. She heard him start the water in the tub.

When Sean came back out, he said, "You've got hypothermia, we've got to get you into a hot bath. Once you get warmed up, I'll wrap that ankle of yours and tend to your other wounds. You're damn lucky, you know. If you'd fallen just a couple feet to the left or right, you would have missed that ledge and wouldn't be here right now."

"I know."

"I don't think you do. But now is not the time to talk about it. But when you're healed up, we're going to have a very serious talk about what happened tonight. But for now, let's just concentrate on getting you better."

"You're a good man, Sean. If I were you, I would have left me out there for the night."

"No, you wouldn't have."

"I guess not. I don't know how I could ever repay you for this."

"I'm sure we'll come up with something," he said with a rather dark look in his eye.

Tracy was so shook up from her fall, she couldn't begin to process what he meant. Sean didn't look like he was lusting after her. She couldn't tell what he was thinking.

Two weeks later, Tracy was healed up. She'd seen Sean a couple times, he'd come by to check on her, but she still couldn't tell how he felt about her. But she knew how she felt about him. She'd fallen for him, hard. Aside from being incredibly handsome and dynamic, the man had saved her life. Couldn't get much more romantic than that.

Tracy was busy, painting her sun porch when she saw Sean walk up her driveway.

"Tracy?" he called from her yard.

"I'm here, Sean. Painting."

He walked up and let himself in.

"Oh, I thought you meant your canvasses. Say, that looks nice. Using a sponge for texture?" Sean asked.

"Yeah, decided to extend my art to my house and try some stuff. You like it?"

"Yeah, looks great. Say, now that you're healed up, I wondered if you'd like to come by for dinner tomorrow night. I'll be barbecuing some steaks, and I still want to have that little chat with you. About what it's like to be living out in the middle of nowhere."

"My lecture?"

"You need one, girl," Sean told her.

"I suppose I deserve it," Tracy admitted. "Although, I think I learned my lesson. I'll listen to you from here on out."

"I still need to make a couple points with you."

"All right."

"So, around six, then?"

"Yeah, that'd be fine."

Tracy whistled and hummed to herself for the rest of the day. Sean was so cute! Hopefully, this wasn't some platonic thing. Hopefully, he'd want more with her. Which would be divine. He had such a nice butt! And those eyes, dreamy. She mentally kept running through her rescue. His strong shoulders, the tender way he took care of her that night. What a man!

That next night, Tracy was on his doorstep with a bottle of red wine.

Sean smiled upon seeing her and let her into his home. His place was very nice; country charm but not frou-frou, a man's house. Mission style furniture, hardwood floors, landscapes of the area on the walls. Then she saw it. One of her paintings on the wall. She knew exactly when and where it had been sold.

"You have one of my paintings?"

"Yes, it's one of my favorites. I bought that—"

"At the Lee Gallery in the city."

"Yes, I did."

"I just missed you that day," Tracy said. "I was bringing in some other work and Mr. Lee, the gallery owner, told me you'd just picked that up."

Sean nodded. "I waited around for you, he said you'd be in, but I had an appointment."

"Sorry about that, I got delayed at the office. My day job. Which I've now quit."

"That's right, you were a lawyer, right?"

"Yeah, civil cases. Glad that's over."

"I'll bet. So, first of all, before we settle into drinks and dinner, I want to get the business out of the way. The unfinished business between the two of us."

"My lecture."

"Yes." Sean motioned for her to sit with him on the couch.

She did so, a bit nervous.

"I'm sorry, Sean, I—"

He held a hand up and silenced her. "I get to do the talking. I know exactly what you're going to say. I know how you feel about my warning, everything. You made yourself clear that afternoon. How you feel about males who try to control you."

"Look—"

"Tracy, please."

"Okay, sorry."

"First of all, I want you to know that I like you. A lot. And I'd like to start seeing you. But first, you have to know something about me. I never give warnings without cause. I don't try to control people for fun. I only give warnings when they are deserved. I didn't appreciate your attitude, your lying to me, nor your complete disregard for what I told you."

"Sorry."

"That's not enough for me. You crossed the line with me, woman. You acted like a spoiled child that day and that attitude almost got you killed. Now you say you learned your lesson, I'd like to make sure of that. And I know a very effective way to get through to women like you. It's worked for me in the past and I know it will work for me now. It'll be something you'll probably never forget. And if we're

going to have a future together, it's a lesson you'd better learn now about me."

"You're making me—"

Before she could react, Sean grabbed her and yanked her across his lap. One of his strong arms wrapped around her upper body. Then, in complete disbelief, she felt him lift up her skirt and pull her panties down to her knees.

"Sean! What the hell are you doing?"

"I'm spanking you, Tracy. A very well-deserved spanking, I might add. Probably the most well-deserved spanking I will ever administer," Sean told her.

"You can't—"

She felt the first swat, across both cheeks. He wasn't kidding. This wasn't a playful spanking. This was punishment. It stung!

"Ow! Sean that hurts!"

"It's supposed to, Tracy. This is your wake-up call, girl," Sean told her.

Sean started with a series of swats that inflamed her entire rear. Tracy began kicking and trying to get away from him, but his upper arm was like a vise around her back. Her attempts at escape just made him spank her harder.

"Owww, Sean, I'm sorry! Stop!"

Sean sharply slapped each cheek in turn. He worked the highest part of her rear, down to the lowest; concentrating on her sit spots until she squalled. Tears began to stream down her face, she cried and kicked and wailed at him to stop, but Sean took his job very seriously.

Tracy was shocked, embarrassed and mainly, in pain. Her entire rear felt like it was being seared with his strong hand!

Up and down her behind the spans came in a horrid, even rhythm. She couldn't believe how long her punishment lasted.

Tracy was so shocked to be over this man's lap, her bare rear exposed to him! She'd fantasized

about something like this, but in her dream, he wasn't spanking her.

Finally, he stopped. Tears spilled from her eyes. She was so humiliated!

"Now listen to me, Tracy. Listen to me. Are you listening?"

"Y-yes, I'm l-listening," she choked out.

"You aren't in the city any longer. You're a country girl now. The hospital is an hour away. Emergency teams can't get here for up to a half an hour. You can't be cavalier about your personal safety. We're on our own out here."

"Okay! I got that!"

Whack! "Quiet, and just listen to me."

"Okay!"

"When I tell you something, when I warn you that you might be in danger, you will listen to me from here on out. Right?"

"Right."

"I can't imagine the loss if you died. Your ability to create art is so special, yet you risked everything to take a stupid walk. Why did you do that?"

"I don't know. Probably wanted to show you that you couldn't order me around. And I didn't believe you."

Whack!

"Ow, Sean!"

"This little spanking is nothing, Tracy. I'm just trying to get your attention here. I want you to focus on that rebellious streak of yours and get it under control. You almost died because of it. And when we're in real danger out here—during wind storms, floods— you'd better listen to everything I tell you or it could be your life."

"Okay, Sean. I will."

"You'd better. I can't tell you how much of my time as a paramedic and firefighter was taken up with reckless brats like you. If people like you only read the signs that said, 'High Surf Warning', 'Dangerous Cliffs', you'd save us precious time we'd

rather spend on saving people who got into accidents through no fault of their own."

"I'm sorry, Sean."

"You'd better be. Now I'm going to let you up. But I swear, if you ever disregard my warning again and put yourself in that kind of danger, you will find yourself right back over my knee. Only next time, I won't go so easy on you, you hear me?"

"Yes, Sean."

"Good girl," he said. He let her up. "Now go into the bathroom and clean yourself up. I'm going to go start the barbecue."

"Yes, Sean," Tracy said, hiding her tears from him.

"I don't like spanking you, you know. The only reason I did it was because I care about you and you needed it."

"Okay."

"Now go get cleaned up. I'll be outside."

"Okay, Sean."

"Good girl."

Once in the bathroom, Tracy was chagrined to find that the make-up she'd so carefully applied was now in streaks down her face. She cleaned up as best as she could. She couldn't resist and took a peek at her rear in the mirror. Wow, very bright red, his hand prints were clearly visible. She rubbed herself, which took out some of the sting. But sitting wasn't going to be easy for awhile. She was so embarrassed! Spanked like a naughty little girl.

While Tracy was very upset that he'd smacked her, something about the way he took charge over her turned her on. She hadn't been this interested in sex in a long time. But this man was bringing it out in her. What a hunk!

She left the bathroom and joined Sean outside at the barbecue. But Tracy found she couldn't make eye contact with him.

When she did steal a glance at him, Sean was grinning at her.

"What?" Tracy asked.

"You."

"What, me?"

"You're cute, girl, very cute. Especially with that chastened look on your face. Very satisfying."

"I'll bet."

Sean walked up to her and surprised her by taking her in his arms.

"You're a beautiful woman, Tracy. I didn't want to hurt you, only wanted to wake you up. It would be a great loss if something happened to you."

"Thanks, Sean. I blew it."

"You sure did."

He smiled, leaned in and kissed her.

Wow! She felt like her shoes blasted off her feet! What a kisser! He smelled so good, his arms were so strong and what he could do with his tongue!

Sean kissed her for a long time, tracing her jaw with his fingers. He pulled away and grinned at her. "I knew it was going to be good between us."

"You did?"

"Uh-huh," Sean said, his blue eyes full of lust. He kissed her again. His hands rubbed her back and he pulled her close. She could feel the hardness in his pants. Felt like he had an awesome weapon down there.

He pulled away and laughed. "If I don't stop here, I'm never going to get dinner on the table."

"Would that be such a bad thing?" Tracy heard herself say. Usually, she didn't like being too forward, but this time she couldn't help herself.

Sean's eyes dilated and he brought her to him and kissed her, this time much more passionately. He moaned deep in his throat as a hand found her breast. He cupped it lightly and then squeezed her through the thin material of her blouse. He slipped his hand underneath her shirt and under her bra. His supple fingers worked magic on her. She arched up against him, whimpering, her breathing becoming ragged with longing.

When Sean pulled away, his eyes were heavy-lidded, a bestial look behind them. "Tracy, I want to

make love to you right now. But I don't want to spoil things. I don't want you to think I'm the kind of man who takes advantage of a woman. I want you to know that this isn't just a fling to me, I want you, I want all of you. Body, mind and soul. I have for a very long time. Even before I met you. That painting I bought. I saw your photo when I bought it and I've had so many fantasies about you. And then when I heard you were moving next door to me, I couldn't believe it. And then when I met you, finally, I knew. I knew you were for me. And not as just some passing fancy, I knew I wanted you for always. If I'm moving too fast for you, just say so. I just..."

Tracy put her fingers to his lips. "Sean, I want you so much I can hardly think. No one has ever cared about me in the way you have. And I can tell what kind of a man you are. You aren't capable of taking advantage of me. And I, too, I never take things this fast. But this feels right to me. You feel right to me."

"Tracy," he said, squeezing her tight.

Sean picked her up, carried her into the house and to his bedroom. He set her down next to the bed and slowly undressed her. His fingers lightly traced her shoulders as he pushed her blouse off and down her arms. He took off her bra and his mouth found her breasts. He unzipped her skirt and pushed it over her hips. He knelt before her, pulled her panties off and buried his face between her legs. Tracy pressed her hips against him as his tongue licked and teased her. His hands stroked her legs, her rear and her thighs as he mercilessly worked her sweet spot. Within a few moments, she cried out and catapulted into a marvelous, explosive climax.

Sean pushed her back onto the bed and ripped off his clothes. She gasped upon seeing his body. Perfectly muscled chest with a light coating of hair, six-pack abs, narrow hips, bulky thighs. And his

maleness was marvelous. Hard, huge, perfect curve, lovely.

Sean joined Tracy on the bed, taking her into his arms and kissing her. She reached out and took his member into her hand; it was smooth and hard as steel. She touched his chest and abs and then she pushed him back, moved down and took him into her mouth. He was so big, she could only take him in so far. But she licked and sucked and teased him until he was groaning with desire.

Finally, Sean pushed her away, grabbed her and threw her back on the bed. He reached for a condom from his bedside table.

Sean put it on, then moved between her legs, shoving her thighs apart with his knees. As he gazed deep into her eyes with a dark and hungry look on his face, he slipped inside her.

Tracy gasped as Sean entered her. His second stroke in launched her into a wild, screaming orgasm. She clawed at him and moaned in unbridled rapture.

And then the boy became a machine. A lovemaking machine. Driving her into more orgasms than she'd ever before. He felt so good! And the way he was looking at her! So arousing! His scent, his masculinity, his caring, sent her over the edge again and again.

Finally, Sean couldn't take it any longer and thrust into her deeply and came, moaning loudly and grinding into her as if it was their last time together instead of their first. He lay on top of her like that for a long time, hugging her as if she was the most precious thing in the world.

Afterwards, Sean withdrew and took her into his arms.

"My God, Tracy. That was beautiful. You are beautiful. You're everything I've been looking for in a woman. Tell me you're never moving away from here. Tell me you're here for good. Tell me that you're mine."

Tracy looked deep into his eyes and said, "I'm here for good, I'm never moving away and I'm all yours."

"God, I love you, Tracy," Sean said and he kissed her.

An Angel in Training

"When we get home, you're gettin' your ass spanked," Bill pronounced as he took the exit for the freeway.

"What? Why? What did I do?"

"Don't give me that crap, Angel, you know perfectly well what you did. I'm just glad Frank and Jenn didn't figure it out. I thought you were past all that."

"Past what?"

"Angel. Don't. You denyin' it is only gonna make me spank you harder and for longer."

"Bill, I didn't do anything!"

"Bull. I saw the look on your face. I saw you. I watched you. I know. When did you do it, huh? Had to be on Saturday while I was busy watching the game. They were out-of-town, you know where the spare key was kept."

"I don't know what you're talking about. Why would I decapitate all her Marie Alexander dolls? The crime was obviously perpetrated by some psycho. Someone who wanted to scare her. I'm over what Jenn did to me."

"How do you know I was talkin' about the dolls?"

"Uh..."

"Now you're gettin' it double. I found one of the doll heads in the trash when I was takin' it out. The bag broke, I didn't think much about it until tonight. When Jenn was all cryin' over her dolls."

"Just because you found—"

"Angel, stop!" he said in "the tone".

She knew she'd pushed him too far already. Damn it. When he used "the tone" she knew she was done. Damn it! She'd only been dating Bill for three months, but he'd already used "the tone" on her several times. When she ignored him, she got the paddle. Why had she fallen in love with a spanker? Talk about short-sighted! She pushed her last guy all the way to the wall and a little bit past. Of course, it was probably the reason he left her.

But this new man of hers didn't take any guff from her. As she had found out on several painful occasions.

"You're lucky I'm in a good mood. And you're also lucky I thought it was pretty funny. But you're still gettin' your ass spanked. What if you'd gotten caught? Huh? How would I explain that to my brother? That my new girlfriend still held a grudge against his wife?"

"Jenn is a bitch. You heard her tonight. Every time she's around me, she insults me. 'Nice shoes,' she says. 'I thought they'd gone out of style. But you, Angel, you can wear even unfashionable things and make them look good.'"

"That was a compliment."

"I can't believe you believed that was a compliment. She hates me, she's always hated me and for God's sake, she's the one who caused me to lose that job—"

"A job you hated."

"Immaterial. She caused me to lose that job."

"You were stealing from the boss."

"Only wine and so was she. But no, she played Miss Innocent and I went down for the crime. She didn't say a thing and she was the one who wanted that bottle. I was stealing it for her!"

"Angel, it doesn't matter, you're in trouble."

"It does so matter. Then she stole Jacob from me."

"You hated Jacob, you were about to break up with him."

"That's beside the point. Then what about my birthday party? She ruined it. She came in wearing that cute little outfit, everyone paid attention to her and not to me. Then she makes that toast in my honor and made everyone laugh at me."

"I wasn't there, but no one else talks about that night. I've only heard that story from you."

"And then, last week, she humiliated me in front of the entire class reunion committee. She told everyone that I slept with George Blanders."

"You slept with George Blanders?" Bill asked, surprised.

"It was different back then," Angel explained, defensively.

"No, it wasn't. I knew him, he was a fat, drunk slob, even at fifteen."

"Look, that's not the point. The point is I've never told anyone that she slept with Jimmy Barker."

"She slept with Jimmy Barker?"

"Yes. The same night I blew it and ended up with George. I'd had a pint of Yukon Jack. Saddam Hussein would look good after a pint of Yukon Jack. George and I were in the front seat of my AMC Hornet while she was in the back seat, blowing Jimmy Barker."

"She did not!"

"She did so! And I didn't say anything. Then she's all adding insult to injury, tellin' everyone that I was George's girlfriend. I've gotten fifteen emails from friends, laughing at me because of it. We swore we'd never tell. So I kept my promise, but Jenn the bitch doesn't keep hers. So I decapitated her stupid dolls."

"Angel! She was devastated. They were expensive, too."

Angel smiled. "I know. I enjoyed every minute of it."

"Oh, girl, are you gonna get it when we get home."

"You should be spanking her, not me. She made me a laughing stock in front of the whole town."

"Well, now you won't be sittin' for a week, does that make it better?"

"You can't spank me, I didn't technically do anything wrong. It was equal revenge. I almost peed on her toothbrush. At the last second I stopped myself. I should get some credit for that."

"Angel! What am I going to do with you?"

"You knew I was like this when you started hitting on me."

"Maybe, I just thought you'd outgrown all this stuff."

"Apparently not."

"Well, honey, I'm gonna break you of all these bad habits. Jenn and Frank would go nuts if they knew what you did."

"Are you going to tell them?"

"No. Of course not. Tell them that my new girlfriend—their friend of twenty years—broke into their house and cut the heads off of a bunch of dolls? What do you think they would do?"

"I don't care."

"You are definitely gettin' your ass spanked and good. You're gonna stop all this, honey. If it's the last thing I do, I'm gonna break you of all this wild behavior."

"Don't you think I'm incorrigible? I think I'm incorrigible."

"No, you're not. I broke you of the habit of smoking—"

"I wanted to quit."

"I broke you of the habit of swearing."

"Well..."

"And now I'm gonna break you of the habit of freakin' decapitating dolls. For God's sake, Angel, what if someone saw you? You know they called the police?"

"They did?" Angel asked, more scared. "I missed that conversation. Was I in the bathroom when they said that?"

"Yes. And they dusted for fingerprints. They got some, but they didn't match any in the database. You're damned lucky the police didn't catch you."

"Whew. I'll say."

"But the one man who really counts, did catch you. And boy, honey, are you gonna pay for this one."

Angel's mind raced for plans of escape. She could lock herself in the bathroom, climb out and go home for the night. But that wouldn't be fun. Bill was the most excellent lover she'd ever had. She'd

known the hunk her whole life, she never in a million years thought he liked her. But after her last divorce and his, he'd called her up and asked her out. She hadn't spent one night in her own bed since.

But Bill spanked hard. She didn't want to face that tonight. Maybe if she ran away, he'd change his mind. Of course, the last time she tried escaping, it didn't turn out so well. He'd chased her down, caught her and used his belt on her. She'd just have to make sure she got away and stayed away this time.

If she'd done something that she believed merited a spanking, she'd submit to it. Even though, she'd tried that and that hadn't worked out so well, either. Just the week before, he'd caught her smoking a cigarette. She submitted to him and he'd spanked the tar out of her. Shocking her. She thought he'd go easy on her. Not! He was a brute. And over a stupid cigarette. Which she almost understood because she'd made a promise to him.

But she'd never promised him anything about decapitating dolls. This was a simple case of retribution and there was no way she was getting spanked for it. She should get time off for good behavior for not peeing on Jenn's toothbrush. That should count. But obviously Bill didn't see it that way. But that didn't matter. His sentence was unfair and therefore, had to be fought. She was running.

Of course, if she ran and he did manage to catch her... she shuddered. That last time she'd run from him, she'd gotten the worst hiding ever. She'd started swearing at him because he wouldn't let her watch a new reality series opener. Perfectly acceptable application of profanity. He ordered her to strip and walk over to him, but she decided to run instead. She got through the backyard and mid-way through the adjacent park before he caught her at the swings. After wrestling for awhile, he'd thrown her over his shoulder and taken her back to his house. He'd carried her into his bedroom, ripped

her jeans off of her, pushed her face down onto the bed and got her into a hold. Then he laid into her behind with his thick leather belt. He'd only given her about ten, but they were the worst ten of her life. Her butt was so sore, walking was horrible and using the bathroom, agony. The bruises lasted two full weeks.

Still, it didn't mean that she wouldn't try running again. She just had to ensure that she escaped. Failure was not an option.

"Just in case you're thinking about running from me, I wanted to tell you about something I just bought. Its a brand spankin' new wooden paddle. Pun intended. It's about a foot and a half long, nice feel to it. I mean, it won't be to you, but it feels pretty damn good in my hand. And it hurts even worse than my belt."

"Bill, you shouldn't have gone to the trouble. I haven't done much."

"You broke into my brother's house and decapitated fifteen dolls worth over fifteen hundred dollars."

"Actually, one was worth more, the total was closer to two thousand dollars worth. One is rare and she won't be able to get again."

"Goddamn you! You're proud of yourself! Don't you see how wrong you are?"

"Uh... yeah, yeah I do."

"Don't lie to me, Angel."

"Bill, I'm not."

"I hope they don't find out. We wouldn't be welcome in their house anymore."

"Nah."

"Goddamn you, Angel, yes! Well, you wouldn't be!"

"Maybe so."

"Maybe! Maybe! Damn you girl, you just don't think about consequences."

"Because there haven't really been any."

"Not until you met me."

"No. Not until I met you."

"Welcome to your personal judge and jury, baby. It's a whole new day with me. You are gonna give up your wild ways or you won't be sitting. Ever."

"Yeah..."

"I mean it. Don't you see that you're wrong?"

"Maybe."

"Angel, goddamn you!"

"No, no I'm sorry. Really, I am. I'll change. I'll be good."

"You're damn right, you'll change. Before you hurt yourself or me, I'm layin' down the law. You do what I say, woman. You don't do this kinda stuff anymore. No more criminal acts. No more smoking, no more swearing. Period. I love you. I don't want anything happenin' to you. I don't want you in jail. So I'm gonna do some behavior modification on you, and you will submit to it."

"But Bill—"

"Angel, you can be a better person. You can be a good girl. You are most of the time. Then you lose your mind, go off and cut the heads off a buncha dolls. Why did you do that? By the way? Why them?"

"Because she just read a book about some little girl murderer who liked to decapitate dolls. I knew she'd flip out."

"Angel!" he said, seeming horrified.

"Okay, so it was mean. She pissed me off."

"You are so gettin' it. Girl, tonight your life changes. After tonight, you're gonna be a different woman."

"Bill, you're scaring me."

"Good, you should be scared. I'm gonna make you cry, honey. I am going to make you cry. You will feel sorry by the time I'm through with you. You will feel sorry, I can guarantee you that."

Okay, it was clear. It was time to run away. Far away. Maybe to another state. She loved him, but she wasn't going to get spanked that badly. Not willingly. Forget it. She was running.

They got out of the car and Bill seemed to read her mind. He took hold of her arm and led her into the house.

They walked into the living room, Bill said, "Angel, you sit there and wait for me on that couch. Don't you move. I'm goin' to get the paddle. We're takin' care of business now. You're gettin' that attitude adjustment and you're gettin' it now. Before you try and sweet talk me out of it."

"I wouldn't dare try," she replied sullenly. Then as a seeming afterthought, she said, "Can I use the bathroom first?"

"Yes, but you'd better not try anything. You don't want me mad. This is gonna hurt enough. You make me mad, you're gonna be in double trouble."

"I know. You made that point the last time I ran away."

He grinned. "I did, didn't I? Okay, you go straight to the bathroom, then you come out here. And get that look off your face. This is much better than if the law was involved."

"The police wouldn't spank me."

"No, but I would have as soon as I bailed you out of jail."

"Okay," she said miserably.

Bill watched as she walked, dejectedly, into the bathroom.

"Don't close that door," he ordered curtly.

"Bill, for God's sake, give me some privacy."

"Don't you pull anything on me, Angel, you hear?" he said.

"I told you I wasn't," she said, crossing her fingers behind her back.

She quickly closed the door and rushed to the window. She undid the clasp and pushed up the window. It squeaked. She held her breath, listening for her boyfriend. She didn't hear anything. Breathing a sigh of relief, she hoisted herself up and climbed out the window.

She landed in the soggy grass, turned and standing right there, armed with the paddle, was

Bill. She shrieked in terror. With a hard gleam in his eye, he reached for her.

She couldn't believe what she was doing, but she jumped back, turned and sped off around the house.

"Goddamn you, Angel!" he thundered at her.

She tore off across the driveway and ran down the street. She could hear him right on her tail.

"You stop! You hear me! Stop!" he commanded loudly.

He was going to catch her, she had to do something. The neighbor's three doors down were doing some construction work. There was a pile of lumber right by the side of the road. As she ran by, she grabbed the end of a two by four and pulled it down behind her.

Bill must have hit it full force. The bellow of anger and pain he let out alerted the entire neighborhood to their fight.

Angel ran faster. In the next driveway, she saw that some kid had thrown his bike down and left it.

Perfect! Angel took a short detour, grabbed the bike, jumped on it and raced away.

She was just picking up speed when she felt Bill make a grab for the back of her sweatshirt. She peddled faster and finally managed to pull away from him.

He let out a roar of fury that could be heard for miles. Angel peddled as fast as she could for her place.

Now what was she going to do? She'd never made him this angry before. Would he break up with her?

Twenty minutes later—nearly exhausted from her escape—Angel finally saw her darkened little house. Relief! She peddled up, ditched the bike in the front yard and then realized that she'd left her purse at Bill's. Damn it!

She went around to the back yard and got her spare key from under the back porch. She let herself in through the kitchen, threw the spare keys

down onto the kitchen table and headed for the refrigerator to get herself a beer.

She opened the beer and went into the living room. She turned on a light and screamed. Bill was sitting there on her couch, looking menacing, holding that horrible paddle in his hand.

She started to take off, but he was up in a flash and had her in a hold, but good. He wasn't taking any chances this time.

Without saying a word, he dragged her over to her couch, sat down and wrestled her quickly across his lap. A powerful arm across her back, one of his massive legs pinning hers, she was caught. And more scared than she ever had been in her life.

She felt him tug the back of her knit workout pants and quite quickly, they were around her ankles, along with her panties. The house was cold, and she could feel the cool air whoosh over her vulnerable rear and thighs.

Thwack! The most intense pain she'd ever felt, across both buns. She gasped, absolutely shocked. The sharpest pain, different than his hand or the belt. The cool smoothness of the wood, the hardness of the implement, the sharp slap of the thick paddle as it impacted her behind. This was a sensation she never wanted to feel again.

Bill stopped and let the pain course through her.

"You feel that Angel? Well, that's nothin'!" he pronounced vengefully.

He lit into her with a machine gun report of hard smacks, all over her poor ass. Outrageous pain. All she could do was scream. Bill paddled her behind with such lightening-fast fiery strikes, she could barely sense when one spank began and one ended. He stopped. Tears spilled from her eyes, she sobbed loudly. It hurt so badly! And there was no way out, his arm was like a steel band around her middle.

"I haven't even started with you, yet, Angel. I'm gonna take my time with you tonight. By the time I'm through with you, you won't even be considering disobeying me again, you hear me?"

"I hear you! I hear you! You've reached your objective! Please stop, Bill! I'm sorry! I won't ever run away from you again! I promise!"

"You're damn right, you won't, baby!" A storm of hard swats with the paddle. Up her ass, the sides and her worst nightmare, her sit spots. When she squealed as he concentrated on her most sensitive spots, he increased the intensity of the strikes. She cried out in agony.

"Take this, bad girl!" he roared at her. Thwack! A large, single smack on her sit spots. "Run away from me, will you?" he said. Thwack! One big swat across both buns. He stopped and allowed the pain to reverberate through her whole body.

"Bill stop!"

Thwack! "You don't tell me anything, Angel! I've never been more mad at you!" Thwack!

"Owww! Bill! I'm sorry! I'm sorry!"

"You give me a bruise, I give you a bruise! Two of 'em, Angel, by the time I'm through with you, both of these sweet little buns of your are going to be black and blue!" His paddle rained down on her poor behind with a torrent of swats.

Angel thought she was going to lose her mind from the pain. Never again would she make him this mad, never again!

Bill stopped again, letting the pain do its job. "You feel that? Huh, honey? You feel my wrath? You feel what it is to be bad? To run from me? Huh? You feel that?"

"I feel it! I feel it!"

"I'm not sure you do."

"No, Bill!"

Thwack! A hard one, to one bun. She shrieked. There was a pause. Just when she'd hoped he was done, he smacked her on her other bun. This hurt so badly! Why was he tormenting her so? Why not just a straightforward spanking? Why all these horrible pauses?

"You get me, Angel? Am I getting through to you? Just who is in charge of who here?"

"I get you! I get you, Bill! I'm sorry! I'm sorrreeeee!"

Another pause while she sobbed and cried. A long pause. Was he through? Was her punishment over? She could only hope.

Just when she thought he might be done, he shocked her by spanking her rapid-fire again with the paddle, all over her poor, thrashed behind. She had no idea how much more she could take. She could only cry, scream and beg him to stop.

He paused again. All she could hear were the sounds of her own sobs. Finally, she quieted down, but Bill made no move to let her up.

"Are you learning your lesson, Angel?"

"Yes, Bill."

"Will you do this to me again?"

"No."

"That's what you said the last time."

"I know, but I really won't this time, I promise."

"You promised me the last time."

"I know."

"So you know what your promise is worth, don't you, Angel?"

"Yes, Bill."

He tormented her by rubbing the cool, smooth paddle over her seared cheeks.

"I wonder if you've had enough," he said to himself. He was clearly enjoying himself.

"I have! Believe me, I have!"

"Your poor ass looks pretty bruised, Angel."

"It is! I'll be good! I'll be good!"

"You'd better be," he said. He moved like he was going to let her go. She heaved a sigh of relief. And then, to her shock and dismay, he fired into her behind again, fast and hard. Too many swats to count. All she could do was scream.

He stopped again. She cried and wailed.

To her absolute relief, she felt him put the paddle down. But he didn't let her up. He began to stroke her behind. Very carefully, very thoroughly. It hurt, but it helped with the pain.

"Damn it, Angel, I just love you so much. I don't want you in trouble."

"I know."

"I want you to listen to me from now on."

"I will."

"I don't believe you, but this paddle will be my back up."

"Okay, Bill."

"All right now, I'm gonna let you up, but your punishment is not over. You ran from me, you caused me hella bruises, I'm not done with you."

"Are you gonna spank me again?"

"I might. Depends on you. If you obey me or not."

"I'll obey you! I'll obey you!"

"Okay, now I'm gonna let you up. Now you listen to me. You're gonna take off all your clothes and stand in the corner of your dining room."

"For how long?"

"For as long as I say."

"O-okay."

Bill took her out of the hold and helped her up.

"Now strip," he said, sitting back down on the couch.

She took off all her clothes.

"Now go into that dining room and face the wall."

"Okay."

"Good girl."

Angel did as she was told. Bill made her stand there for an entire hour while he watched a game on TV. She was shivering from the cold, in pain, but too afraid of him to do anything else.

"Angel?" he finally said.

"Yeah?"

"Come in here."

She gladly did as she was told. She walked into the living room and stood before him. He obviously liked what he saw. He took in her naked form, lust clear in his eyes.

"Now sit on the coffee table here in front of me and spread your legs as far as you can."

This was getting better. Angel complied. Sitting hurt like hell, but she knew she had to obey him.

Still Bill did nothing. He just watched her.

"Bill?"

"Did I tell you to speak?"

"No."

"Then don't."

She shut up. He got up and quickly disrobed, his eyes never leaving hers. She was mesmerized by his power, his control.

"You did good, Angel. I think you're gettin' who I am. What I will and will not take from you. And I think it's time I rewarded you for your good behavior. Spread your legs further apart. Good girl."

When she felt his tongue on her very special place, Angel knew he'd forgiven her. After he made her come, he picked her up, entered her and did her right there on the coffee table. They had crazy sex all over her living room. For some reason, right after her punishments, they had the best sex. Such a wonderful silver lining!

That night, she fell asleep in his arms and promised herself she'd never make him that mad again. That she'd be good.

Well, at least until the next time someone made her mad.

While the Cat's Away

When Philip walked in the door, he had a look on his face that worried her. If Suze's suspicions were correct, she was in deep doo-doo. She decided the best way to combat whatever suspicions he may have was to pretend she didn't notice his expression. She would just concentrate on cooking. And hope all to hell he hadn't found out what she did.

"Hi honey," she said brightly.

"Hey, baby," he said, coming up to her and giving her a nice kiss.

Newly married, Philip still took her breath away. He had short dark hair, shocking blue eyes, dark heavy brows, a long nose that had been broken once upon a time, full, sensual lips and a cleft in his prominent chin. Gorgeous man. Tall and lanky, the way he moved was like a big cat. So hot. Her knees trembled each time he kissed her.

She was so happy with him. No man had ever treated her as well, he cared for her and protected her better than her father had. He even protected her against herself. She was kind of wild before she'd met him, he'd helped her see that her behavior was self destructive. And she was grateful to him for his help. His help, however, sometimes came under the guise of punishments. Aversion therapy. She had agreed with him that some negative reinforcement might help her keep her promises to him and herself. But sometimes, she regretted her decision. Like when it came time for the negative consequences. She hoped all to hell this was not one of the nights when she had to face one of his punishments.

"You have a good day?" he asked. While there was a smile on his face, there was a sharpness to the look in his eye. She turned her attentions to dinner.

"Yeah, great. Dinner will be ready in a few," she said.

"Good. I'm gonna fix myself a drink," he said.

"Good. The chicken will be ready shortly."

"Smells good, baby," he said as he fixed himself a scotch and soda at the bar behind her.

He got his drink and came over to her, leaned against the counter and watched her.

She checked him out of the corner of her eye. He was trying to determine something about her. Damn it, someone had told him. Of course, she knew when she'd woken up that morning three days before, that her escapades would surely be zipping around the rumor mill. Damn it, anyway. Stupid cosmopolitans. They should be banned from all bars. She'd lost her mind that night. And also had some outrageous fun. At least, from what she remembered, she'd had fun.

"So..." he began.

Her heart started beating faster.

"Yeah?" she asked absently, trying to keep her cool.

"I saw Bob today at Starbucks."

"You did? How's he doing?"

"Oh, fine. A little miffed, but fine."

"Miffed? Why?"

"Apparently, some of the girls went out earlier this week and really tied one on. You wouldn't know anything about that, would you?"

"Who, me? You told me I was grounded. After I wrecked my bike last month after that party, you put me on probation for month. I'm still not off it yet."

"You didn't answer my question. Do you know anything about the wild party the girls had earlier this week? When I was gone? As I recall, you didn't answer the phone that night," he said, his ice blue eyes trying to peer into her mind.

"I told you, I went to bed early with a headache."

"And you're still standing by that story?"

"Uh, yeah. Why?"

"Oh, nothin'. Just seems logical, if all your friends were out partying, that you'd be with 'em."

"Yeah, well. Gotta obey the rules, you know?"

"Uh... yeah."

She was careful not to look at him. She concentrated on the stew instead.

"You know, some funny stories are going around town."

"Really?"

"Now don't tell me you haven't heard them."

"No, no. Of course, girls got a little wild. It was no big deal, the guys made a huge deal out of it, but from what I heard from Betty, they just had some drinks and some laughs and that was it."

"You didn't hear about the male strippers? The Party Wagon?"

"Party Wagon?"

"June told Dick about the Party Wagon."

"She did."

"Yeah. Apparently, the girls hired a stretch Humvee that drove them to twenty bars between here and Middletown."

"Really?"

"Really. You didn't hear that?"

"Uh... no. Wish I was there."

"You know, it's funny. There was a charge on our credit card for that night, from a limo service."

She dropped the spoon into the stew.

"There was?" she said, quickly trying to retrieve the spoon.

"Uh, yeah. And somethin' else. Bob gave me this," Philip said, withdrawing something from his shirt pocket. He handed it to her.

It was a photo. She didn't even have to look at it. She knew what it was.

"Look at it, Suze."

"Uh..."

"I think you'll recognize some of the people in that photo."

"Really?" she squeaked.

"Uh, yeah."

She took the photo and finally looked at it. Her heart sank. It was of the ten of them, all posed around a couple of male strippers. Suze herself was wrapped around one like a tourniquet.

"That woman who's all over that one stripper guy, man, she looks a lot like you, Suze," he said. "Long, dark hair, the green eyes. And the funny thing, she's wearing a mini-skirt that looks remarkably like the one I got you last month. The one you were supposed to wear only for me," he said, the last sentence punctuated by a bit of anger.

"Crap," she said.

"Yeah. So, let's see. We've got drinking, lying, carousing, touching another guy, dressing like a girl who's trolling for sex, spending my money on limousine service—"

"The girls are going to pay for that," she replied defensively, finally looking up into his piercing blue eyes, inwardly flinching at the fire behind them. "I was the only one with a credit card that night."

"Oh, so now comes the confession. The excuses are sure to be good ones, for this big of an infraction against the rules. You didn't just break the rules, honey, you obliterated them. You know what's comin' don't you?"

"Honey, look, that was unfair. The girls just... oh, Christ. Yes. I know what's comin' next," she muttered.

The tattoo! If he spanked her, he'd see the tattoo! Holy Christ!

"Turn that stew down," he ordered.

"But—"

"But what?" he asked.

"But, shouldn't we eat now? I mean, the spanking can—"

"No, it can't, Suze."

She looked at him, his expression was foreboding. "Okay," she finally said.

"Honey, you're the one who's making sure this is happening. As far as I'm concerned if I never had to spank you again, I'd be happy."

"Bull, you love it."

"You tryin' to get me more fired up here?"

"No, no. I just know you enjoy—"

"I enjoy makin' my point with you. I enjoy showing you whose boss. I enjoy makin' you feel sorry. But I could save all my spankings for the bedroom. I would enjoy it much more if you just behaved, woman!"

"I know."

"You know. Well, obviously, you don't know. What? Did you think I wasn't gonna find out? Suze, for God's sake. If you don't want to get caught, don't send up a bunch of red flares. Renting a limo on our credit card? Taking pictures? You wanted to get caught. You want to stop all this. But you can't bring yourself to say no when Diane and the rest of them come calling. Speaking of that, you were grounded. What happened to that?"

"I..."

"Yeah, right. You just threw it all away, the second my ass hit the seat in that plane, didn't you?"

"No. I didn't go out the first night they called. I restrained myself. Then... Ordie got this idea and... they caught me at a weak moment. I hadn't seen you in two days, male strippers sounded good to me."

"You are just digging yourself deeper here, aren't you?"

"Oh, probably," she grumbled.

"Turn down that stew and get into that living room, Suze."

"Look, I learned my lesson, I had the worst hang... over..." she said, realizing mid-sentence just what she was admitting to.

His large brows furrowed together to form one, giant disapproving eyebrow. He looked incredulous. He got even angrier.

"Get in there," he commanded, pointing towards the living room.

Shoulders drooping, Suze turned down the heat on the stove and headed miserably for the next room.

Philip walked past her and sat down on the living room couch. He motioned for her to approach him. He always punished her in the living room rather than in the bedroom. He didn't want to confuse sex spankings with punishment spankings.

She knew the drill. She stood in front of him. He glared up at her, his eyes barely moving from hers as he reached for the button of her jeans.

As much as he wished he could save all the power games for the bedroom, Philip couldn't help but enjoy punishing her. He liked the feeling of power that undressing her gave him. He liked taking his time, making her anticipate the punishment. And he loved spanking her. Especially when she deserved it so much.

She was just so damned impulsive, this girl. Right when he thought he'd trained her to obey him, off she went, goin' crazy, doing something stupid. He wondered how many sessions over his knee it was going to take to get through to her. That he was the master; she was the wife. While he was no chauvinist, Suze responded better to the traditional dynamic. She was a loose cannon. When they'd gotten together, she was a mess. He'd known her for years and was surprised at the reckless and dangerous change in her behavior after her divorce. He'd stopped by her house to talk to her about his concerns and a spark ignited between them. They'd fallen in love fast and married. Right from the beginning, he'd taken her in hand. She'd responded well, cleaned up her life and started flying right. Then there were these lapses. Lapses he was going to make sure happened much more infrequently.

He slowly unbuttoned her top button, his eyes never leaving hers. She started to look away, but he said, "Suze, look at me, into my eyes. Do it."

Her face flushed red, but she obeyed him. He loved that contrite expression in her face, that scared look in her vivid green eyes. It meant he was getting through to her.

He unzipped her jeans. Taking hold of the waistband, he slowly pushed her jeans over her small, tight hips. He pushed them inch by inch down her milky white thighs. His face mere inches from the triangle of soft hair between her legs, he got stiff at the scent of her. He worked hard at ignoring the voice in his head ordering him to thrust his tongue into her sex. That was for later, punishment now.

He pushed her jeans down over her knees and tucked them around her small, feminine ankles. Pulling her down across his lap, he suddenly froze. There, on his favorite tush in the world, was graffiti. Permanent graffiti. She had a two-inch-long tattoo of a martini glass that said "Party On!" across the front of it.

She said nothing. Just waited.

"Suze... is there something you forgot to mention to me?"

"At the risk of incurring more of your wrath, no. There's no way in hell I was going to tell you what I'd done. I was hoping I'd have it removed before you saw it."

"So what? Your plan was not to have sex with me? Like I wasn't going to notice?"

"You didn't last night. Nor the night before. Nor the two mornings."

All he wanted to do was to lay a huge one on her, just smack that ass from here to Timbuktu. But he waited. Her time would come. He needed to be patient. To deliver the kind of effect he desired, the punishment took time. Her anticipation and fear of the spanking was equally important as the act itself. She'd told him once how the waiting period before the spanking was almost worse than the spanking itself. How she just wanted him to do it and get it

over with. So he prolonged that time as much as he could, knowing how much it bothered her.

"Oh, girl," was all he said.

"Sorry sounds really bad right now."

"Uh, yeah. It does. We talked about tattoos. You know how I feel about 'em."

"Yes, they make women look cheap."

"They do."

She finally said nothing. There was nothing to say. It was all there in black and white on her rear. She had defied him. Broken nearly every rule. Her heart was beating out of her chest, and she was shaking like a leaf. He was going to kill her ass. Kill it.

He adjusted her hips so they were raised in the air, just over his right knee. He positioned her legs on the couch, then reached up and pushed her t-shirt up to the small of her back.

"Hands on the floor, baby," he ordered. She complied.

As she trembled beneath his touch, he ran a hand over her rear, gently, carefully. Up and down his hand traveled, letting her know exactly who was in control. He would spank her when he was ready and not before. He savored this time before the actual punishment started. Fully enjoyed her rapidly increasing breath, the way she squirmed under his touch, the little sobs in the back of her throat. She knew it was going to hurt. She knew he would leave marks; he always made sure to leave marks. The lesson wasn't learned in one five-minute period. It was learned that night and the next day when she tried to sit. This time, it wouldn't be just the next day that would be ruined for her, this time; the little brat wasn't going to be sitting for a week. But she didn't know that yet. He had never spanked her like he was about to. This was going to be a whole new world for her.

He picked up a special implement the month before. He found a beautiful, solid wooden paddle in a sex shop in San Francisco. He never really

thought he'd have to use it on her, but wanted it there just in case. He'd hidden it deep in the living room couch, right where he had perfect access to it. The tool was exactly what he needed for the lesson she would be learning today. A tattoo? Consciously or unconsciously, she was doing some serious rebelling against herself and him. He needed to put a stop to it and quick.

He lightly ran his fingers over her white, shuddering flesh. A finger danced down her crack and back up again. The tattoo continued to taunt him. He pictured her in that photograph, practically doing that freakin' stripper. Fury rushed through his veins as he stroked her exposed flesh.

He reached behind him, into the cushions and withdrew his new weapon. She'd never felt the likes of anything like this before. He grinned at the thought of her first impression of his new tool. She would gasp; he knew it. Should he tease her with it first? Should he let her see it? His grin widened.

He rubbed the cold wooden paddle over her rounded white rear. She flinched, surprised by the contact and the temperature.

"Philip, what is that?" she asked.

"This? This is a new lesson in pain, baby."

He showed her the paddle and she whimpered at the sight.

"B-but, that's—"

"A fitting punishment for your horrible indiscretion, honey. Don't even try to talk me out of it. I'll get my belt if you say one more thing."

She shut up. But continued to whimper in anticipation as he rubbed the solid wooden instrument over her bottom. He pushed it between her legs and rubbed her a bit with it. Then smoothed it up over her thighs and back up her quivering rear end.

He took the paddle away, brought it back and made a motion like he was going to hit her. She readied herself, stiffened, waiting for the contact,

which never came. When she sighed with relief, that's when he hit her with it. Full on.

She yelped in pain and tried to get away from him. He yanked her back in place. "Don't make me pin you there, baby. I will, I'll push that arm of yours up into the middle of your back if you don't lie there and submit to this."

"Y-yes, sir," she said, a sob escaping from her lips.

"Now hands on the floor," he ordered crisply. She obeyed.

Whack! Philip let her have it with the paddle. The next one he aimed directly on that freakin' tattoo. She squealed. He thought of the male strippers, the girls in that party wagon, Suze staggering in drunk with that picture in her hand and started rapid-fire paddling her behind, but good.

She howled at the top of her lungs at the assault. She began begging him to stop, assuring him that she'd gotten the lesson. Promising him she'd get the tattoo removed. But he said nothing back. Only when she shut up and finally submitted fully to his punishment was he going to stop. And she wasn't near there yet.

Whack! Smack! Thwack! Philip's long and strong arm wielded the paddle with awesome precision, thundering into her poor flesh with fearsome strikes. She began bellowing her apologies. Her rear began to turn bright red, then spots of purple began to appear. She was almost done, but not quite. Not until she fully submitted. When she just relaxed and gave up, that's when he would quit.

He spanked every square inch of her tight little behind. From the top of her rounded buns, to the bottom of her sit spots, he left nothing unscathed. And he paid special attention to her tattoo, using it like a target.

The cracking of the paddle against her bare flesh and her deafening cries of pain filled the room. The floor below her was wet with tears. She took a good

seventy plus smacks to her tender behind before he finally felt her collapse against him, sobbing uncontrollably. After a few more, he stopped and put the paddle away. His job was done.

He let her lie there and finish crying. It usually took her a good five minutes before she calmed, it may take more time now. He wouldn't touch her until she stopped crying. He knew that right after the spanking, the pain was just as fierce as when he was hitting her. It took a long time for the sting to dissipate. He wanted her to feel the full effect before he helped her recover.

After about fifteen minutes, she finally began to calm, and the tears waned. He gently ran his hand over her purple and reddened flesh; her skin felt hot to his touch. She jumped at the contact. He started massaging her lightly and gradually increased the pressure, rubbing out some of the soreness while her sobs ebbed.

"It's okay, baby. Good girl, you did good. I'm proud of you, baby. You took it like a good girl," he said, continuing his careful ministrations to her behind. "You learned your lesson, didn't you, baby?"

"Y-yes Philip."

"You won't be goin' out with the girls without my permission from now on, right?"

"You bet."

"And no more tattoos."

"Yes, Philip. I promise."

He smiled. "Good girl. Okay, now baby, let me help you up."

He helped her to her feet. "Now take those off, honey. You know the rules."

"Yes, sir."

On punishment days, she wasn't allowed to wear clothes after her spanking. Any excuse to keep her naked, really.

Her punishments dovetailed nicely with their power play in bed. He loved nothing more than to tie her to his bed and torment her for hours. Once, he didn't let her come for an entire half hour. He

licked her tender folds just enough to get her to the edge, then he backed off. She had cried that day when he finally granted her release. Afterwards, Suze begged him to do that to her again sometime soon. She was such a fun little playmate. He may torment her like that this night. The spanking had turned him on something fierce.

Suze took off her clothes, gasping and beginning to cry again when she bent over to untie her shoes. Clearly her rear was killing her.

He smiled and went to go fetch the Solarcaine. He'd never used it on her before, but this time, he'd show her some mercy. She'd taken the pain well and had submitted fully to him. He could afford to be nice to her now.

When he returned, she was in the kitchen, sniffing and stirring the stew, stark ass naked, her rear brightly mottled in red and purple. She had the most beautiful body. Long legs, a tight little rear, tall and lithe frame. Long black hair, beautiful green eyes, a knockout. And such a little troublemaker! But she was learning. He'd bet this was the last time he'd ever have to hit her that hard.

"Suze, come here," he said, sitting at the kitchen table.

She looked over at him with stark terror on her face.

"No, honey, that's over, now come here."

She put the spoon down and warily approached him. He reached out and grabbed her. He hugged her and kissed her belly.

"Turn around baby, I got somethin' that will make your bottom feel better."

With a surprised look on her face, she turned around.

She gasped when he applied the cold lotion to her reddened cheeks, then relaxed as he carefully rubbed it in. When he was done, he said, "Now honey, go take a couple ibuprofen and pour yourself a drink. You earned 'em."

She looked like he'd told her that she'd won the lottery.

A tear of gratitude escaped the corner of one eye. "Really?"

"Yeah, honey. Please. You took a lot."

"Thanks, honey," she said as she rushed to carry out his orders.

As he watched her, he realized that he wasn't going to be able to wait until after dinner to have her. He had to have her right then.

As soon as she'd taken a sip of her drink, he said, "Honey, come over here."

Obediently, she came over to him, drink in hand. He stood up, took the drink out of her hand, put it on the table and then pulled her to him and kissed her.

When he pulled away, he sat down, pushed her thighs apart and took her in his mouth. She nearly leapt away from him, but he held onto her hips fast and kept her there.

He teased and nibbled and licked her until she was in a frenzy. Screaming at the top of her lungs, she bucked against him furiously as she came.

By this time, he was so hard he was nearly in pain. He leapt out of his seat and tore off his clothes. He had her bent over the bar before she could even realize what was happening. When he slid inside her, she was more ready than ever.

She moaned with pleasure, throwing her head back against him as he thrust into her. He reached around her hip and his fingers found her sex. She cried out with joy as he increased his pace, working in perfect time with his fingers. She came again and again, writhing, moaning, her hips pressing back against him in perfect rhythm.

With one hand on her breast, the other between her legs, he drove into her until, finally, he could stand it no longer. He increased his pace and thrust into her like a madman as he launched them both into monumental climaxes. She cried out with pure rapture as she came, sobbing with relief and joy.

He thrust into her long after he'd come, not wanting the experience to end. He couldn't believe how good it was between them. They were so well matched. Outstanding sex.

Finally, he withdrew, turned her around and kissed her, long and deep.

"I love you more than anyone I've ever loved, Suze," he said when he pulled away. "I'm so proud of you, baby. I know you learned your lesson. And go ahead and keep that tattoo if you want. Whatever you want to do. I just want you to know that I love you with my whole heart, and I'm so glad I married you."

All she could do was cry. "I love you, too, honey," she said through her tears as she clung to him.

The Detective and The Thief

When Lynn first saw him, she wanted him. Detective Bronson was a large, burly man with a great unruly mane of auburn hair, intense brown eyes, a square jaw and the lined face of a man with great responsibilities. She had been dating Michael for six months, and both were very happy with the relationship. There was only one slight problem. Lynn had lied to him about her occupation. He thought she was an Internet consultant. She was a thief.

They'd met while she was on a job at a large charity event at a local heiress' mansion. After Lynn had helped herself to the hors d'oeuvre—and the hostess' pearl and diamond necklace—she was at the bar getting herself a drink when Michael approached her. They introduced themselves, chatted a bit, and she gave him her phone number. Lynn was completely amused by the thought of dating a policeman. Initially, due to his suave manner and self-assurance, Lynn thought he was a serial dater. As it turned out, he was a one-woman-man looking for a girlfriend. Before Lynn knew it, she'd fallen in love with him.

She assumed that even though she had been dating Michael, it wouldn't be that hard to keep her secrets from him. But her love for him had blinded her to the blatant truth about Michael. He was a detective. It was his job to sniff out liars.

"What's wrong?" Lynn asked one night after they'd made love.

"Just pondering a case," Michael replied, thoughtful.

"Can you tell me about it?"

"Not legally."

Lynn continued to stare at him.

He finally smiled. "Well, I suppose a bit of it wouldn't hurt. We've got a good thief in town, and I can't get a clue about them. They've been hitting

society ladies. A cat burglar, if you will. Remember that night when we met?"

"Uh, yeah. How could I forget?" Lynn said, snuggling against him. Mainly, so she didn't have to make eye contact. She had a sinking feeling he was about to detail her recent spate of crimes.

"That night, someone got into the hostess' bedroom and took a necklace worth over fifty thousand dollars."

"Really? While we were there?"

"Perhaps. Either that night or within a few days. Mrs. Williams remembered putting the necklace in her safe and then when she checked the safe two mornings later, the necklace was gone."

"Wow."

"Yes. What was odd was that it was only the one necklace taken. This thief doesn't take everything, just specific pieces. And they're very careful about what they sell. We've found the thief's fence, but we can't stick anything to the man because the stones from the necklaces are re-set and resold at legitimate businesses."

"How do you know this?"

"There was one stone that was unique. Some unique inclusion that could be identified. This is when we realized that our cat burglar wasn't reselling the entire piece, which is why we haven't been able to trace them. Or recover the jewels. This is a smart operator."

"So what's bothering you about the case? Other than the obvious."

"Well, originally, I thought the thief was a man. Now I'm thinking that it might be a woman. That same woman that ran from me the other day, south of Market. She came straight out of the fence's hangout, saw me and ran."

Lynn almost threw up. When she'd seen Michael that day, she'd panicked and run. Thank God, he hadn't caught her. But, he hadn't forgotten, either. Yikes!

"Wait. What woman that ran from you?" Lynn asked, feigning innocence.

"I thought I told you about that."

"Maybe you did."

"Anyway, I just have a hunch that she's my target."

Lynn wanted to scream. "So how do you go about catching someone like that?"

"Oh, something will happen. It usually does."

"You usually get your man or woman, don't you, honey?"

"More often than not. Speaking of which, I have a bone to pick with you."

"Really? What?"

"Don't lie to me."

"What? Where'd that come from?"

"Oh, I know from the beginning of this relationship, there were things about yourself that you didn't want to tell me. Things you've kept hidden from me. Actually, I don't mind about that. We all have things we keep to ourselves. Just don't blatantly lie to me, all right?"

"When did I lie to you?"

"Last night."

"Last night, I didn't even see you last night."

"I called. You said you were going to bed."

"Yes. And?"

"You didn't, you went out."

"How do you know that?"

"I drive by your place on the way to mine."

"Oh. Oh," Lynn said, shocked. Of course, he drove by her place. When he left work, he had to drive right by her apartment building.

"You were at work late last night?" she asked.

"Yes. That's where I called you from."

"Oh," Lynn said, disconcerted.

"I also need to tell you something about myself."

"Which is?"

"I am a great believer in domestic discipline."

"Domestic discipline?"

"Yes."

"What is that, exactly?"

"It's probably because of my job, but I believe that there should be consequences in a relationship for failure to adhere to the rules."

"What rules?"

"Like lying to me, young lady."

"Well, it wasn't a total lie. I was intending to stay home, and then Karen called and invited me out for a late night cocktail."

"Really?" Michael said, looking like he didn't believe her.

"Yeah, why?"

"Because I followed you."

"You did?"

"You did not go to a bar."

"No, I didn't."

"Are you cheating on me?"

"No."

"Well, then, why did you go to that apartment building?"

To case the joint. Lynn felt caught. She hadn't expected this and didn't have a lie handy.

"You obviously don't want to talk about it."

"No, I don't."

"All right. But don't lie to me."

"I'm sorry, Michael. I just have some loose ends of a previous life I'm trying to sort out. I've been involved with some people that I'm... that I have gotten rid of now, but... I keep an eye on one. I know I'm being cryptic here. It's just that I'm tired of thinking about it and talking about it. I was hoping, with our relationship, I could just leave it behind me. I hadn't realized the implications of going out with a police detective, that's all."

"You can't hide anything from me, Lynn. I will find out."

"I'm realizing that."

"Which is why you have to stop lying to me. At least, tell me you'd rather not talk about where

you're going or what you're doing. Don't tell me one thing and do another, all right?"

"Fine."

"I'm warning you now, so there won't be any misunderstandings between us. I won't tolerate lying in this relationship."

"I wouldn't either."

"I get the feeling that lying has become second nature to you for some reason. Like you're living two lives. One you keep private, the other you show me."

"Perhaps."

"Well, let me just be up front here, then," Michael said. "I'll let you slide this time, but if I catch you in another lie, there will be consequences."

"Consequences... what kind of consequences?"

"I'm a great believer in spanking as a deterrent."

"Spanking?"

"Spanking."

"Wait. So, if you catch me in a lie, you'll spank me?"

"That's exactly what I'm saying."

"You're kidding."

"Try me."

"Really?"

"Really."

"How hard?"

"Fairly hard. It will be a punishment. Not like the little play spankings I've given you during sex. This will be a real, punishment spanking that I can guarantee, you won't enjoy. So, don't lie to me, all right?"

Lynn had butterflies in her stomach. "All right," she said, completely disconcerted now.

"You have that much trouble telling the truth, do you?"

"No. No. I'm just..."

"Don't lie to me, do what you say you're going to do when you say you're going to do it, and you

won't ever have to face being punished. It's easy, Lynn. I don't intend to impose Draconian laws on you. Just don't lie to me."

"No problem. I... won't. I'll stop. I apologize. I don't want to do anything to erode the trust between us."

"Neither do I."

"Domestic discipline, huh?"

"Yes."

"So you've spanked other women?"

"Oh, yes."

"Your ex-wife?"

"She was a handful, yes, many times. I even had to go out and buy a paddle to keep that woman in line."

"A paddle."

"Believe me, you don't ever want to push me that far. Those leave marks."

"You really hit her?"

"Disciplined her, with her permission. Well, not always in the moment did I have her permission, but in general, she gave me power to impose sanctions upon her when her behavior merited it."

"So, is that what I'm doing now?"

"You'd better or it will be difficult for me to proceed with this relationship. As much as I love you, Lynn, I won't stand for being mistreated. You stay in this relationship with me; you agree to comply with my rules and demands. And I, in turn, will treat you the same, fairly. But, cross me, my girl, and there will be hell to pay."

"You're scaring me, Michael."

He smiled and kissed her. "Be good and all of this will be a moot point."

"Okay."

"Good girl."

For some reason, Lynn discounted what Michael had told her. While she didn't ever want to get caught lying to him, she had to lie to him. It was

now part of the deal. Because in no way could she let him know that she was the thief he was pursuing.

And, thank God, he'd given her the information that her fence was no longer safe to use. Lynn had a few other contacts in other towns nearby that could do the job for her. Usually, she rotated fences as a matter of precaution. But, she liked Blinky McCallahan, her current fence. But, his cover was blown. So, she would go elsewhere.

A week or so after Michael's warning, Lynn met him at his apartment. But, when he opened the door, something was clearly wrong.

"Michael, are you okay?" she asked after greeting him.

"Not entirely, follow me into the living room."

Lynn did so, wondering what could cause such a grave expression on his face.

Michael sat down on his large, leather couch and indicated she should sit with him.

"What?"

"Do you remember the conversation we had about a week ago?"

"Which one?"

"The one about domestic discipline."

Suddenly, the pit of Lynn's stomach dropped. Damn it. He knew. She thought she'd gotten away with it, but the night before, she'd had to lie to Michael. He'd called at eight for a last minute date, and she'd told him that she had to work. Which was actually the truth. But she couldn't tell him what kind of a job she'd done. He must have seen her go out. Damn it! Why did she have to be in love with a detective?

"I did have to work last night," Lynn finally said.

"You left your apartment at nine. You told me that your work would keep you home."

"Yes, I did."

"Where did you go?"

"Look, Michael, I was working."

"Where did you go?"

"Did you follow me?"

"I'm asking the questions here, young lady, now answer me. Where did you go?"

"You followed me to a parking garage."

"Yes, I did."

"Where I disappeared."

"Yes."

"When did you see me next?"

"I started this, don't get off the subject. Where did you go?"

"I work for some weird people, Michael."

"What kind of weird people?"

"That's confidential."

"Why did you tell me you'd be working at home?"

"Uh..."

"What did I tell you about lying to me?"

"Well, Michael..."

"I need to make a point with you here, Lynn."

"I didn't lie. Well... damn it."

"You did lie."

"Yes, I lied."

"All right, then. What did I say would happen if I caught you lying to me again?"

"That you'd spank me."

"Yes, I did."

Before Lynn could even protest, Michael pulled her across his lap. She began to fight him, but he took her arm and got her in a firm hold.

"Michael, I got it, I won't lie to you, I'm sorry, I—"

"Too late, Lynn. I told you what would happen, and I'm a man of my word, and you're just about to learn that."

To Lynn's shock, Michael grabbed her waistband and pulled her pants down to her knees. Then he grabbed her undies and pulled them down as well.

"Michael, you can't—"

"The only way to deliver a true spanking is upon the bare bottom of the recipient," Michael informed her coldly.

The first swat was shocking. Michael wasn't fooling around. His large and strong hand smacked her soundly across her naked rear end. It hurt!

"Ow! Michael, wait!"

Michael didn't say a word; he just laid into her behind with his open hand. Again and again, he impacted her poor, tender flesh with fearsome strikes. Michael was obviously practiced with this form of punishment. He was being thorough. He spanked one part of her rear until she squealed and then moved onto another, until there wasn't one square inch of her entire rear end and upper thighs that wasn't burning with pain.

Lynn cried and protested and begged Michael to stop, but he was on a mission. To make his point with her. And such a point it was! Lynn had never felt more vulnerable, or more stupid in her life. Lying to a detective? How did she ever think this could work?

Whack! Smack! Crack! Michael delivered series after series of very hard smacks to Lynn's sensitized rear. Only after she was sobbing in pain, did he finally stop.

Michael let her up and ordered, "Now strip and go into my bedroom and lie face down on the bed. Do as I say, go!"

"B-but Michael—"

"Lynn? Go," he ordered curtly.

Tears streaming down her face, Lynn shuffled miserably into Michael's bedroom and reluctantly took off her clothes and lay down on his bed.

She cried for a while, wondering how the hell she would ever have a future with the man. He was bound to find out that she was the cat burglar. Would he put her in jail?

Within a few minutes, Michael came into the room. She heard him undress and then get on the bed beside her. She felt lotion being poured onto her rear, and then his hands begin to massage it into her sore buns. It felt good.

"I don't enjoy punishing you, you know."

"I know."

"You just have to stop lying to me, Lynn. You can trust me. I won't hurt you. I just don't understand why you feel you need to continually lie to me."

"I'm sorry."

"I get the feeling that you're caught up in something. Something you don't want me to know about. Something illegal."

Lynn felt so grateful that she wasn't looking directly at him. Or, he'd know he'd hit the nail on the head.

"I could help you, you know. If you want out, I'll help you get out."

"Really, I'm fine, Michael."

"I can only help you if you tell me."

"It's nothing I want to talk about now."

Michael turned her over so he could look at her. He looked very concerned. "You aren't an Internet consultant, are you?"

"Uh... no."

His face fell.

"I don't want to lie to you, Michael."

"But you can't tell me the truth."

"Not now."

"Does it involve something illegal?"

"Michael, I won't lie to you anymore, okay? Just don't ask me so many questions. Then I won't have to."

"If our relationship is to progress, I will need to know everything about you. I need to know you, Lynn. I need access."

"I know."

"But, you still don't trust me enough to tell me."

"Trust really isn't the issue. Confidentiality is the issue. My clients would not be happy if they knew I was dating a detective."

"So you are doing something illegal."

"I didn't say that. I just said my clients wouldn't like this. That's all. Don't read into what I say, just take me at... my... word. Which is crap."

"You see my problem."

"Yes, I do."

"I can handle this for a while longer, and then I'll need to know."

"Okay."

Two nights later, Michael stayed the night at Lynn's place. Lynn was exhausted, having been up three nights in a row for three separate jobs. Lynn decided to increase her pace of robberies and quit. Then she wouldn't have to lie to Michael. So after she fixed him dinner, they watched a movie on the couch, where Lynn promptly fell asleep after the opening credits. When she awoke at three in the morning, she was in bed, and Michael was lying awake beside her.

"Why are you still awake, honey?" she asked.

"Just thinking. No need to worry. Just go back to sleep, Lynn."

Lynn couldn't help but do so because she was so tired. The next day, after Michael went to work, Lynn got on her computer to check her email and go over some schematics of a building she was going to break into. She went to check the website of the architect and couldn't remember his name. So she went into her History file to find the address. In her History file, she found something curious. The night before, the History logged three websites Lynn had never looked at. It was then she realized that Michael had been on her computer!

Lynn nearly threw up. She forgot to password protect her computer; being single, she saw no need. What if he'd found her information files on all those buildings she'd broken into? Was that why he was awake at three?

Lynn quickly decided she shouldn't worry about it. There was nothing she could do about it, anyway. She password protected her computer, just to make sure that Michael would have no further access.

That night, they weren't going to see each other. Michael said he was busy on a case, which was fine with Lynn. She decided to go for broke and pull one of her last, big jobs that evening. She was going for a penthouse suite belonging to local millionaire. Her sources had informed her that a huge diamond necklace was stored at the apartment. She knew exactly how she was going to get in and out. This one shouldn't be a big deal.

It was not a big deal. Her plan went perfectly. She got the necklace and got out, a flawless execution. She stopped at a bar and had a cocktail to celebrate.

When she pulled up into her parking space back at her apartment house, she noticed her guest parking space was taken; by Michael's car.

When she looked over, she noticed that not only was his car there, so was Michael. Which was odd, she'd given him her key. She rolled down her window, and he rolled down his.

"Hey, honey, what's going on? I thought you had to work," she said amicably. She couldn't see his face in the darkened car opposite her. But, when she heard his voice, she knew something was wrong.

"I did go to work. And I caught someone."

"You did? You don't sound too happy about it."

"I'm not."

"Well, did you arrest them?"

"No."

"No?"

"No."

"Are you okay?"

"No, I'm not."

"What's wrong?"

"Let's go up to your apartment, and I'll tell you."

"This sounds serious."

"It is."

He couldn't know. Could he? No, she was imagining things.

Lynn realized that she had to bring up her briefcase with the necklace in it. No way was she leaving a hundred thousand dollar diamond necklace in her car overnight. But this was all so dangerous with Michael around. If he saw it, she'd have to tell him that it was costume jewelry, lie her way out.

When she saw his face, she got even more worried. Michael looked like an executioner. But, she hadn't lied to him, not directly. They weren't even supposed to see each other that evening.

She let him into her apartment, and without warning, he snatched her briefcase away from her.

"Michael, that's mine—I—"

"I know it's yours," he said in a low growl. He walked into her dining room, placed the briefcase on top of the dining table and opened it up.

Michael reached in and pulled out the necklace. He turned around and glared at her. Lynn wanted to faint.

"Do you have something you'd like to tell me?" he asked.

"Uh, I don't know what you think that is, but its a costume piece I—"

"Oh, costume jewelry? So you don't mind if I toss it out the window then?" he said, walking over to the window in her dining room and opening it up.

"Michael NOOOOO!" Lynn couldn't help but yell.

Michael turned around and said, "If it's costume jewelry, why are you so worried if I throw it away?"

"Well, it's expensive costume jewelry and—"

"Goddamn it, Lynn! If you don't start telling me the truth, I'm going to toss this thing out the window! Now talk!"

"I can't! Please, don't throw that out, it's real! Okay? It's real! It's worth a hundred grand. Please, Michael, stop!"

Michael was so angry that he looked demonic. "Start talking now, Lynn and talk fast."

"I can't. You don't want to know."

"Oh, yes I do. Miss Cat Burglar!"

Lynn winced. "Sorry."

"So it was you!"

After a pause, she said, "Yeah. Sorry."

"Sorry is not going to cut it—strip, Lynn. Now."

"Wait I—"

"All your clothes off. Now."

"But Michael, I—"

"Don't disobey me now, Lynn, take them off, all of them."

"But you—"

"Do it now or I'll do it for you."

Lynn quickly stripped.

Michael grabbed her arm, dragged her to the couch and without another word, he sat down and pulled her across his lap.

He lit into her bare behind with gusto. Fast and hard, Michael thundered into her poor tender rear with forceful strikes. Lynn howled and wiggled and fought, but Michael held her fast. He was relentless, covering her entire rear with searing spanks. Up, down and all around, Michael's firm hand worked Lynn's upturned bottom until she wailed in pain and shock.

He abruptly stopped. "You pulled the job at Mrs. William's mansion that night I met you, didn't you?"

"Yes, Michael."

Whack! Whack! Whack! Michael laid into her again.

"Ow! Michael! Stop!"

"Like hell I will!"

Michael spanked her soundly until she felt branded.

Finally, he stopped again.

"You are going to stop, young lady! You hear me? You are going to stop!"

"Okay, okay!"

Michael let her up and instead of pushing her away, like she expected, he cradled her in his arms as she cried.

"Now, look, you've put me in a hell of a position, but this time, I won't prosecute. But you get out of

this business now, and you get a legitimate job, you hear me?"

"Yes, Michael."

"I love you, and I'm going to marry you, but no wife of mine is going to be some cat burglar!"

"I'll stop."

"You sure as hell will. I can't believe it. Here, I've been after this hardened criminal mastermind and it turns out to be my soft, sweet girlfriend! How long have you been doing this?"

"I don't know. Eighteen years."

"Eighteen years! Have you ever been caught?"

"No. You're the first."

"How did you evade them?"

"I'm good, Michael."

"I can't believe this. I knew you had secrets, but this is too much."

"It's just a job."

"It's immoral."

"Maybe so, but none of the people I ripped off have ever really hurt from it. I only target people who can afford it, and I never clean them out. I always take one specific piece and leave the rest."

"This does not make it right."

"I never said that. But, I have a code I live by."

"If I wasn't putting an end to it, would you have continued?"

"No, I've reached my financial goals. With this job, I'm done. I always intended to quit."

"So how wealthy are you?"

"Got a lot more than you, honey."

"But, this apartment is modest, your car—"

"All my money is tied up in investments. I don't like spending money; I like earning money. Now, I have enough real estate and passive legitimate income that I can quit."

"This is a lot to comprehend."

"So... are you gonna dump me?"

"Of course, not. No, now I have to stay with you. Darling, I'm going to be your own professional police force. You step out of line, you steal a pack of

gum from here on out, and I'll buy myself a paddle."

"Uh, oh."

"Yes, I'm going to be watching you a lot closer, young lady."

"A lot closer?"

"Yes."

"How close?"

"This close," Michael said, leaning down to kiss her while his hand disappeared between her legs.

