

Bad Girls

III

By
Michelle Carlyle

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Dedication

To Reesa and Josh at disciplineanddesire.com:
Thanks so much for all your wonderful help and
guidance over the years. I couldn't have done it
without you. Keep up the excellent work. You
guys are the best!

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Calamity Clarissa
Part One

Dimitri scanned the vast meadows of his large country estate from the giant picture window in his mahogany-paneled study. He couldn't see her anywhere.

He heard a familiar squeak of orthopedic shoes behind him. His housekeeper, June.

"Where is she, have you seen her?" he asked without turning around.

"No, sir," the older woman replied. "She went out sometime after two for a ride and I haven't seen her since."

His fist balled, he punched his palm. "Damn the woman! I told her not to go out unescorted! She promised me she wouldn't!"

"She is headstrong, that girl. How much longer is she staying with us?"

Dimitri threw up his hands and began pacing. "God, I have no idea. I wish my idiot of a brother hadn't offered the family house to her. Without my knowledge, I might add. Damn him, anyway. Dumps this disaster on me, when all these repairs are going on; the estate is gearing up for that charity event in two months time; I have no time to chase after Frederick's guests. Especially not that impulsive Clarissa nightmare."

"What exactly is the reason for her visit, sir, if I may ask?"

"Under the guise of some study she's doing on country estates in New England. She's working on her doctorate in architecture and is doing her thesis on the history of this area. But my God, you'd think a Yale graduate student would have more sense. But not that woman. Do you know I had to rescue her from the pond yesterday? She was investigating the structure of the feature and somehow managed to slip in. I found her slipping, sliding, covered with slime, desperately trying to claw her way out. I

hadn't even intended to go by there, I found her totally by accident, crying out for help, a complete mess!"

"Yes, sir, I helped clean her up. She's quite a pretty little thing, though, isn't she?"

Clarissa had the brightest blue eyes, a pert nose, and a cute way she tilted her head when she studied something. "Too pretty. Too talkative, too inquisitive, too much of everything. Damn it, I don't need to baby-sit some Calamity Jane while I'm so pressed for time. She went for a ride? Can she even ride a horse?"

"She said she could. James saddled up Rose, since she's the most gentle. Clarissa said something about checking out the old cabin in the south forty. Apparently, the old place has some kind of history."

"Yes, yes, it does. But my God, the entire area is completely overgrown. I'd better go make sure she hasn't fallen in some old cesspool, God knows what kind of trouble she could get in. She needs a keeper, that woman!" Dimitri stormed off to get into his riding clothes.

A half an hour later, Dimitri headed out of the stables on Prideful, his favorite Appaloosa. He rode for a good twenty minutes until he reached the south forty area. He saw the cabin in the distance, partially hidden by trees and overgrown bushes. In front of the old shack stood a horse. Rose.

Clarissa was fit to be tied. Not again! What was wrong with her? Why was it always like this? Her best-laid plans always turned into such disasters. She'd only walked into the old cabin, that's it, just walked inside. Suddenly, the floorboards gave and she found herself trapped in a hidden chamber underneath the cabin. The walls were of earth; there were no footholds; it was dark; she had no way of getting out. This was all so unbearable! No

way would anyone find her out there. Unless they found the horse. Then maybe, just maybe they'd find her.

She prayed Dimitri wouldn't be the one to find her. He'd forbidden her to go out alone and she'd gone anyway. His brother had warned her about him. Dimitri was a stickler for the rules. He had a reputation for being picky, controlling and domineering. He'd been a lieutenant colonel in the Army, when he retired, he'd returned to the family estate to manage its restoration. Ever since he'd returned, he'd become very much the lord of the manor. Frederick said that his brother was a throwback to an older time.

While Dimitri been gracious enough to allow her to stay with him for her study, he'd made it plain that she was unwelcome. Even when she wasn't bothering him, he was treating her like an irresponsible child. Which was too bad because he was such a hunk. She'd fallen for him the first time she'd laid eyes on him. So handsome! Tall, lean, he had amazing green eyes that reminded her of a panther's eyes. While arrogant and commanding, she had witnessed, first hand, that he had a much warmer, more tender side. When he was unaware of her presence, she saw him pick up a kitten that had gotten lost from its mother. He'd nuzzled it, kissed it and comforted the poor little mewling thing as he took it off to rejoin its parent. It was clear to her in that moment that his bark was worse than his bite.

But still, she in no way wanted to be found by him. With that authoritarian streak of his, he may just toss her off the property before she could finish her study.

"Miss Fontaine?!" a man called loudly. "Miss Fontaine, are you out here?"

Clarissa couldn't believe it. Someone had found her! She was saved!

"Clarissa?" came the voice again.

She heard it clearly this time. Her heart sank. Dimitri. She couldn't let him find her like this!

A large, hairy spider dropped on her arm. She let out a shriek that could wake the dead. Okay, that was it. Who cared if she got kicked off the estate, she wanted out of there!

"Dimitri!" she called out. "Dimitri! I'm here!"

He heard a muffled reply from somewhere off in front of him. Damn it, she *was* in trouble! He knew it! Ever since the woman arrived on his doorstep, he felt an uncanny connection to her. When she fell in the pond, he was in the library, choosing a stain for the walls when something in the back of his mind told him to go find her. Just like today, he instinctively knew she was in trouble. Now if he could only find the horrid little thing.

He rode towards the sounds of her cries. As he got closer, he heard her more clearly.

"Miss Fontaine? Where? Where are you?" He stopped Prideful in front of the old, dilapidated wooden building.

"I'm here! I'm here, under the floorboards of the cabin! Watch out, the floor is weak!" came her muffled reply.

Under the floorboards? What was she talking about?

He dismounted and approached the cabin. "Where are you?"

"Under the cabin!" she called out.

"Under the cabin?" he asked. As far as he knew there was nothing under the floorboards. Just about two feet of space.

He carefully walked across the rickety porch and stepped inside. There, about six feet in front of him, was a large, person-sized hole in the floor. He leaned over and peered inside the gaping hole. There below him, looking up at him with large blue eyes, was the scruffy-looking, red-haired problem.

As angry as he was, he was surprised by how far down she was. "I had no idea that was there. Deep, isn't it? So how did you manage to end up there?"

"I told you, I fell through the floorboards! Watch out! The floor is barely a floor!"

"For Christ's sake, you are a problem, woman. What did I say? Huh? What did I tell you?"

"I know."

"You know. Do you know that you cost me three thousand dollars today because I had to come out here to find you rather than oversee a very important project? I had to send the workers home early."

"Oh."

"Yes, oh. You are completely out of control woman! When are you going to stop?!"

"Well, jeez, you don't have to be so mad. I would have got myself out eventually, Dimitri. I'm not some weak idiot that has to be rescued all the time, I'm not that kind of woman!"

"What utter garbage. You are delusional, woman. Now hush for a moment and let me figure out how to get you out of there."

"Jeez. I'm not like this!"

"Very convincing. All right, I'm going to lie down here and pull you up. You'll have to help, get some footholds in the walls down there."

"This is so embarrassing. Look, all I did was come out here and walk into the building. That's it. Walk inside a building."

"You promised me you wouldn't venture out on your own unescorted."

"Oh, come on, how the hell am I supposed to study your place with a buncha people following me around? Besides, I was fine. It's your stupid floorboards here. This is a dangerous building, Dimitri."

"Which is why the public is not allowed to venture out alone. You broke my rules, Miss Fontaine, and I am not happy with you."

"Jesus Christ, Dimitri. Listen to yourself. You gotta learn how to lighten up. Besides, this was not my fault."

"Oh, no? Then whose fault is it? Did James put a gun to your head and order you out here? Did I push you down into that hole?"

"Practically. Come on, it was completely logical for me to come out here, we were talking about it last night."

"And I specifically remember telling you not to come out here alone. Didn't I? Didn't I tell you not to come out here? Didn't I warn you?"

"If I listened to every stupid warning people give me, I'd never get out of bed."

"This is my home, my domain, and I expect you to follow my rules. Do you hear me, Miss Fontaine?"

"How could I not? You're shouting."

"Miss Fontaine!"

"Dimitri, I'm down here in the dark with a buncha nasty spiders and you have to turn this into a huge blame thing, don't you? Look, I—"

"Don't try my patience anymore than you already have, Miss Fontaine. You're tempting me to leave you there."

"Look, it wasn't my fault! I know you hate me, but I did not—"

"I do not hate you, Miss Fontaine. Now please, are you going to shut up long enough to allow me to rescue you or do you want to stay down there?"

"No, no. I need your help."

"Good. Now take my hand," he said, lowering his hand down to her.

She could just reach it. She took a firm grasp on his hand and with his help, she climbed out of the dark, cold space.

He couldn't believe what a mess she was. Her long red curly hair was a tangle of leaves, dirt and old pieces of floorboard. Her perfectly oval face was covered in smudges of dirt, one large smear on the end of her small, turned-up nose. Her bright blue

eyes peered at him from behind the dirt and mass of hair; a mixture of contrition and relief on her face. But beyond that, he sensed a subtle air of defiance about her. It was clear she felt blameless in the entire affair. Frustrating!

"Are you done getting into trouble, Miss Fontaine? If you aren't, there's an old mine shaft a few miles from here that I'm sure you'd love to explore. Or perhaps the lake, just down the trail here. I'm sure there's some way you could find your way to getting stuck in the mud there. Or maybe you'd like to explore the roof of the main house? There must be some way to damage yourself further, don't you think?" he bit out.

"I was just about to say thank you, but apparently, you're more interested in belittling me. Your brother said you were arrogant and condescending, he forgot to add incredibly rude to your impressive roster of traits," she said, huffing by him, heading towards her horse.

Dimitri exploded. He rushed after her, grabbed her arm and turned her around to face him. "How dare you talk back to me, after what you've done to me? Do you have any idea how busy I am? Or how important the work is that I do around here? You may think that I'm some rich arrogant fool who spends all his time indulging his useless whims, but I can assure you that what I do is far more important than baby-sitting a disaster area like you!"

She slapped him across the face. Hard.

He stood shock still, holding the side of his face, staring at her in disbelief. Before her mind could catch up to his actions, he grabbed her and dragged her over to a large, stone and wood bench that sat under an old apple tree. She fought him as hard as she could, but soon he had her across his lap with her arm behind her back.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?!" she demanded.

"Making very sure that this is the last time you hit me and the last time I have to rescue you from some ill thought out plan! You disobeyed me, you broke the rules and you hit me, you little rotten brat, and for that you will pay the price!" he pronounced.

It was then she felt the first swat to her upturned rear. Shocking! The man was actually spanking her! Clarissa Fontaine! Yale graduate student, over some rich jerk's knee being spanked like a child! Inconceivable!

Dimitri took all his pent up frustration at the squirming little brat and slapped her sassy rear with vigor. He treated her to full, long swats; pulling back his arm far behind him and allowing the full weight his swing to impact her insolent behind. The sound of the smacks were loud and echoed off the walls of the nearby cabin. Soon, her squeals of pain drowned out the slaps.

He took his time with her, luxuriating in her cries, basking in her sobs. This little troublemaker was going to learn a lesson this day. Slapping him for rescuing her! Talking back to him when she'd practically ruined his day. Nothing had ever felt so good, giving this girl her comeuppance.

But throughout his punishment, there were unwanted thoughts playing in the back of his mind. He was all too aware of the feel of her bottom underneath his hand. The curves of her very feminine body; her tight little legs kicking; the tangle of red hair. He couldn't help but think about what she'd feel like underneath him. What she'd look like without those tight jeans on her.

What was he thinking? She was a human catastrophe and he needed to run as far away from her as he could get.

But still, he couldn't help but picture her naked underneath him. Dominating her, making passionate love to her. He wondered what her screams of pleasure would sound like.

Get a hold of yourself, man!

He forcefully pushed the frightening ideas out of his head as he pushed her off his lap. She fell in a heap on the soft earth and leaves under the tree.

As she sobbed uncontrollably at his feet, he pointed down at her and thundered, "You push me any further, woman, and the next time I won't go so easy on you! Next time, I'm pulling those jeans right off you and spanking that bare bottom of yours!"

He strode off towards his horse, mounted him, kicked his powerful flanks and left the human mess sobbing under the tree. As he rode away, he shoved away the niggling compulsion to return to her and comfort her.

He urged Prideful to go faster.

When Dimitri sat down at the dining room table later that evening, he noticed that only one place was set. "So where is our guest this evening? Not hungry?" he asked June as she set his dinner in front of him.

"She took a tray in her room, sir. She said she wasn't feeling well, something about falling. She's up there, laying on her stomach on the bed looking quite miserable."

Dimitri grinned into his wine glass and took a sip. "Thank you, June, that will be all." Ha! That will teach that little brat. He felt powerful and righteous.

As he enjoyed his dinner, something began bothering him. At first, he couldn't put his finger on it. He finally realized what it was. He was missing her company. What was wrong with him? She was nightmare. A human nightmare.

He had to admit that she'd regaled him with the funniest stories the evening before of her adventures and mishaps. She was bright, cheerful, witty and well read. He'd been surprised by her extensive knowledge of English Literature. She was

well versed on myriad subjects. She'd been very good company.

She'd been downright sweet, actually. She'd complimented him about his choices for paint colors and design choices in the restoration of the east wing. And there was no getting around her beauty. The way her curly red hair framed her face; the sprinkling of freckles across the bridge of her small, pert nose; the way her sparkling blue eyes playfully regarded him. As annoyed as he was with the intrusion, he soon forgot why she was there and on some level understood her to be a friend.

But on the other hand, she was so inquisitive, it bordered on the obsessive. She peppered him with unending questions. She filled herself on the most minute details about the mansion, its history and his ancestors. Exhausting him. But in those few quiet moments when she let her guard down, what was there captivated him. She was nearly exactly what he'd been looking for in a mate. Smart, sassy, funny, bold, outspoken. Almost brash at times. Yet thoughtful and kind as well.

He smiled when he thought of how gorgeous she looked when he rescued her from the pond—despite the slime. Her white shirt had become like a second skin and was completely see-through. There was nothing left to the imagination. He had found himself staring at her, unable to move. Her laughter had broken him out of his trance. Embarrassed, he made a bad attempt at hiding his attraction and called for June to help clean her up.

A renewed surge of fury fired through him. What had she been thinking going off by herself like that? After the pond fiasco, she almost fell off the third floor verandah trying to get a good photograph. As she began to head over the railing, he'd leapt forward and just caught her. After that, he'd made her promise to wait for an escort before venturing about the estate on her own. She obviously thought he was being ridiculous, but she had promised him.

Dimitri wished she'd come some other week, when he had more time. He had twenty-seven workmen to oversee: plumbers, restoration carpenters, painters and plasterers. A decision a second, he ran from one end of the mansion to the other; fielding questions, making calls to supply houses; it had been crazy. In the middle of all this, the woman disappears. He still couldn't believe she'd slapped him after he'd saved her. That spanking had been earned. Justified.

It was her fault that she was up in her room, sulking. Of course, he had hit her pretty hard. Her bottom had to be quite sore. Which couldn't help but make him grin. She should have listened to him.

On his way to bed, he couldn't seem to stop himself from walking by her door. When he heard the television in her room, before he knew it, he'd knocked on her door.

"Who is it?" she called out.

"Dimitri. May I come in?"

"If you must," she grumbled.

Grinning to himself, he opened the door. She was on her stomach, watching TV in pink pajamas, a disconcerted expression on her small face. Adorable.

"How are you feeling? I missed you at dinner," he said.

"Oh, I bet. You jerk. Don't worry, I'm leaving in two days, then you can be free of me."

His jolly mood vanished instantly. Why did she set him off so much?

"Excellent, then maybe I can get some work done around here."

"Why did you stop by, just to taunt me? I can't even sit, you bully."

His jaw set, he crossed his arms across his chest and stood tall. "If you will recall, you slapped me right after I rescued you from that black hole filled with spiders. Not only did you break your promise

to me, you disobeyed me and then hit me when I called you on it. I will not apologize for that spanking. You earned it. Furthermore, if you dare to explore the grounds tomorrow alone, I will follow through on my earlier threat and thrash you bare-bottomed."

Her mouth twisted in defiance, her eyes glittered with challenge. "You're not the only one who owns this place. I called Fred and he said that I could go anywhere I wanted, anytime I wanted."

Dimitri's blood boiled, he could feel the steam leaking from his ears. "Frederick had no right telling you any sort of thing. I'm in charge here, I'm the authority. Anything you do has to go by me and I'm telling you, if you dare to gallivant around alone, I will come track you down and spank the living daylight out of you!"

Her chin thrust out, her eyes narrowed, she said, "Maybe I will, maybe I won't. But it will be up to me, what I do tomorrow, not you."

"The hell you say! You try it, Miss Fontaine, you go ahead and try it, but if you think your rear is sore tonight, just you wait. I haven't even started with you yet! You disobey me again and there will be hell to pay!" he pronounced.

She waved a hand. "Blah, blah, blah, words, words, words, get out! I'm done listening to your stupid threats, I've got more important things to do like watch inane programming on TV!"

"Fine!" he yelled more loudly than he meant to. "Good night!" He stormed out the room, slamming the door behind him.

She made him so mad! Why was she like that?! Why couldn't she be more compliant?! Would it be so hard for her to try to get along with him? No! She was a human hurricane. A train wreck.

And unfortunately, a horribly attractive little train wreck! He could not figure it out, the more she derided him, the more she tormented him, the more

he wanted to make love to her. He wasn't right in the head, he just wasn't right in the head!

Clarissa glared after him as he slammed the door. The big jerk! Why couldn't he be nicer to her? Why couldn't he try to get along? If he thought she was going to just roll over and play dead at his mighty greatness, he had another think coming. She would go where she wanted, when she wanted. He wasn't going to tell her what to do. Fred had said she could go anywhere. And that's exactly what she was going to do. Dimitri wasn't the only one in charge, Fred was, too. Damn it.

If only she wasn't so attracted to the big control freak. The more he blustered at her, the more she wanted to kiss him, to attack him. She had something seriously wrong with her, she must. Why did she like the guy so much when he was so horrible to her?

The next day, Clarissa decided she'd go down to breakfast. She wanted to face him, to prove that she wasn't afraid of him.

When she walked into the dining room he was seated at the head of the twenty-foot-long mahogany dining table; pouring himself a cup of coffee; looking handsome as ever. When their eyes met, sparks flew. But not all of them were good.

As she walked to the buffet, he said, "So, I see you've decided to grace me with your presence."

She ignored him and concentrated on the array of sterling silver serving dishes set on the antique sideboard.

She sighed and went for a bored and false tone. "Good morning, Dimitri, I hope you slept well."

He didn't miss a beat. "Very well, thank you very much. So, were you comfortable? Sleeping on your stomach?"

She stopped serving herself the scrambled eggs to glare at him. "I'm warning you, don't start with

me or milord might find himself wearing his breakfast."

He grinned at her. "I dare you to try."

She tossed her head and turned back to the food. She served herself, walked to far end of the table and set her plate down.

He laughed heartily. And even harder when he saw how gingerly she sat down in the chair.

She ignored him.

Dimitri was delighted. She was so fun to tease! He hadn't had this much enjoyment out of female companionship in years. It was too bad she was leaving the next day. If only there was some way of keeping her around.

"So what are her ladyship's plans for the day? Do you require any assistance? Tell me now so I can schedule you in. I've got two bathrooms to oversee today."

"How appropriate," she muttered.

"Didn't sleep well?"

"You know very well, I didn't!" Damn it, she didn't want to react to him. She had to get her power back.

"Good. Then maybe you learned something yesterday."

"Yes, I learned what a jerk you are."

"Uh, uh, Miss Fontaine. You don't want to find yourself over my knee again, do you?"

She thrust her chin out and dared him to try.

"You're playing with fire, Miss Fontaine."

"You're the one who's gonna get burned the next time, Dimitri."

"We'll see, won't we?"

"We sure will."

Calamity Clarissa
Part Two

Clarissa's jaw jutted out as she pointed at her less-than-gracious host, sitting across from her at the large, expansive dining room table. "I'll kick your ass if you try spanking me again. You took me by surprise. I won't be going easy on you, so don't even try that again. You will be sorry if you do."

Dimitri laughed delightedly. "Oh, really? Just what are you going to do to me? I outweigh you, I can out wrestle you, I can out fight you, darling, you are at my mercy here. You'd best remember that and start being nice to me. You do want access to the entire grounds, don't you? I can limit your visit to just the house if you don't behave."

"Frederick—"

"—is not here, my dear. My brother, while part owner, is not the manager of Harrington Hills. Nor is he here at the present time. While it was his right to invite you here, I'm the one who sets the rules for guests and family alike. And you'd better get that through that impulsive little head of yours. I am in charge, not you, and I'm forbidding you to run about the estate unescorted. Do you understand me?"

"I hear you, Dimitri, but—"

"But what? When are you going to come to your senses and just admit you were wrong and let me escort you?"

"Look, I didn't mean to get stuck in that cabin or in the pond. Sometimes I have bad luck. But I am not a child that you have to watch or protect or spank! I am a grown woman, sir, and you crossed a boundary with me, you struck me—"

"Ahem," he interrupted. "Who struck whom first? Who would that be? Do you think I enjoyed that? I rescue you and then you slap me? How do you think that made me feel?"

"Well, you were... Look, don't turn this around on me, you were clearly in the wrong there."

"You slapped me. Right after I rescued you."

She was finally quiet. After a few moments she said, "I'm still going where I like while I'm here. Frederick said I could so I am. I won't get into any more trouble, I won't bother you one bit. I just don't want a police escort because I made a couple minor mistakes—"

"Minor mistakes, you could have died!"

"Oh, come on."

"Falling ten feet into that pit below? Hello?"

"Okay, well, when you put it that way..."

"While you are here, you will obey me or you will suffer the consequences. That is it. I'm laying down the law. You can see anything you want as long as you are either in my company or that of one of my employees, but no, you may not venture off alone and that's final. Now would you like some coffee?"

"You... damn it."

"Coffee?"

"Fine," she grumbled.

"Well then, since you chose to sit all the way down there at the far end of the table, you can come up here and get your coffee."

Her face turned red with anger; her blue gaze flashed at him. "You are such a jerk!" she exclaimed.

He held up the coffee pot and waited for her.

Mumbling to herself, she grabbed her plate of food and her cup and moved up to sit next to him in the vast dining room hall.

Dimitri poured her coffee and then shot her a grin as he set down the pot onto the large mahogany table.

"You are so mean. No wonder you're still single," she muttered.

"And you are a complete disaster area. It's no wonder why you're still single, too."

Her mouth tightened. "I've had plenty of proposals, buddy."

"I'm sure. Was that before or after you almost killed them in one of your ill-thought out schemes?"

Her mouth fell open, she dropped her fork. "How do you know that Jeffrey almost died?"

He burst out laughing. "I didn't know, I was just teasing you. Really? You almost got a fiancé killed?"

She picked up her fork and returned to her food. "It's not funny."

"I'll bet it wasn't to him."

"No, it wasn't."

There was quiet as she concentrated on eating.

Dimitri took a sip of coffee. "Aren't you going to tell me what happened?"

She glared at him. "No, you'll just think that I'm to blame. Like everyone else. But it wasn't my fault."

"I'm sure not."

"It wasn't. How was I supposed to know that the rope wasn't tied securely to the top of the climbing wall?" She gestured towards an imaginary wall. "It was hanging there."

He couldn't believe she dared to engage in such a dangerous sport. "Don't tell me you took climbing lessons."

"Of course, I did, it was fun," she said enthusiastically. Her brows knitted together and she shrugged. "Until I fell on Jeffrey."

Dimitri almost spit out his coffee. "You fell on him?"

"It was an accident," she said earnestly. "That and the car, neither were my fault. But when he broke up with me while he was in the hospital, he started making all these accusations about me planning to hurt him. I'm not capable! Damn it, things just seem to happen to me."

He chuckled. "You have no impulse control, woman."

She rolled her eyes and made a face. "Oh, right. I mean, I hardly ever get hurt. Only once in a while. But Jeffrey thought I was deliberately trying to hurt him. The idiot. I'm glad he broke it off with me. As if I'm capable of hurting anyone. I mean, I was sure that the parking brake was on. How was I supposed to know that it wasn't the release for the convertible top?"

Dimitri got an entire picture of the scene. "Don't tell me. Jeffrey was in front of the car, instructing you on how to take down the top of the convertible, you pulled the parking brake and ran over him?"

She spun on him, her gaze intense. "Did Frederick tell you the story? Wait, I didn't tell him. How do you know so much?"

Dimitri belly laughed. Finally, he calmed himself enough to speak. "He didn't, you just did. Oh, my God, he was so stupid. He should have known better. Stood in front of the car while giving you instructions. Didn't the climbing wall tell him anything?"

She threw down her napkin onto the table. "It wasn't my fault!"

He could not stop laughing. "I'm sure not."

"It's not funny," she said with a pout.

"Oh, yes it is."

"You wouldn't be laughing if you were me," she grumbled. She returned to her food.

"No, I probably wouldn't. Jeffrey was an idiot. He should have been able to figure out by then what kind of luck you had; that you were a catastrophe in the making; and he should have made the necessary adjustments to his plans. But he was in denial as much as you."

"I am not a catastrophe!"

"Oh, yes you are. But I don't think you're malicious, I don't think you plan these kinds of things. I just don't think you think things through. I think you're impulsive, curious and both of those

factors—along with some heinous bad luck—all contribute to the problem.”

She glowered at him. “I am not a problem.”

“The hell you aren’t. I pity the man who finally weds you. It will be a full-time job keeping an eye on you.”

“I haven’t ever broken one bone in my entire life,” she said as if this were proof positive of her innocence.

Her luscious mouth beckoned to him. Instead of leaping across the table and kissing her, he said, “How many car accidents have you been in?”

“Only about four or five,” she said matter-of-factly. “And none in the past... well, since Jeffrey. But that wasn’t my fault. It was his car and he didn’t show me all the levers and such. Just assumed I would automatically know what lever went to what function. I’m not stupid, you know.”

“I know that. You’re highly educated and very intelligent. I’m not talking about that. I’m talking about the pond and the cabin and Jeffrey’s car and I’m sure a hundred other incidents just like those. You get yourself into fixes often, don’t you?”

“No,” she said, but it was clear she didn’t believe it.

“Clarissa.”

She shrugged. “Well, not that much.”

“How often?”

“Oh, I don’t know, I’ve lost count. Most of them don’t count.”

He gave a short, barking laugh. “What do you mean, don’t count? No lasting injuries sustained?”

“Well... yeah. Nobody gets that hurt. Jeffrey was a jerk. I told him we didn’t need the top down. It was cold, anyway. And he stopped the damn car on a hill. That wasn’t smart either. Nor did he brace the tires against the curb. I’m telling you, that wasn’t my fault,” she said, her face flushed, worry lines deep on her sweet face.

"Clarissa, stop getting so upset, I know you're not capable of directly hurting anyone. Well, except for me, yesterday."

"I didn't exactly mean to hit you. That happened before I could stop myself."

"You won't do it again, will you?"

She rubbed her rear. "Uh, no."

Dimitri leaned back and regarded her. He nodded. "See? I just think you haven't found a man yet who could handle you. Who could understand who you were and help you avoid getting yourself into dangerous situations."

She snorted. "I don't need a man to save me."

"Oh, yes, you do."

She threw down her fork. "I'm not weak!"

Completely unfazed by her angry display, he said, "I never said you were weak. I said you were in denial."

"I am not!"

"Clarissa."

"Well, I'm not. And damn it, I'm gonna prove to you that I'm not. Today, I'm going back to that cabin to investigate that room. I was reading up on the history of this estate and that cabin once belonged to smugglers. There may be a tunnel connecting it to the river."

Dimitri set his coffee cup down a bit too hard, some spilled onto the polished and gleaming table. He pointed at her. "You will do no such thing. That is too dangerous. I'm having the entire area secured until I can get the carpenters out there to make things safe. Now there's plenty of other places on the estate I'd love to show you. I'll be available after one this afternoon."

It was clear she didn't believe him. "Come on, the cabin isn't that dangerous, we—"

He pulled himself up, straightened his shoulders and looked her straight in the eye. "No, I said no, Clarissa. It's too dangerous."

"Dimitri, that was an accident," she said, pointing off towards the direction of the cabin. "I know better now. I was going to bring a ladder and a few spotlights and stuff and investigate that hole. I won't make the same mistake again."

He kept his straight-backed posture. "No, you're won't. Because you are not going out there and neither am I. We aren't. Get it out of your mind. Not until I can have that floor reinforced."

She sat back and looked at her lap. "I think you're being silly."

"Too bad, don't disobey me again, Clarissa. You're having difficult sitting now. Don't let me get after you again. This next time, I can guarantee you, you won't be sitting for a week."

She glared at him. "Spanking is humiliating. I'm not a child."

"You were acting like one. So I treated you like one."

It was clear to Clarissa that arguing with him was getting her nowhere. She'd pretend to be compliant. She would let him think what he wanted and go out to the cabin anyway. If she got back before lunch, he would be none the wiser.

"I will know if you go out there," he said as if reading her mind.

She tried to keep her cool. "I wasn't planning on it."

He smiled. "Oh, no? I saw that idea go through your head. Don't try it, Clarissa."

"Look, I was thinking about something else. You're no mind reader, Dimitri."

"Now she's lying to me. You aren't a very efficient liar, Miss Fontaine."

"Great, now he's mind reading and accusing me of lying to him. You're never happy, are you? I'm complying, I'm complying, okay?" she said, crossing her fingers under the table.

"And no crossing your fingers under the table, Missy."

How could he know?! She held her hands up and wiggled her fingers at him. "I told you, I won't go out there." *Not for at least another half hour. Not until I'm sure you're fully occupied.*

"Good, see that you don't," he said, smiling at her.

Why was he smiling at her? He actually looked like he was fond of her. She must be misinterpreting that. He couldn't like her, could he? She noticed the way he stared at her breasts the other day when she fell in the pond and he rescued her. But he was a man. All non-gay men loved breasts. But he was sending her some pretty smoldering looks. Curious. Her heart skipped a beat at the thought of his sensual lips on hers. He was so cute. Those cat-like green eyes, his strong male features, his sinewy arms, he was such a handsome man.

He was also a nit-picky, controlling demi-god. A stern taskmaster. It would never work out between them. He scared her too much. He'd be all over her case all the time, trying to stop her from doing what she wanted.

But they'd be pretty fantastic in the sack together, that was a near certainty. Too bad he was so domineering.

All Dimitri could think about was leaping across the table and kissing her. As Clarissa pouted and twisted her mouth in an effort to figure out a way around his orders, she looked so adorable. He hadn't been taken by a woman like this in years. Those soft red curls around her sweet face, those sparkling blue eyes, full of mischief, it was all he could do not to carry her off to his bedroom.

Where no doubt she would scream, slap him and run away. She didn't see him that way. She saw him as a big, overbearing authority figure. She was still clearly angry with him over her punishment.

A sly smile crossed his lips at the thought of her sweet backside over his lap. Two perfectly rounded

buns, there at his mercy. A charge went through his loins. She would be so fun to conquer. Underneath him, her legs and mouth parted, that saucy look in her eye. Delicious.

Too soon, breakfast was over.

"So?" he asked. "After lunch? I'll take you around the estate? How does that sound?"

"Great, Dimitri."

"What will you be doing until then?"

"I have some old documents I need to review in my room."

"Excellent. So I'll see you here at noon for lunch?"

"Yes, Dimitri."

A spring in his step, Dimitri left his houseguest.

Clarissa quickly formed a plan. She was going out to that cabin whether he liked it or not. She was nearly certain there was a secret smuggler's tunnel beneath it. She went to her room and studied the map of the estate. One of the roads on the vast grounds went very near the cabin. Perfect. She'd only have to carry the ladder a short distance. All she had to do was borrow a maintenance truck without Dimitri knowing it. She could get out there and back before he found out she'd left the mansion. This would work!

After making sure that Dimitri was otherwise occupied, she rushed out of the house to the maintenance building. In broken Spanish, she explained to a group of workers that Dimitri gave her permission to take one of the trucks. The men were quite accommodating at the mention of the big man.

Soon, she was happily driving off to the cabin with her truck, flashlight and ladder. Sweet!

It wasn't easy, but she managed to haul the heavy ladder the four or five hundred yards to the old cabin from where she parked. Pouring down

with sweat, she carefully slid the ladder across the old rotting floor and eased it down into the gaping hole she'd fallen through the day before. She grabbed her flashlight, stepped cautiously across the creaking floorboards and climbed down into the vast space under the cabin.

When she shined the flashlight around her, her heart leapt into her throat. She'd been right! There was a dark tunnel leading off from one side of the large earthen room. And on second glance, the room in which she was standing wasn't made of dirt, it was built of masonry and stones. Over the years it had been covered by dirt, but the room was clearly built in the Civil War era. It was a smuggler's den! She was so excited she could barely see straight.

Clarissa knew she shouldn't, but she couldn't stop herself. She carefully and cautiously began to venture into the large dark, cobweb-covered tunnel. Her heart beat wildly. She had to move chunks of masonry and stone out of her way, roots were poking through the roof of the tunnel, but it was still fairly easy going.

She made her way down the tunnel, excited beyond belief. She was the first person to walk this mysterious hidden passageway in over a hundred and twenty years. She felt as if she had become a part of history. She imagined a queue of men, all carrying bundles, walking this very tunnel. Slaves, smugglers, maybe even pirates used the hidden passageway. So fascinating!

She stopped to check out the flooring, which suddenly felt different to her. Some brickwork in the floor? She bent down to scrape some dirt off the surface of the ground, but it only revealed more dirt. She must be mistaken. She crawled a bit, checking another spot ahead, but still only found dirt. Disappointing. She stood up, but hadn't checked above her. She smacked her head on a root and suddenly she heard a rumbling above her.

A rock fell on her foot, then the entire ceiling started to give way.

With a scream she darted back the way she'd come. She heard a deafening crash from behind her and glanced over her shoulder to see what it was. A huge boulder just barely missed her! It sealed off the tunnel behind her. Bummer! She heard more deep groans in the tunnel structure. She ran for her life.

She was almost at the end of the tunnel when she tripped on a stone and went flying. She landed on an old length of timber, smacking her forehead hard on its unforgiving surface. She could feel a warm trickle of blood run down her face. She leapt to her feet and kept running.

Clarissa made it to the ladder and practically leapt up it. She rushed out of the cabin and stood just outside, breathing heavily.

When she finally caught her breath, some movement out in front of her caught her eye. She looked up and couldn't believe what she saw. A very angry Dimitri standing no more than twenty feet in front of her, his arms crossed, his jaw set, his eyes piercing her like daggers.

She didn't even think. She took off running for the maintenance truck.

"Damn you, woman! You get back here!" he commanded, giving chase.

She ran as fast as she could. But she'd hurt her left knee when she'd fallen, and it was slowing her down. She dashed around some trees and finally saw the welcome sight of the truck in the distance.

It was then she felt his hands on her shoulders and soon, she was face down in the dirt. She struggled with him as he fought to contain her. Within a few minutes, he had her, but good. He picked her up and threw her over his shoulder and stalked back to the cabin. With her protesting at the top of her lungs, he took her off his shoulder, sat

down on a bench under a tree in front of the cabin and wrestled her across his lap.

To her horror, she felt her pants being yanked down to her ankles, felt the sudden warmth of the sun shining down upon her exposed flesh. She kicked and screamed, but to no avail.

Dimitri began spanking her, hard. His large hand nearly covered her entire rear as it slapped her. He smacked her across both buns, the pain was so sharp, so intense, at first she couldn't breathe. Then she began screaming for him to stop. But she could tell he was in no mood for trite apologies. He was determined, focused and angry. She didn't stand a chance. She clearly pushed the man too far.

She thought the spanking over her jeans had been bad. It didn't even compare to the agony she was now experiencing. Dimitri was killing her poor rear, killing it. She didn't know if she'd ever be able to sit comfortably again.

Finally, he stopped. He pulled her up, turned her around and brought her down into his lap.

"Stop now, stop Clarissa, stop and listen to me."

Her butt was on fire! "I-I c-c-can't," she sobbed miserably.

"Yes, you can and you will. Now listen to me. You could have died down there. That was irresponsible and dangerous. You lied to me, you disobeyed me and you have to stop this behavior."

"I know."

He wrapped his long arms around her and held her tight. "I couldn't stand the thought of anything happening to you." To her surprise, he kissed the top of her head. "You silly thing. Rushing out here and almost dying. I see the blood here on your forehead, you almost got stuck in that tunnel, didn't you?"

"Y-yes, Dimitri, I'm sorry."

"You sure as hell should be. Damn it, Clarissa, you have to listen to me."

"I will, I will, I'm sorry. I... you... darn it."

"It's all right. You're all right now and that's all that matters. I... couldn't stand it if you'd really got hurt."

She finally pulled away to look at him. "Why? I didn't think you liked me."

"Not like you? You horrid little thing, I think I'm in love with you."

He laughed at her shocked expression, then leaned in and kissed her.

Clarissa nearly fainted as his lips pressed against hers. She opened her mouth and allowed his tongue to explore her. A thrill went through her nether regions at his masterful kissing.

She pulled away. Breathlessly, she said, "Dimitri, I think I love you, too." Without waiting for him, she kissed him.

Dimitri's hand went up her blouse and under her bra to gently caress one of her breasts. His supple fingers carefully pinched a nipple until it peaked. His breathing quickened as she grabbed the back of his head to pull him closer to her, a soft moan escaping her throat.

He was all too aware that her pants were still around her ankles. He moved his hand from her breast to that enticing place between her legs. She gasped and opened her legs to receive him. He kissed her more deeply as his lust carried him away. He slipped a finger inside her, the wetness that greeted him made him so stiff, he was sure his pants were about to burst.

Before he could even think, she pushed her pants all the way off, ripped off her top and was naked on his lap, kissing him.

A second later, they made short work of his clothes. He stood up, picked her up and slipped inside her. And there, underneath the apple tree, her legs wrapped around his waist, her arms about his neck, he began thrusting into her. It was wild sex. He slammed up into her as she threw her head back and screamed with pleasure. He swung her to

the ground onto a pile of leaves and plowed into her, making her come again and again.

But he still wasn't done with her. He swept her off the ground, sat on the bench and pulled her down on top of him. She rode him with an expression of pure joy on her beautiful face. As a grand finale, he threw her to the ground once more, fell into her and sent them both into bellowing orgasms.

Afterwards, they were laughing and kissing, holding each other as they lay underneath the old apple tree, both of them stark ass naked.

"Oh, my God, Dimitri, I... that was so intense! My God, you are a lot of fun!"

"Oh, my dear, this was just the beginning. What I have planned for you, you have no idea. I am going to make love to you in every room in that mansion. In every closet, every bed, every nook and cranny in the entire house. You are going to be my love slave, I am going to keep you so busy, you won't have time to get into trouble."

"Oh, Dimitri, I should have listened to you, I'm sorry."

"You sure should be."

"But still, you didn't have to spank me that hard," she said, rubbing her behind for emphasis. "I got the lesson."

He laughed. "I sure as hell did have to spank you that hard. And I'll do it again if you ever pull anything like that on me again. Mark my words, my dear, when we get married, I will be laying down the law with you. You will obey me and you won't question my authority or I will paddle that beautiful behind of yours until it's red and bruised like it is right now. You will never be in harms way, again, I can guarantee you that."

"Wait, get married?"

"Oh, didn't I mention that? You will be my wife, Clarissa, won't you?"

"Yes, Dimitri, yes!" she cried.

"That's my girl," he said, his lips finding hers once again.

Accidental Love Part One

Vicki tapped her foot and checked her watch as she waited impatiently in line. The barista was moving in slow motion. Didn't the idiot realize she had a plane to catch? Apparently not.

Damn this, anyway! Vicki had to make that plane. Not that she was looking forward to the conference in Atlanta. Not only did she have to make a presentation she hadn't even started working on yet, she had to soothe an irate customer. The customer's orders had been completely messed up, and they were threatening to take their business elsewhere.

Vicki normally didn't do grunt work like customer service, but the client was a huge one, and her boss decided it would be a good idea to send in the big guns since Vicki would already be at the conference.

Finally, she made her way to the front of the line, ordered her latte and practically grabbed it out of the hands of the barista when it was done. As she raced out of the coffee house, she dropped her keys in the doorway. Swearing under her breath, she made a swipe for the keys and continued on her way.

Suddenly, a man appeared in her path, but it was too late to move, and she slammed into him, head on, spilling her coffee all over the poor guy's suit.

"Damn you! Why weren't you watching where you were going?" the tall man blasted at her while desperately trying to wipe the coffee off his coat.

"I'm sorry! I didn't see you; I was trying to pick up my keys," she explained.

On second glance, the man was actually quite gorgeous. He had very even features, sandy blonde hair graying at the temples, amazing blue eyes and a cleft chin. Even with the fury on his face, the man

was a looker.

"It would help if you kept your head up while you were walking," he snapped.

"I said I was sorry; I can't be any more sorry than that," she replied defensively.

"Well, you can't be as sorry as I am," he retorted. "I just bought this suit, and it cost me a fortune."

The man's looks were obviously compensation for an ill temper. "Look, I'd love to stay and have you flame me some more, but I have a plane to catch," Vicki said, eager to get away from the angry man.

"I hope it's not the same one I'm on," he grumbled as he pushed past her.

Her jaw clenched, a flame of anger burned inside her. While it was clear she was in the wrong, he certainly hadn't made the situation any better. Jerk. Her anger quickly faded to amusement. A little spring in her step, she suddenly felt good about spilling coffee on the man. She always believed the adage: *what goes around comes around*, and clearly that man had the coffee spill coming. Probably used to people bowing and scraping to his handsome greatness. Idiot.

Vicki made her plane in plenty of time. She settled into her seat and as usual when on a plane, she immediately fell asleep.

Some time later, she awoke, and the plane was in midair. The movie played on the overheard monitor; and when she looked around, most passengers were asleep or watching the show. She needed her book, but she'd forgotten to get it when she'd boarded.

She got up, opened the overhead cargo bin and pulled on her carry on. It was stuck. With a great tug, Vicki yanked the small suitcase out of the bin, but she pulled so hard, she lost her grip on the bag, and it fell directly onto the man seated in front of her.

"Ow!" he exclaimed, shocked. He pushed the bag up and off of him, and Vicky caught it.

She found herself looking straight into the angry blue gaze of the man upon whom she'd spilled her coffee earlier. "Oh, Christ, not you," she said, hugging the bag to her chest.

His eyes practically popped out of their sockets. His symmetrical face flushed red, his sensual mouth drew down into a frown. "You again?! Woman, you are a disaster! Stay away from me."

"I would if I could, but I can't. I'm seated behind you."

Glowing at her, he said, "Then make sure you stay back there."

"I'm sorry. I didn't want to spill my coffee on you or dump my bag on your head, they were both accidents."

"I'm sure," he retorted and turned his attention back to the movie.

Vicki got out her book and set it on her seat. She carefully reached up and put her bag back in the overhead bin while below her the man held up his hands defensively.

"I wouldn't have done it a second time," she assured him.

"And I'm supposed to trust you?"

"No. I guess not."

"Are you done yet? Have anything else you'd like to throw at me?" he snarled.

Red-hot anger flashed through her body. "You don't have to be nasty."

His mouth dropped open, his blue eyes went unfocused. "Don't have to be nasty? You bruise my head and shoulder, you ruin a seven hundred dollar suit, and you have the audacity to tell me I'm being nasty?"

"It wasn't my fault. Well, the suitcase was, but it was jammed, probably with your stuff."

He was slack-jawed again, but recovered quite quickly. His azure gaze narrowed, his mouth twisted

into an ugly sneer. "Oh, so now it's my fault?"

"Is there some problem here?" A stewardess appeared at Vicki's side, looking concerned.

Vicky was embarrassed they'd attracted attention. "No, no problem. Just getting my book," she tossed off casually.

The stewardess looked at the man. "Sir? Is there a problem?"

Mr. Nasty took the opportunity to level an ice-cold glare her way. "Not anymore. Just make sure this woman stays away from me."

The stewardess looked between them, the worry lines deepening on her face. She turned to Vicky. "Ma'am? Is there a problem here?"

"No. Well, there wasn't one until this guy decided there was one."

The man made a surprised strangling noise, his face redder than a Coke can. His blue gaze was wild. "What? I've never heard such a ludicrous—"

The stewardess cut him off. "Sir, could you keep your voice down? You are disturbing the other passengers."

Mr. Coffee Spill's eyes practically rolled back in his head. His face turned purple, but when he spoke, he sounded remarkably calm. "My apologies, I will just continue to watch the movie, all right?"

Vicki purposefully showed no emotion in an effort to make him look like the crazy person. Heh-heh-heh. "I'm just gonna read my book here," she said cheerfully.

The stewardess watched nervously as both people settled back into their seats.

It wasn't long before Vicky fell asleep again. She woke up to her seatmate poking her.

"Could you get up? The plane landed ten minutes ago," the dark-haired older woman asked.

"Oh, sorry," Vicky replied sleepily. She quickly got up and allowed her seatmate to leave. After collecting her things, she left the plane and went off to find baggage claim.

Vicki was distracted, trying to call for the hotel shuttle while watching for her luggage. Right as the hotel clerk asked what airline she'd flown, she saw her bag come off the conveyor belt and onto the carousel.

She rushed for her bag. "I'm on American."

"What?" the clerk asked.

"A-mer-i-can!" she shouted into the receiver. Her bag was almost to her.

"You're breaking up," the clerk said.

Vicki reached for her bag. "I'm on American!" she shouted into the receiver.

Right as she grabbed her bag, some man's arm shot out in front of her and grabbed hold of her bag at the same time. Vicki found herself in a tug of war with the guy.

She yanked hard on her bag, but he wouldn't let go. "Hey!" She glared straight up into the sky-blue gaze of her number one new enemy. Mr. Spilled Coffee.

His eyes narrowed, his mouth became a tight line. "Madam, will you let go of my bag?" he demanded in a cold tone.

This was unreal! The guy was a freakin' plague. "It's my bag!"

"What airline are you flying?" came a demand in her ear from the hotel clerk.

Frustrated beyond belief, Vicki yanked on her bag and shouted, "American! American! You, let go of my bag!"

The guy pulled hard, her arm practically got yanked out of its socket.

"It's my bag, woman!" he hurled at her.

"Ow! No, it's not!" Vicki held on and glowered at him.

The hotel clerk said, "I can tell you're American, no need to shout, lady. Now what airline are you flying?"

Vicki shouted into the phone while trying to pull her suitcase out of the man's hands.

"I am flying American—will you let go of my suitcase?!"

"I don't have your suitcase," said the clerk over the phone.

The man's face was a mask of fury. "It's MY suitcase, now let go, I'm going to be late for my meeting!" he shouted, giving the bag another great tug.

Vicki hung onto the bag like a pitbull. "I know you don't have my suitcase, I'm trying to get it away from this psycho who keeps getting in my way! Now I'm flying American, get your hotel shuttle here, now!"

"Okay, okay, lady, you don't have to be rude," the clerk said and then hung up.

Right as the clerk ended the call, the man finally got Vicki's bag away from her. With a victorious glare her way, he turned and stalked off.

Vicki was right on his heels. "Damn you! That's mine!"

The man swung on her, his blue gaze flashing, the hard planes of his handsome face seeming even more severe. "It is not. It says: Mark Voight, right here on the tag! I am Mark Voight, and I know you aren't, now leave me alone! Haven't you done enough damage to me today? Or maybe not. Perhaps you want to shoot me or run me down with your taxi, I'm sure you could find something more horrible to do to me!"

She narrowed her gaze at the big jerk, her mouth set. "I'm considering knocking you flat. That bag does not say Mark Voight, it says Vicki Terra! See? Right here." Vicki reached out, grabbed the tag and turned it face up. The tag read: Mark Voight. She was stunned. She held it, staring in disbelief. She finally came to her senses and dropped the tag and took a step back. "Oh. Oh. Uh..." A blast of anger and frustration overtook her. "Well, what the hell are you thinking? Buying a bag that looks just like mine, anyway?" she yelled at

him.

He took a step back away, his mouth fell open a bit, his gaze blank. His shock turned quickly to rage. His eyes glittered with malice, his lips curled. "Woman, if I wasn't a civilized man, I'd take you right across my knee for all your shenanigans. Someone should keep you caged and away from the public! You are a human disaster area!" With one last glare at her, he turned and strode away.

Vicki was fit to be tied. She hadn't been this angry in months. "Stay out of my way, you jerk!"

The man turned and glowered at her; the fire in his eyes scorched her from twenty-five feet away.

Vicki stuck her tongue out at him. His eyes narrowed, his jaw clamped. He turned and stormed off.

Satisfied by his reaction, Vicki turned her attentions back to the luggage carousel and finally found her bag. What an ordeal!

It took her another full half hour to find her shuttle; the clerk had told the shuttle driver that she'd flown Alaska Airlines, not American. By the time she hit the hotel, Vicki was fried from her day.

After she unpacked, she knew what she needed next: a drink. She hit the mini-bar and pulled out a beer and downed it. But it really didn't do the trick. She needed hard liquor. So she chose a couple small bottles of Jack Daniels, grabbed the ice bucket and headed off to get some ice.

She stuck the ice bucket in the ice machine and hit the button. Suddenly, ice went everywhere: onto her blouse, her sweats, into her open-toed shoes. Cubes skittered across the floor in all directions. Damn it! She hadn't pushed the ice bucket in far enough.

Swearing loudly, she kicked the ice out of her shoes, pushed the bucket in further and finally managed to fill it.

She grabbed the full bucket, turned, stepped on a piece of ice and suddenly, she was sliding across

the vending room floor, out of control. She did a series of quick steps to try to regain her balance, but tripped on her own feet and soon she was flying through the air, ice bucket first.

Just then, a man appeared in the room in front of her. She knocked him flat on his back, landed on top of him and dumped the ice all over his face.

"Yeee-argh!" the man sputtered. They wrestled there for a moment as she tried to get off him and he frantically tried to get the ice off his face.

Vicki finally got untangled with the man and stood up.

When the man sat up to face her, she couldn't believe it. It was the jerk from the airplane! This could not be happening to her!

Three separate and powerful emotions crossed his wet, but handsome features. Surprise, recognition, fury. "You!"

Just the sight of him infuriated her. "Jesus Christ! What's wrong with you?! Why do you keep getting in my way?!"

"That's it!" he shouted. The man leapt to his feet, grabbed Vicki by the wrist and dragged her out of the vending room.

She tried to break free of him, but he increased his grip. "Let go of me! What the hell do you think you're doing?" she demanded.

"Something I should have done at that damned coffee shop!" he retorted over his shoulder as he dragged her down the hallway.

"Are you crazy? I said, let go!"

He kept pulling her along. "Oh, I'm sure that doe-eyed innocent act works wonders on the men in your life, but I'm immune to your beauty, woman! I don't care how cute you are, no woman treats me like this!" he roared.

"What the hell are you talking about? Let go of me!"

"Not yet, I won't! Someone should have done this to you years ago!" he thundered cryptically.

"Done what to me?! Let me go, or I'll call security!"

"Oh, I'll let you go, all right! And hopefully, I'll never see you again! You are a complete disaster, woman! A complete disaster!"

Without missing a beat, he pushed open a hotel room door and pulled her inside.

As she fought him wildly, he dragged her to the bed, sat down and yanked her across his lap and pinned her there.

Vicki was suddenly staring at the floor, over the man's lap with her arm up behind her back. "What the hell are you doing?" she demanded.

For an answer, the man lifted her skirt up over the small of her back, grabbed her panties and pulled them down to her knees.

"Pervert—" was all she managed to get out before she felt the first swat. The pain took her breath away. It took her shocked and overwhelmed mind a good second to figure out what was happening. The man was actually spanking her! This could not be real!

"You (swat) are the worst behaved brat (swat) I've ever had the (swat) misfortune (swat) to encounter (huge swat)!"

"Ow! Stop it! What the hell do you think you're doing?! Let me go!"

The man responded with a machine-gun report of hard spansks that burned her behind like it had been branded with a waffle iron.

Vicki screamed in pain and shock. "Stop that!" Tears began to run down her cheeks.

But the man didn't reply, he just wailed on her poor behind with all of his might. He spanked her right cheek, and then thundered into her left cheek. He spanked the top of her rear, then moved down and spanked her sit spots until she thought she'd lose her mind. She wailed and howled and protested, but the man would not let up on her.

She began sobbing uncontrollably; tears ran

from her eyes; she kicked her legs and pushed on the bed with her free arm, but couldn't get away and couldn't get the man to stop. The guy clearly worked out, his hard thighs were unforgiving on her hips, his strong hand felt like flesh-covered iron on her tender rear.

Overwhelmed by the assault, Vicki began shrieking for help. But the man would not cease his punishment. His large and firm hand spanked her flaming rear vigorously and thoroughly, he didn't miss one single spot on her entire bottom or upper thighs. Her throat was parched from crying, and she was blinded by the make-up running into her eyes.

Without warning, he stopped and yanked her up and off his lap. "You stay away from me! If you ever see me again, you will turn and walk the other way! Do you understand me?!"

"I hate you! I'm calling the police!" she sobbed.

"Go ahead! I'll counter sue you on charges of assault!" he yelled, gesticulating wildly. "No jury in the world would convict me if they saw you in action! You are a complete disaster!"

"Stay away from me!" Vicki cried and rushed for the door. She pushed it open and ran for her room.

Vicki collapsed on her bed and cried her eyes out. None of that had been her fault! That guy just kept getting in her way! Why had he been so horrible to her?

After a while, she stopped crying and went into the bathroom to get a cold rag for her eyes. She pulled down her sweats to check for damage. Her ass was flaming red, dotted with purple bruises! Fury jolted her system. What a brute! He had the right to be a bit miffed, but the jerk had completely over-reacted.

Was she just going to lie down and take his crap? No! It was time for retaliation!

Vicki cleaned herself up as her mind raced for plans of revenge. She knew just what she was going to do.

A half an hour later, Vicki was ready. She knocked on Mr. Creep's door, careful to keep her head down.

"Yes? Who is it?" came the reply.

"Concierge, sir, we think there was a mix-up with your credit card," she said in a deep voice.

"Oh, God, what else is going to go wrong?" she heard him grumble.

When he opened the door, she threw a huge bucket of ice in his face. He yelled and sputtered and reeled back in the room; she advanced and smashed him in the jaw with the ice bucket, knocking him to the floor on his back. She wound up and threw the bucket at him as hard as she could, nailing him in the stomach. Which disappointed her, she was aiming for lower.

As he bellowed with rage, she turned and ran as fast as she could for her room. She didn't even make it to his door.

He grabbed her by the arm, hard, and turned her around to face him. His blue eyes were flashing with fury; his face was flushed; he looked like he was about to kill her.

But she didn't care, she was still so mad, all she could think about was revenge. She wound up for a slap; he grabbed her arm and pulled her to him. They were now inches from each other's faces; both were shaking with rage.

She tried to push away from him, but he held on. They wrestled wildly, each trying to get the advantage over the other.

"Let me go, you big bully!"

She twisted to the left, then lunged to her right and escaped his grip. She took two leaps for the door when he caught her again. He spun her around and yanked her towards him, she fell into his arms. She glared up at him, their gazes locked.

She didn't know how it happened, but suddenly, they were kissing.

All at once, they both seemed to realize what

they were doing. They pushed away from each other, stunned, and stared at each other in complete surprise.

"What did you do that for?" she demanded.

"Me? It was you who kissed me!"

"You are insane!"

"I must be to have let someone like you kiss me!"

"Just... just stay away from me!" Vicki yelled. She turned, burst out through the door and ran all the way to her room.

What was wrong with that guy? How the hell did they end up kissing? Horrible!

Vicki soon decided the moment had been an aberration for both of them. She drank three shots of Jack Daniels to wipe the man out of her mind and then promptly passed out.

The next morning, Vicki got up extra early so she could get out of her room before Mr. Crazy did. Luckily, she managed to get all the way to the meeting room downstairs without running into him.

The meeting with her sales reps went well. They believed her when she said she had a leg cramp and had to stand throughout the meeting. No way was she going to admit the real reason she couldn't sit. She and her team devised a plan of attack for soothing their client. Their meeting with the client was set for ten o'clock, so Vicki decided to get some breakfast before their meeting.

Vicki was sipping on coffee, waiting for her breakfast to arrive when her cell phone rang. It was her secretary. Apparently, their client wasn't able to send their usual contact, and they wanted Vicki to know that they had sent a different person. She was meeting with a man, not a woman. But they had neglected to tell her secretary what the man's name was, just that it wouldn't be her usual contact. Vicki was actually relieved. She knew the usual contact,

and the woman was a battle-ax. Vicki usually did better soothing men. With her long legs and green eyes, most men were slobbering dogs after she got done with them. She relaxed and enjoyed her breakfast.

At ten to ten, Vicki set off for the meeting with the client. They were to meet in the hotel bar, which wouldn't be open at that hour, but was used as a casual meeting place during the day.

When Vicki arrived, the bar was empty. She settled in to wait for her sales reps and the client when her cell phone rang. It was her secretary again.

"Hey, Vicki, sorry to bother you, but Acme just called to tell me the name of the guy you're supposed to meet."

"Great, at least I'll know whom I'm supposed to talk to. What's his name?"

Vicki was suddenly aware that there was someone standing behind her. As she turned around to see whom it was, her secretary said, "The guy's name is Mark Voight."

Vicki found herself staring into the incredulous blue eyes of her Number One Enemy.

"Oh, God," Vicki said in a small voice as she locked gazes with the man. "Uh, Sally? Tell the boss we lost the client. I'll explain when I get back."

"What? So fast? You haven't even met with him yet," Sally exclaimed.

"Oh, I've met him all right. Tell Jim I'm sorry. I'll talk to you later." Vicki clicked off and sighed heavily.

Mark stood there, his brow knitted, his mouth slightly open. "You can't be with Landco."

"I was. I'm not sure after this whether or not I'll have a job. Christ," Vicki said, turning away from the man. She closed up her case and got up.

Just then, her sales reps showed up. They had on their professional "friendly" faces.

As she walked towards the two men, Vicki held

up a hand. "Forget it guys. It's over. I can tell you right now, this guy isn't going to listen to us. Let's just hang it up." She turned back to Mark. "Mr. Voight," she began, but stopped when she saw his annoyed expression. "Oh, forget it." Dejected, she turned and headed out of the bar.

Her sales reps looked bewildered. They chased after her.

"What happened? What did that guy say?" Tom, one of her reps, asked.

She waved a hand dismissively. "Never mind. I'm going up to my room. Jim is going to have my head for this."

Mark caught her by the arm. "Miss Terra, wait. We have some things we need to settle."

She shrugged out of his grip. "No, we don't," she bit out tersely, glaring at him. "You win, I lose. I'm going to my room to get ready for my presentation. Probably my final one. Good day, Mr. Voight, it's been nice doing business with your company. But I know there is nothing I can do now to get your business back. If you will excuse me."

He didn't budge; he stood there with his hands on his hips looking disgusted. "So that's it? You're not going to even try?"

"So you can humiliate me some more? No thank you."

"It was you who humiliated me," he corrected sternly.

"Fine. You win. I lose. If you will excuse me," she said, turning away.

"I never took you for a quitter," he said to her back. She spun on him. "A head case, but not a quitter. I know your reputation. While it conflicts with the person I met yesterday, I can't imagine you're just going to walk away from a ten million dollar account."

She shook her head. "Watch me, I know when I'm beat."

"So that's it?"

"Yes. Good day, Mr. Voight." She turned away, and her reps surrounded her.

"Vicki, if the guy wants to talk, what's the problem?" Brian, her other rep asked.

All she wanted was to get the hell out of the bar. "I'm not going into it."

"Miss Terra, am I to take it that you won't even talk to me?" Mark asked.

She turned back to the tall man, annoyed. "Look, Voight, why bother?"

"Because this is about business, not about our personal relationship," he replied.

The sales reps looked between the two; exchanged knowing looks; nodded at each other and disappeared.

"Like we could talk without fighting? I doubt it. Unfortunately, our previous relationship has doomed this meeting. You know it, and I know it. So why don't you let me go, so I can go draft my letter of resignation?"

His mouth grew tight. "What I should do is turn you over my knee again and spank some sense into you. Resign? You're the Vice President in charge of Marketing, woman, you don't resign over something like this."

"What the hell do you know about me?"

"I know that a good solid spanking might wake you up," he said, taking a step towards her.

She glowered at him. "You touch me again, and I'll kill you."

"Maybe a kiss would work better," Mark said, reaching for her.

She turned to run and got two steps away before she found herself in his arms with his lips pressed firmly over hers.

Accidental Love Part Two

Vicki tried to push Mark away, but he was persistent. He grabbed the back of her head and pressed his tongue into her mouth. A split second later, Vicki was transported. The feel of the man's arms around her, his heady musky scent, and the way his tongue danced with her own—all combined to send her straight to La-La Land. This man was so hot!

She forgot about spilling coffee on him, dumping her bag on his head, dumping that ice on him and his retribution—that horrible spanking—and could only think of how sexy the man was. He was tall, handsome and the most amazing kisser—ever! She forgot who she was, and where they were; all she could think about was this amazing, virile man. Wow, she wanted him!

He pulled away; she stood there, dazed, staring up into his bluer than blue gaze.

"That's better," he said, breaking into a satisfied smile. "Now can we talk about the account?"

Talk about a reality slap. Vicki was instantly furious. That kiss hadn't been for real; he was just calming her down, manipulating her. How infuriating! He knew what effect he'd had on her and was completely smug about it. Doubly infuriating!

Like lightening, she reached out to slap him, but his reaction was quicker. He grabbed her arm, hard; his gaze went cold.

"That would earn you a one-way ticket over my knee, young lady. Get your emotions together," he ordered crisply.

She pulled away, enraged. "Get my emotions under control? You're the one who kissed me!"

"Well, it was either that or spank you, and I thought the kiss would work better. But if it won't," he said, bringing her closer, the look in his eye

darkening. "I'm completely up for another spanking."

She pushed him away; it took all her strength not to knee him in the balls. She gathered as much dignity as she possibly could.

"Mr. Voight, it is obvious that the two of us have some sort of personality conflict."

His harsh expression softened; he got a half-smile on his handsome face. "We have some sort of powerful chemistry, that's for sure."

"Whatever you want to call it, I don't care. All I want is for our exchange to end. Now I'm going to my room to prepare for my seminar. If you would like, I'd be willing to give our companies one more chance to solve our differences, but later on, when I've cooled off. If you would like to meet me at... say around five, somewhere on neutral territory where I could feel safe from your sexual advances and your strange proclivities—"

She tried to ignore the twitching corners of his mouth and the amused glint in his eye as he listened to her.

"—I would be willing to discuss the problems your company has been experiencing."

"Where would you feel...uh, safe from me then, Miss Terra?" he asked with a barely hidden smile on his handsome face.

All she could think about was slapping him. "Uh... well, there will be plenty of people here by five. Here in the bar, perhaps?"

"I'd be delighted."

She narrowed her eyes at him. "Fine, but I won't tolerate any more of your nonsense."

"My nonsense? Let's put it this way, if you come armed with a bucket of ice, the deal is off."

"Funny. Five, then? Here?"

"As you wish."

"Well, then, I'll bid you good day, Mr. Voight."

"And the same to you, Ms. Terra."

She resisted the urge to say something nasty,

and turned and walked off towards the elevators. What an ego on the man! What a jerk! Taking advantage of her like that. He certainly had his nerve. But if she could save the account, it was worth risking a bit more of his brutish company. She just had to make sure she wasn't left alone with him. No way was she going to let him take advantage of her again. No way!

But as angry as she was with the man, all the way up the elevator and into her room, all she could think about was that kiss. Annoying!

After the second meeting of the afternoon, Vicki successfully got Mark Voight off her mind and was consumed with work. She took fifteen minutes to prepare for her presentation and finally felt ready. She walked into the room, set up her overhead projector and waited for her audience to show up.

People began to file in. An old co-worker approached her and they caught up while the room filled. By the time she was done with the conversation, she was shocked to see that her entire room was filled.

Vicki introduced herself and began the presentation. No one seemed bored, which was good, and no one left, which was extra good. Then came the question and answer period.

An out-of-place looking man was seated in the second row. He was dressed in an Earth First t-shirt, jeans, little round glasses and had long, blonde dreadlocks. She'd noticed him first thing—since he stood out so much against the sea of business suits—but figured he was a techie trying to understand the workings of his marketing department.

He promptly stood and said in a loud voice, "Miss Terra, isn't it true that Landco just acquired land in Canada that was supposed to be a wildlife sanctuary? But your CEO and Board of Directors

bribed the officials, and now it's all been whitewashed?"

Okay, definitely not a techie. A political nutcase more like. Vicki knew she had to assert her dominance over this guy and do it quickly.

She replied in an authoritative tone, "Uh, excuse me, but I have no idea what you're talking about. If you listened to my lecture at all, you'd understand that my job entails marketing, only. If you wish—"

The radical cut her off. "Well, if you were so up on your marketing, you'd know what was going on, and you'd be the person put in charge of spin. So you must be lying to me right now. Come on, Miss Terra, let's hear about how benevolent Landco is and how wonderful they're treating the environment—"

"Excuse me sir, but this is neither the place nor the forum for this. If you could hold your comments, I can get you in touch with—"

"Someone else who will lie to me? Is that it? You're just going to pass me off—"

"Sir, I said, no," Vicki replied firmly. "I won't talk about this. Now if you don't have any questions regarding my lecture then I must insist that you sit down."

"How dare you tell me to sit down! I know my rights! I paid for this—"

"Excuse me, sir, will you please come with me?"

Mark was there, at the man's shoulder; looking tall, strong and forceful. Vicki had been so focused on the nutcase that she hadn't noticed Mark stand up; she hadn't even known he was in the room.

The dreadlocked man held his hands up in a defensive posture. "Get away from me! I know my rights!"

"Come with me," Mark said, forcefully, a deadly cool look on his face. Behind Mark stood two other men.

"I'm calling the police! Harassment! Harassment!" the man shrieked.

Two more men joined Mark and the other two guys; the five of them surrounded the squealing hippie freak and escorted him outside.

After they were gone, Vicki said, "I guess he didn't like my lecture."

The crowd broke up. The moderator came into the back of the room, signaled to Vicki and pointed to her watch. Time was up.

"Okay, folks, that's it," Vicki announced. "The show's over. And someone tell my ex-husband that I don't appreciate him trying to ruin my seminar."

More laughs. The crowd filed out, and Vicki grabbed her things. When she looked up after closing her briefcase, Mark was standing there.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

"Oh, fine. Thanks for asking. And thanks for getting that unbalanced person out of here."

Mark nodded. "He *was* unbalanced. And your lecture was so well done, too. Sorry he wrecked it."

"He didn't wreck it, he added a bit of drama to it. Those people won't forget this lecture any time soon."

Mark laughed. She stopped and stared at him. She'd never seen him smile before. He was beautiful.

Mark looked surprised. "What? What happened? You look positively shocked."

Vicki began laughing. "No, sorry, it's just... I'd never seen you really smile before. Uh, quite a change."

He broke into a wide grin and nodded. "Ah, yes. Well, I have to say, you have definitely brought out the worst in me."

"I didn't mean to."

"I know. But what I'm hoping for is to see if you can bring out the best in me as well."

She smiled. "You're flirting with me."

He smiled back. "And you're flirting back."

"Hmmm. I'm not sure it's wise, either."

"Afraid of me?" he asked.

"Perhaps."

"Uh, yes. So... I suppose I'll see you at our meeting in... a half an hour?" he asked.

She nodded, trying not to get lost in his amazing gaze. "Yes."

"Excellent. Until then?" Mark said.

"Yes, Mr. Voight, until then."

He sent her a very smoldering, sexy look and then turned and walked out. She was entranced.

Vicki had another quickie meeting and then took five extra minutes to dash to her room to touch up her make up and hair. She told herself that she'd be doing it for any late afternoon meeting, but down deep she knew the real reason for her primping.

Finally satisfied by her reflection, she traveled down to the bar and walked in right on the dot of five o'clock. Just as she gingerly sat down at a small table, Mark walked in. A large smile grew on his face when he saw her. While her rear end reminded her of his heinous assault of the night before, the grin on his face wiped away her anger. Damn the man, she should hate him, not be all googly-eyed at the mere sight of him.

"Have you recovered from your assault?" he asked as he sat.

"Yours or that guy's at the seminar?"

A slightly wicked smile crossed his sensual lips. "Uh... now that you've brought it up, both."

"I see you've got a slight bruise on your jaw there," she countered.

His smile dampened, his eyes narrowed a bit. "Yes," he said, rubbing his jaw for emphasis.

"Do you think we'll be able to get past our differences in order to do business here?" Vicki asked.

"I'm willing to bury the hatchet," he said.

"As long as it's not in the center of my forehead," she quipped.

He laughed, a nice baritone laugh. Her heart skipped a beat. Mark was one of the most

handsome men she'd seen in years. He had to be in his mid-forties, but he had the appearance and muscle tone of someone much younger.

"So, shall we begin?" Vicki asked.

For a good half hour, the two talked business. What the problems amounted to were nothing more than miscommunications. They compared figures; realized where the information exchange had gone wrong, and agreed to move forward—but with a new chain-of-command as far as information was concerned. They both talked to their superiors, and all agreed on the new procedures.

Vicki hung up with her boss, very pleased. George hinted that her bonus would be twice as large as the month before. Five minutes after she hung up, Mark clicked off with his boss. He seemed equally happy.

"So? We're all good?" she asked.

"Better than good. I may be in line for a promotion," he said with a triumphant grin.

"I'm getting a double bonus," she said.

"I think it's time for a drink to celebrate our agreement," Mark said and waved for the cocktail waitress.

"Good plan."

They ordered drinks.

"So, I thought Acme was based in Dallas," Vicki said.

"They are."

"Why were you in San Francisco?"

"I live there," he replied.

"But—"

"Acme opened a branch in Silicon Valley. Since many of our customers are in the Bay Area, we felt it would be better to have an office there."

"You live in San Francisco proper?" she asked.

"No. I just bought a home in Burlingame."

"Jeez, we're practically neighbors. I live in Millbrae."

"Really? I wonder why we've never met. I do

business with Landco frequently, been to their office numerous times."

She took a sip of her Cosmopolitan. "I'm rarely in the office, that's why. Mostly I've been traveling. But I've requested to stay home more; I miss having a life."

"Yes. I hear you. Me, too. This promotion should allow me to work from home a couple days a week," he said.

"Lucky you. That's my dream. Just to be home. Traveling wears on you."

"It does."

"So do you have a girlfriend?" Vicki blurted without thinking. When she heard the words pop out of her mouth, she nearly died. "Wait. Sorry, didn't mean to get personal."

Mark smiled. "Uh, as a matter of fact, currently I do not. What about you?"

"Nope, no girlfriend. I'm straight," Vicki couldn't resist saying.

He pursed his lips at her and then chuckled. "I had a feeling you were."

"No. No boyfriend or husband right now. Just divorced last year."

"I assume you have no children?" Mark asked.

Vicki shook her head. "No, he didn't want any."

"Is that why you split up?"

"That and he was cheating on me with my ex-best friend."

Mark winced. "Oooo. Sorry."

"Me, too. But it's actually all right. She's stuck with him now. And I got the house because he felt so guilty. Worked out for me."

Mark took a sip of his drink. "I was married once upon a time."

"Don't believe in it?" Vicki asked.

"No, I'm great believer in marriage."

"For other people," she finished.

"No. Actually, I'm looking to get married again. Haven't found the right girl," he said, sending her a

penetrating stare.

Vicki got nervous. This was proceeding a bit too fast. "So what do you enjoy other than work?"

"Bicycling, kayaking and reading, basically," Mark said.

Vicki was surprised. "Really?"

"Why?"

"I just entered in the Bay Area Centennial bike race," Vicki revealed.

Mark's gaze widened. "You did?"

"Yeah."

"I was going to, but I have to go to Japan that week. Really? You're a racer, too?"

"Uh, kinda. This is my second race. Basically, it gets me off my butt and pushes me to train," Vicki said.

Mark nodded. "That's why I do it. I don't really care about winning, I just like to train and have a goal."

"Me, too."

Mark sent her a smoldering look. "Shall we continue this conversation, say over dinner?"

"I've got a... wait. No, it got cancelled. I'd love to," Vicki said.

"I have to make a few calls first," Mark said, checking his watch. "How about if we meet outside, in front of the fountain in an hour?"

"Sounds great."

"There's a great restaurant down the block that a friend recommended. You like Thai?" he asked.

"Love it."

"Excellent. Until then?" he said, getting up.

"Yes, Mark," she replied with a coy smile.

Well, wonders never ceased! Vicki practically bounded up to her room. She checked her email, nothing, no calls. She was in such high spirits and had an hour to kill, she decided to take a walk. The hotel was situated near a park; she could take a nice long stroll before getting ready for dinner with Mark. What a wonderful turn of events!

She put on her tracksuit and went to the park. After a lovely stroll around some exemplary gardens, she headed back to the hotel.

She was walking towards the fountain when she saw a man and a woman kissing and hugging in front of it. The man's back was to her; the woman was wrapped around him, and they were hugging hard. It looked like it was a reunion of sorts. Lovers meeting at the hotel probably.

As Vicki passed them, she glanced over and was dumbstruck. It was Mark, hugging all over some hot blonde girl that looked to be half his age. Of all the nerve!

Vicki's temper ignited. She marched right up to the jerk and the little chickie beside him.

"No girlfriend, huh? What the hell do you take me for? Some kinda moron?" she yelled.

She reached out fast and pushed Mark hard on the chest with both hands. He tripped, fell over backwards and landed right in the fountain with a huge splash.

"He's all yours honey; you deserve him! I'm obviously too old for him!" Vicki seethed at the now horrified-looking young woman. She turned to a sputtering and soaking wet Mark, who was trying to extricate himself from the fountain. "Maybe that will cool you off, you... you, Lothario!"

She turned and stalked away. She heard the young woman shout behind her, "Uncle Mark, Uncle Mark, are you okay?"

Vicki stopped dead in her tracks. Uncle Mark? She turned back just as the young woman helped Mark out of the fountain. When she met Mark's gaze, the flames from within shot out and practically singed her.

"Vicki Terra, would you like to meet my niece? This is Tiffany Voight, my brother's oldest daughter who just dropped by to say hello to me. She's going to college here," Mark said in a barely controlled tone.

"Oh, God," Vicki said in a small voice. "Uh, pleased to meet you, Tiffany, if you'll excuse me, I have to go to the Emergency room to get my foot removed from my mouth." She turned and began to hustle away.

"You wait, Miss Terra!" he ordered. "Tiffany, darling, I'll see you at lunch tomorrow, all right? I have some business I need to conduct with Miss Terra here. Some pressing business."

Mark strode up to Vicki, grabbed her by the arm and dragged her towards the hotel.

"Mark, I'm sorry, I..."

"I know what you thought. That was obvious. In a second or two, you'll know exactly how I feel about it."

"But... but..."

"You shut up," he said. "I've heard all I want to out of you for the moment."

In dark silence, a soaking wet Mark led Vicki up to his room and hustled her inside.

"You sit on the bed, and don't you dare make one move."

"But..."

He pointed dramatically at the bed, his eyes glowing coals. "Sit!"

Vicki sat.

Mark stalked off to his bathroom. When he emerged a few minutes later, he was dressed in shorts and a t-shirt. His hair was still dripping wet. Even through her anxiety, she couldn't help but notice his long and buff legs. Probably the only time she'd see them. He was about to blast her and tell her he never wanted to see her again. What a horrible day!

He walked right over to her, yanked her up off the bed, sat down and pulled her across his lap. Oh, God, no! Not this again! Was she this stupid? The man was a spanker; had she forgotten so soon? She should have taken the opportunity to run.

Mark tugged on the back of her track pants and

pulled them down to her ankles.

"Mark no! I'm still bruised! I learned my lesson! I learned my lesson!"

"You obviously didn't! Have you no self-control, woman?" He took hold of the back of her panties and pulled them down to her calves.

"I do! I do! Don't spank me! I'm sorry!" she pleaded.

"Not sorry enough!" he pronounced. Spank! His large, strong hand smacked her bare bottom with such force that she nearly leapt off his lap. If he hadn't anchored her there with an arm across her back, she would have hit the ceiling. Her already tenderized behind was completely overwhelmed by the sensation.

"Owww! Mark, I'm sorry! Don't!"

"Don't tell me 'don't', young lady!" Swat!

"Yee-ow!"

"What is wrong with you?!" he demanded. "Are you always this impulsive?" he asked, punctuating his question with a series of incredibly hard swats.

"Ow, ow, ow! Please stop! I thought you were playing me!"

"Obviously! Well, if this doesn't get through to you about what kind of a man I am, nothing will!" Swat, swat, swat! "I am honorable!" he shouted, spanking her a good one. "I don't cheat on my women, not even women I just met!" A series of nasty smacks, concentrated solely on her sit spots.

Vicki howled.

"I don't lie!" Swat! "I don't cheat!" Smack! "And I don't take guff from ill-tempered brats with self-control issues!" Spank, spank, spank!

Tears began to stream down her cheeks.

"And if we're going to start seeing each other," he said, swatting her with even more vigor. "You better get that through that impulsive head of yours!" He incinerated her poor behind with a storm of intense swats. "I'm not your ex-husband. I treat my women with respect, unless they act out, and

then I spank them!" he said, delivering a barrage of intense spans all over her burning buns.

"Mark! I'm sorry! I'm sorrreeee!" she wailed.

"You'd certainly better be!" he said, finishing up with a thunderous crescendo of stinging spans.

Finally, her punishment was over. She lay there, limp across his lap, sobbing and feeling super stupid.

"You silly woman. Why would I ask you out and then be caught with some young woman in the exact spot that I had arranged to meet you?"

"I didn't know. All my men have cheated on me. I... think I attract them. I thought you were just another one of them," she said, sobbing.

He pulled her up and sat her down on his lap. She took a sharp intake of breath as her very sore bottom hit his hard thighs.

"Now, you, you listen to me. Your punishment is not over, you hear me?"

"What?"

"I'm putting you to bed without supper," he said with an evil glint in his eye as his mouth closed over hers.

Somehow, with her pants down around her ankles, her bare rear in contact with his bare skin, the feel of his tongue inside her mouth, the stinging of her rear—it all combined for a potent sexual impact. All she could think about was having Mark inside her.

He chuckled deep in his throat when he felt her respond to him. While his expert tongue played in her mouth, he reached down and pulled her pants off. He ran his hand up her legs until he found the triangle between her thighs.

Vicki took a sharp intake of breath as she felt his fingers gently probe her sex. She opened her legs for him, he moaned into her mouth and slid a finger inside her. He toyed with her until she began groaning. He slipped his hand up her front and cupped her breast. He teased the nipple, pinching it

lightly as his tongue continued to explore her mouth.

Before she knew it, she was on her back, Mark was naked and over her, a devastatingly dark and feral look in his eye. He parted her legs with his knees and slowly and carefully entered her.

Vicki brought up her knees and hips, welcoming him inside her. Oh, boy did he feel good! His member was long and hard as steel; she could feel him press all the way inside until he hit her g-spot. Vicki arched against him, moaning. He began to thrust inside, hitting her special spot with amazing accuracy. He grabbed her wrists and held them over her head and pummeled her into submission.

Vicki blasted into an intense orgasm; she bucked and writhed underneath him, lost in a crescendo of joy and sensation. It was just a few seconds later that Mark had his release, which brought her to another spectacular climax.

Afterwards, they lay together, sweaty, spent and satisfied.

"Wow," Vicki said.

"You can say that again."

"Wow."

Mark chuckled and moved some hair off her brow. Gazing deep into her eyes, he said, "You have to be the most fascinating woman I've ever met."

"I thought I was unruly and undisciplined."

"You may be those things, but mostly you're absolutely fascinating. I think I'm falling in love with you."

Vicki's teeth nearly dropped out. "Did you just mention the 'I' word?"

"I did. Are you afraid now?"

"No. Yes. Of course, I'm afraid. You... you're... I think I've finally met my match."

Mark laughed. "No wonder you're worried."

"So... this spanking thing..."

"Yes?"

"Can I expect more of that if I blow it in the

future?"

"Most definitely."

"But—"

His mouth closed over hers. When he pulled away, he said, "Only if you're bad, darling. But I think you'll understand my rules soon enough. And my number one rule is the most important."

"Which is?"

"You must never change. I love you just the way you are. Impulsiveness and all."

She smiled up into his gorgeous blue gaze. "I think I'm going to be very happy in this relationship."

"I know I am," he said as he bent down to kiss her.

The Motivator Part One

"How's class goin'?" Lydia asked.

Heather groaned. "Oh, God, don't ask."

"Don't tell me you didn't pass Physics again."

"Physics Three, thank you very much."

"Still? How many times have you taken that course?" Lydia demanded.

Heather laughed. "God... uh, I think this is the fourth."

"How many times do they let you take the course?"

"As many times as I want to pay for it."

Heather sipped on her latte and took a bite of her pastry. She and four co-workers were in the break room, having coffee and chatting. Along with Heather and Lydia, there was Sherrill, the overweight, nail-biting sales manager, Jason, the young executive intern and Curt, the mysterious and handsome financial consultant.

Curt was only supposed to have been there for a month, but they'd been so impressed with him, he had work lined up there for the next year. With his sparkling blue eyes, his tall, lean frame, a quick smile and killer facial bone structure, Curt was exactly her type. Heather got a crush on the guy at first sight. But he kept his cards close to the vest and didn't seem to be interested in any office romances.

And why would he be interested in her? She was a freakin' disaster area.

Jason nodded Heather's way. "What are you guys talking about? You're in school, Heather?"

"So the school thinks," she cracked. "No, Jason, dear, you see, I'm only twenty units shy of a master's degree, and all I have to do is to pass a few classes and bingo, more money, a new degree and the potential to get into Research and Development here."

Jason seemed surprised. "You want to do that? It doesn't have the income potential that Sales does."

"No. But it actually interests me. I'm gettin' burnt on dealing with our customer base. I want to do what I thought I'd be doing, actually getting involved with some exploration instead of just selling product."

Sherrill nodded her way. "You need a PhD for that."

"Don't I know it. But I got friends in there, if I get my Masters, they can sneak me in, and then I'll have three years to get my doctorate. And of course, the company will pay for it. Well, if I actually passed a class, it would help."

"Have you tried a tutor?" Lydia asked.

"Why does everybody suggest that? I *am* smart, I just..."

Jason asked, "What?"

"I hate school. I hate it. I hate, hate, hate class. And this... I'm having trouble with the subject. It got all esoteric on me. I mean, the first two physics classes were awesome. I got it. I understood it, but it was all pretty tangible. This next crap... is not. I don't get it, and I don't want to get it... I don't know, I just got this block."

Lydia turned to her. "And you're addicted to several reality show series'."

Heather grinned. "And there's that."

"Sounds like you just need some motivation," Curt said.

Heather looked up at him. He didn't talk to her often, but for some reason, she'd just got his attention with her conversation. And now that she had it, she was a bit uncomfortable. She couldn't tell what the guy thought. He was super cute, but something about him scared her. There was a look in his eye that made her nervous. She didn't know what it was, and she couldn't put her finger on it, but there was a darkness somewhere deep within

him. Maybe not a darkness, but he gave off a certain aura of power. He was certainly self-assured.

"Yeah, motivation would help. Do you know where I can buy some?" Heather cracked.

He smiled, but there was a sharpness to the look behind his eyes. He made her feet feel funny and her stomach fluttery, but it wasn't all sexual attraction. She felt almost afraid of him. Weird.

"I might," he said.

"What? Starbucks?" she asked.

He smiled again. But his gaze seemed to almost look through her. He was evaluating her, gauging her; it was disconcerting to say the least. But Heather never allowed people to know if they were getting to her, so she put up a good, nonchalant front for the man. Not to mention the group.

"No," Curt replied. "I'm talking about personal coaches. People who help you stay on track. Maintain schedules. Complete goals."

Heather regarded him. "You mean, like a cheerleader?"

He smiled. "Something like that. Sometimes, they try a bit of tough love if you slack off. But yes, they'll also cheer you on, to help you accomplish your goals."

"Tough love. Like boot camp tough love?" Heather asked.

"So I've heard," Curt said. "I have a few contacts, people who do this sort of thing."

"Hmmm. Well, I'm not that desperate yet. But I'll think about it. I have been a bad, bad girl lately."

The look in his eye changed. If she wasn't mistaken it went sort of feral, intense, predatory. What did she say? The "bad girl" line. Huh. Very interesting.

She smiled at him and realized that it was a flirty smile. She quickly let it fade. No playing with fire. Curt looked like an inferno, and she was in no

mood to get burned.

"So are you gonna take the class again?" Lydia asked.

Heather laughed. "I already signed up. I start next week, and I'm already thinking of ways to cut class."

The group broke up laughing.

"So number five is the charm?" Lydia said.

Heather waved a hand. "Oh, God, I don't know. All I know is that I need to grow up. I swear, the whole thing is that I'm some big child. I'm so spoiled. I work. I go home. I do a bit of a workout, and then it's tube time. I hardly clean the house anymore; I hardly do anything on the weekends. I've turned into a total slug since what's-his-face moved out."

Lydia pointed at her with a biscotti. "He was a neat freak jerk."

Heather checked her watch. "Maybe that has something to do with it—oh, Christ, I have a meeting in five minutes. See you, guys," she said, getting up.

As she left, she caught Curt's gaze. Intense. She'd peaked his interest, which was both exciting and scary. She wasn't sure what was going on with him, but she'd got his attention. Which, on second thought, couldn't be a bad thing. He was hot!

She went to her meeting and was returning to her office, walking by Curt's temporary office, when he beckoned her inside.

"Yes?" she asked in a playful tone.

He grinned. "I meant what I said. I can get you the help, if you need it to pass that class."

"So you know one of these coach-type people?"

"Yes, I do."

"Do you know them well?"

He shrugged. "Fairly well."

"Huh."

"I think you do need the help. You sound as though you do."

"Oh, I play stuff up for the group, but I'm doing okay—okay that was such a lie. I am a liar! Sorry. Yes, I do. I know I do, but..."

"What?"

"I just..."

"What?" he asked.

"I don't know. It seems so desperate."

"So you think your bosses are desperate, and that's why they hired me?"

"No. Well, kinda. They really needed you. I hear you've got magical wizardry type financial skills."

"They needed extra help, expert help."

"Point taken."

"We can't always accomplish our goals alone," Curt said. "Look at any professional athlete. They have coaches."

"Yeah, they do. You're right."

"I even do some of this coaching myself."

This surprised her. "You do?"

He smiled and sent her a penetrating stare, then shook his head to himself. "I do. But I don't think you'd... go for my... specialty. My methods are only for those who truly want to change and get their goals accomplished. I'm a bit... let's just say my tough love techniques are a bit more tough than others," he said with a wicked smile.

He intrigued her. "Well, I want to change, and I need to pass that class. But... What do you mean a bit more tough than others?"

"I normally only discuss the particulars with serious clients."

"Huh. So how much do you charge?"

"I have a sliding scale. For you... since we're friends, I'd be willing to barter or work something out. But only if you were serious, and you just don't strike me as the serious kind of girl."

"Oh, I'm serious. I have to pass this stupid class. I mean, five times? Come on. I won't be able to live with myself if I don't, and I'm starting to get desperate."

"I don't think you'd like the methods I employ to motivate my clients. You don't seem the type."

"The type? What kind of type?"

"You just seem... well, very rebellious, I think. A bit on the bratty side. Brats can get into real trouble with me. Real. Trouble," he said with a warning and a promise in his eye.

Something about it sent a thrill through her. This guy was a real hard-ass, and that was a total turn-on. She'd only been with wimps. This guy was a real man.

She grinned. "Well, to be honest with you, I am... yes, I'm very rebellious, and I *am* a bit of a brat. At least, according to my exes. But then, they were jerks, and I had to get even somehow. But that's beside the point. This is business. I need to get this class done. I have to. That offer in R & D isn't going to last long. But you're scaring me."

He sent her a half smile, and looked thoughtful for a moment, his deep blue gaze evaluating her. "I would scare you, yes. I think I would."

She laughed. "So what? Are you some kinda disciplinarian or something?"

He grinned and didn't miss a beat. "You could say that."

"Oh, dear," she said, her knees feeling a bit shaky. The man was touching on some of her hidden fantasies. Was this the man she'd been looking for? The one who would open up that whole world of power games to her? No, she was imagining it. He just wanted a new client, and like he said, she was a friend.

But she was getting some other hints that the man may just find her attractive. He was definitely baiting her, teasing her. And he was certainly turning her on.

"Tell you what?" he said. "You think about it. If you want, we can meet and discuss specifics. Say over dinner sometime this week? If you want."

"Uh..."

"Think about it. Get back to me."

"Uh, okay."

She stared at him for a few seconds more, then turned and walked out. She almost walked into Jason; she was so dazed by the conversation. Did he just ask her to dinner? No. It was business.

But was it business?

She had gotten all the way to her office before it struck her. Who the hell cared why the guy talked about having dinner with her? This was a perfect opportunity to get the guy alone! She was single, and she had to get back on the horse. And wouldn't she love to ride his pony. Yee-hah!

But wait, she was making that up. He didn't care about her sexually, only professionally. Right?

Well, there was one way to find out. Last she checked, her dance card was empty.

What if he was married?□

She was talking about dinner, not marriage!

She headed straight back to his office. He seemed surprised, yet very amused to see her return so soon.

"Yes?" he asked cordially.

"You're on. When?"

His gaze darkened, and his smile grew. But it was a predator's smile. *Welcome to my web said the spider to the fly.* "How's tonight?"

So what, if he scared her? He was hot. "Perfect. Where? When?"

"How about Sam Sushi?"

"Oh, good one."

"I'll make reservations for seven, shall I?"

"Go for it."

He sent her another amused smile.

"What? You think I'm gonna run scared from you?" she asked.

"Yes."

"You don't know me that well."

"Well, maybe by the end of the evening, we'll know each other just a little bit better."

"Okay, son. You're on."

"You want me to pick you up? I know you live close to downtown."

Heather nodded. "Yeah, why don't you? I'll email you the directions."

"Good. See you at seven."

"Great. I think."

He laughed. She took off for her office. She couldn't believe she'd accepted his offer. Oh, hell, it was just sushi. Nothing else.

Hmmmm. Damn, she hoped he kissed her. What was she thinking? God, no work romances!

But of course, in his case, she may have to make an exception.

He picked her up at precisely seven, where she waited for him at the curb.

Curt sent her a knowing look when she got into his two-seater sports car. It was clear he figured out she didn't want him to see her house.

"Yeah," she said, answering his silent question.

He laughed. "You mentioned it looked pretty bad."

"It looks like I just moved in, boxes everywhere."

"When did you move in?"

"A year ago."

"And you haven't unpacked yet?"

"I've been..."

"Insert excuse here," he finished.

"No... well... yeah, probably."

"It seems like you may need my help, after all."

"Couldn't hurt."

He sent her a sharp look. That strange, predatory, feral, dark promise. She suddenly could see him in all black leather holding a whip. A little thrill went through her at the thought.

Was she nuts?

They sat down, ordered drinks and began munching on the edamame the waitress had brought them as appetizers.

She studied him. "So... how do you propose to help me?"

"You get right to the point, don't you?"

"Curiosity is killing me."

He grinned. "All right. Well, basically we draw up a plan for you. What you want to accomplish and when. And we decide if it's doable—based upon holidays and other things you have going on—everyone has a tendency to plan more than they have time for. So we go over your current schedule, work in the things you want to accomplish and put you on a timetable."

"Just like any other project."

"Exactly."

"Okay. So... we plan out these goals and then... what?"

"You check in with me weekly, or whatever time period we decide, and I check to see if you've accomplished your goals."

"And then what happens?"

"Well, hopefully, you've accomplished what you promised you would."

"Okay. What if I don't?"

He smiled and leaned back in his chair. "Now that's where it gets... interesting. There are many ways to handle that part. But I do have a method I have utilized in the past that has been quite effective. Very motivating. Once I've employed this... method, my... er, clients have gotten everything done and normally much faster than they planned."

"And that is?" She took a long draw off her drink.

His gaze grew more intense. "If you don't meet your goals, I turn you over my knee and spank the hell out of you."

She spit her drink out all over her lap. Luckily, her napkin was there. She cleaned up her mess and regarded him. He seemed very amused that she was so flustered.

She laughed. "I was afraid you were gonna say that."

The man seemed to have x-ray vision; it was like he was looking straight past her defenses and into her true thoughts. "Afraid or titillated?" he asked, with a hidden grin.

A thrill went through her nether-regions. This man was dangerous all right. Very, very dangerous.

"Honestly? Both."

"I was hoping you'd say that," he said, flashing her a white-toothed grin. He was flirting with her, too.

"So... people have paid you to employ these... methods of yours."

"Actually, no. I've only done this sort of a thing for friends before, really. I do something like this for corporations, without the spankings. CEO's don't really go in for that sort of thing."

She laughed. "No, wouldn't suppose so. So, really, you've done this for... people."

"Let me be more clear. They were a bit more than friends."

"You spanked your girlfriends?"

He nodded. "To great effect and great benefit to them."

"And you. You like that part, don't you?"

His gaze darkened. "Let's just say I really enjoy giving a deserving girl her just desserts."

"You are a bit frightening, aren't you?"

"Not once you get to know me."

Their sushi arrived, and Heather had to admit, it wasn't easy eating. The man made her more nervous than she was on her first prom date.

"So... if we agree to do this... scheduling, won't your girlfriend or wife—"

He laughed. "Very subtle, very, very subtle, Heather."

"Oh, hell. Of course, I'm going to ask."

He smiled warmly at her. The darkness was gone, and just a very sweet man sat there, looking

at her very fondly. An interesting and promising change.

He said, "I figured since you came out to dinner with me, you weren't involved."

"I was. I mean, no, not this month. Actually, David was several months now. Wow, how time flies. So, you're not, either, huh?"

"No."

"Did you scare the last one away?"

He gave her a half-smile. "Did you?"

"Yeah," she replied without hesitation.

He burst out laughing. "I thought so. I knew you were trouble from the moment I met you."

"Nah. Well... only... maybe."

He chuckled, clearly enjoying her. It felt good to be around this guy. She liked him. He saw through her crap, but didn't completely fault her for it. He liked her.

"And yes, I scared her away. I think my standards were a bit too high for her."

"Uh, oh."

"Yes, uh, oh. You agree to this arrangement, and honey, I will hold you to whatever promise you make to me. Just remember this: I will never fault you for knowing your limits and keeping to an easy schedule, but whatever agreement you make, whatever promise you make to me, you'd better be prepared to come through. The consequences can be quite..."

"Painful."

He grinned. "Yes."

"Oh, dear."

"Why do I like scaring you? You have this lovely wide-eyed look of terror you get in your eyes. Yet, I can tell you really aren't scared of me."

"It's a weird dichotomy, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is. Quite intriguing, really."

"Yeah, well, Curt, you intrigue me, too."

He smiled like a cat that ate the canary. "I can tell."

"Cheeky bastard, aren't you?"

He grinned widely. "Yes. And you're quite saucy yourself."

"And impudent at times. Definitely defiant. Yet, I *have* accomplished a lot. I just hit this... zone. This... wall. I want to move forward, yet... I just can't seem to summon up the oomfph to do it."

"I think I can help you there."

"I'm just wondering if I have the guts to actually make an agreement with you."

"It's a question you have to ask yourself. You take me on, you're taking on more than you have, I think, ever."

"But I do like a challenge."

He grinned. "So do I. I will win, you know."

"I'm counting on it."

He insisted they go back to her apartment. "I need to see the whole thing, so I can help you make your goals list," he explained as they drove to her place.

"This is super humiliating."

"I won't think any less of you. Let's just see the whole unvarnished truth about you, shall we?"

"Oh, God." They parked and she led him up to her apartment. She opened the door and gestured that he should go ahead.

He took two steps in and stopped and stared at the tornado disguised as her living room. "Oh, my."

"It gets worse. This is the clean part of the house."

"How do you live in this?"

"I don't. I run in, drop stuff off and run out."

"Oh, so you don't have a house, you have a closet."

"Right. I didn't always live like this."

"Really?" he asked.

"No. I... I actually hate this."

"Good. A good sign."

"Are you a neat freak?"

"I am no freak. But I do like order."

"I did."

"I think you really do need my help."

They sat down and made up a huge grid of goals and timelines for each. He insisted on cutting her goals list in half and lengthening the time by double what she had originally budgeted.

"You don't have much faith in me, do you?" she asked.

"No, on the contrary, I have a great deal of faith in you, or I wouldn't be here. I saw your resume at work. I know what you've done; you've just lost your way, that's all. No, that's why I want this schedule to be easy to accomplish, I want you to succeed."

Heather smiled. "That's encouraging to hear."

"I want to motivate you, not discourage you. And if you make too ambitious a schedule, all you're doing is setting yourself up for failure. And you don't want to do that."

"Okay. Thanks. I think I can do this."

He grinned, his blue eyes twinkling at her. "Of course you, can. Now sign here, so we're very clear on what your promises are." He pointed to a place on the bottom of the goal list for the week.

"Okie-dokie," she said.

As she signed, some part of her felt like she was on a conveyor belt that led straight to some unknown, but very scary future. But as she glanced up into his eyes for reassurance, she found it waiting for her. He was a good man. Above everything, she could tell this was a man on the up-and-up, a man she could count on, a man who would be there for her.

But there was that other side to the guy. This was a man you did not cross. You did not lie to him. You didn't try to pull anything on the man, or you would come out on the short end of the stick.

"Well, I'm going to get going." Curt took her by the hand. "Heather... I'd love nothing more than to seduce you right now. But... I want to take things

slowly with you. I... think we have the start of something special, and I want to make sure that we don't rush it and blow it. And I also want you to take this program seriously. If we got involved too fast, I'm afraid it might not help you. I don't want to make a mistake here. I've done it in the past, and I don't want to repeat it. I don't know if you feel the same way I do—"

"I do."

He smiled. "I thought so."

He leaned in and kissed her. Ka-pow! Serious chemistry. Serious electricity; serious feet tingling going on. His tongue gently explored her entire mouth, then he let loose with a ferocity that made her nearly swoon.

When he pulled away, she was so dizzy that he had to steady her. Which made him laugh.

"You are adorable, aren't you?" he said.

She could only beam.

"Oh, one more thing," he said.

Without quite knowing how it happened, Heather found herself across the man's lap on her couch with her arm up behind her back, her ass high in the air.

"Curt?"

"I just want you to get a sample of what would happen if you didn't come through for yourself. If you don't accomplish your goals."

"I think I can imagine!"

"No, you can't. Besides, I wouldn't think of depriving myself of the privilege. If you'd read what you'd signed closely, you would have seen the provision for pre-punishments."

She could hear the smile in his voice. He was both teasing her and making a point. He wanted her to understand that he took the bargain seriously. And he also wanted to play.

Whack! A sharp, firm slap to her upturned behind. It smarted, but it didn't hurt that bad. She was a little surprised to realize that it kind of turned

her on. Smack! A bit sharper. But the reverberations sent shockwaves through her entire sex. This was fun. Wow. Curt proceeded to administer a very powerful, yet not too painful spanking. It was really fun, actually. A bit painful, but that just served to heighten the sensations rocking her clit. This man knew how to do it.

But she could also tell he was going easy on her. If he wanted to, he could make this whole thing very, very unpleasant. She hoped she could come through. She hoped she wouldn't blow it. While he turned her on, this was a man she couldn't con. All her other men were pushovers. This guy was a warrior. An alpha male. Someone you didn't push around. If she blew it, he would make her pay.

Which made him far more exciting than any other man she'd ever known. She wanted this guy in a big, bad way.

He finished the spanking, let her up and kissed her hard. Then he simply got up, went to the door and left. Leaving her standing there, stunned.

She'd never wanted a man more. Ever.

The Motivator Part Two

Curt knew the moment he saw Heather the morning before their date, that she hadn't made her goals for that week. And she'd done so well the week before. She'd made a bargain with him, signed the agreement, promised to fulfill an easy set of goals, and in only two weeks she'd let herself down? This girl really did need some help. She was a good girl, too, but wild. Just a bit too wild. Her impulsive nature helped her in some ways, but damaged her in others. He'd help her see how to use her nature to her advantage. And guide her in the right direction.

Of course, to do that, he had to spank her. And while he greatly looked forward to it, there would be a part of it that would be difficult. In order to get through to her, he had to do a good job on her, really punish her. It would be no fun for her, tonight. But she needed it, and she'd asked him to help her. And more importantly, she'd signed the agreement. Something he took very seriously. He assumed at some point, she'd break the contract, but not this soon!

He was curious how she would take her punishment. How she would hold up. Many people asked for limits they never really wanted. But she was different, and he knew it. He hoped she did well. He was falling in love with her. If she could stand up to her part of the bargain, he knew it would work out between them. He sure hoped so.

When he arrived at her house at seven p.m. sharp, he heard her vacuuming. Trying to get as much done as she could before she saw him.

She was breathless when she answered the door. And she was worried. He liked that she was a little afraid of him. While he'd never really hurt her, it was good she feared him a bit. It would help keep her motivated. He had to make sure that after they

made love—if they made love—that she knew his limits were firm, and any infractions of the rules would be met with strict discipline, especially if they were ever to marry. He held his mates up to very high standards.

"Uh, hi, Curt," she said, looking very nervous.

He walked inside and took off his coat. He set it down on the couch and turned back to her. He gestured towards the large grid on the wall that listed all her goals. "So, let's see what progress you've made."

She shifted in place and rubbed the back of her neck. "About that..."

"Tell me you aren't going to try to weasel your way out of this week's goals."

She stopped. And thought. Her shoulders drooped. "No."

"You were, weren't you?"

"Yeah," she said, looking at her feet.

Inwardly, he was very amused, but kept his expression firm. He couldn't show any weakness or leniency, or she'd never get the lesson and never pass that stupid class.

"Well, let's see what you actually did accomplish." He walked over to the grid and checked her progress. She'd only gotten half of her goals accomplished.

He turned to her. She seemed to shrink down into her skin. Funny. But again, he kept his expression severe.

"I *am* interested in hearing why you didn't get much done."

"Will it help with my sentence?"

"No."

"Will it add to my sentence?"

"I'm not sure. Depends on the excuse."

"I'd rather not, then."

"Oh, one of those?"

"Yes," she said dismally.

"I still want to hear it."

"Went on a bender with some old college friends."

"Is that why you were sick on Monday?"

"Yeah."

"So you lied to your work?"

"No, I was sick. Totally hung-over. Woke up in a hotel in Santa Cruz with no memory of how I got... there... I shouldn't have added that."

He could feel the edges of his mouth flicker; he wanted to smile, but couldn't let himself. He rubbed his mouth thoughtfully to cover his amusement. Oh, she was a bad girl, this one. He hoped he could tame her. He hoped she responded well to his discipline.

"All right, then. It's time to pay the piper, Heather."

"Christ. Look, maybe this wasn't such a good... idea... oh, hell. I need to pass this class, and I didn't even make it to class this week."

"I see that. All right, this is how it's going to work. You will submit to your punishment. You won't try to get away, and you won't fight me. Do you understand?"

"Yeah..."

"Good girl. Now..." He got his coat, reached inside the pocket and withdrew a large leather paddle. He loved her reaction. Her eyes went wide, and then she paled and swallowed.

"You... you're gonna hit me with... THAT?"

"Yes. The punishment is for you, not me. I don't want my hand hurting."

"Oh, dear..."

"Now," he said, looking around the room. He spotted the very solid dining table. "That should work well. All right, Heather. Over to the table."

"O-kay," she said, looking terrified. The fear in her eyes sent a thrill through him. He liked the prelude to a spanking almost as much as he enjoyed administering the punishment itself.

"Now, I want you to pull your pants and

underwear down to your ankles; I won't look."

"But..."

"The only way to properly administer a spanking is on the bare bottom of the recipient."

"Oh, man," she said, her voice shaky. Her hands were shaking, too. A surge of power raced through him. God, he loved punishing brats!

Reluctantly, she unzipped her jeans and pushed them over her hips. She took her very cute pink panties and pushed them down as well. She pushed both down to her ankles.

When he saw her amazing heart-shaped ass, he immediately got hard. Really hard. Almost painfully so. He couldn't wait to see that lovely alabaster turn to a candy-apple red. He loved reddening a girl's bottom. Loved their little shrieks of pain. The tears, the trembling lower lip. God, he almost wanted to skip the spanking and take her from behind.

Control, man, control.

He still wasn't sure about her, yet. Their whole future depended on how well she submitted to him. While he wanted an equal partner, they both needed to obey the rules. While he always did, it was clear the girl still had some self-destructive behaviors that needed to be addressed. If she handled this punishment well and didn't get angry with him for it, actually appreciated it, then that would settle any doubts.

"I want you to reach over and grab the opposite edge of the table, Heather. That's it, all the way over. Good girl. Now, do *not* let go unless I tell you to, you understand me?"

"Yes, Curt."

Oh, the obedient tone! He got harder. He was glad she couldn't see him. His pants were completely tented.

"All right, now. I'm going to start. If you let go or try to cover yourself or do anything but hang on, I will stop and start all over again, do you understand me?"

"Yes, Curt."

"Good."

He waited a good few minutes, allowing her to anticipate the punishment. He walked over and took her by the hips to position her a bit better. Moved her legs apart just a bit. Adjusted her to make her ass a bit higher. He stepped back. And waited. Her breathing increased. This was such fun!

He took hold of his paddle and got himself into a good position next to her.

He rested his hand on the small of her back. Her skin was so soft. A thousand ways of making love to her crossed his mind. He couldn't resist and ran his hand over her lovely, lovely derrière.

"Yes, I think you're finally ready."

He waited another beat. He wanted her unprepared. Right when he saw her relax, he reached far back and came down on her unprotected, tender behind with his paddle. A satisfying loud slap rewarded him.

She shrieked and let go of the table. Then immediately grabbed hold again. He smiled. She was trying. Good.

He eased up for the next strikes; he hit her hard, but not as hard as he would shortly. He wanted to build the punishment. Build the tension; increase the pain bit by bit until the climax to his performance where the little girl would learn never to let herself down again.

Her rear end began to glow pink. But he wouldn't stop until it was mottled with purple bruises. This girl needed to learn a lesson.

After warming her up a bit, he began to work her ass. He started up top, across both buns, and then he alternated, one cheek, then the other. Each strike sent ripples across her tender flesh. He kept checking her expression to gauge her pain level. The tears had started, but she was trying to be brave. Admirable. But he was definitely getting through to her. She began dancing a bit with her

feet.

"Keep those feet on the ground, Heather," he bit out harshly. She obeyed him instantly. Excellent.

He began concentrating on her sit spots, the most important area on a woman's behind. The most sensitive, and the one place that left the most lasting impression. He started fairly lightly, working the paddle against her taut behind, then built up to where he was close to putting his all into it. One spot, then the other, again and again and again. The leather paddle swished through the air, the strikes making louder and louder slapping sounds.

She finally broke down and began sobbing. Good, she was almost done.

He would end with attentions to both cheeks at once. He started a bit lightly, and then built up the rhythm and the strength until he was really letting her have it with the paddle.

And God bless the little girl, she bore it. She took it and didn't let go of the edge of the table once.

Her ass was nearly fire engine red. It was mottled with light purple bruises, and it was time to put the finishing touches on his masterpiece. And oh, her ass was a lovely sight. Swelling now, the color so inviting. Her long beautiful legs shook, her prone position, so vulnerable, so lovely, the hint of her sex peeking out; it took much of his inner resolve not to ram himself inside her. As it was, his granite hard member pressed painfully against his pants. He was so close to coming that it wasn't funny.

He brought his arm back far and let loose with the last few swats to her overwhelmed rear, causing her to shriek loudly.

He put the paddle down on the table and took his hand off her back.

"You stay there, now, Heather. Just stay there."

She collapsed against the table, weeping and sobbing. Now he'd have to see what the aftermath

brought. She would either turn him out, and he'd never see her again, or she'd be contrite and promise never to disappoint him or herself again. He prayed it was the latter. He'd rarely had this much fun punishing someone. She was so lovely. Those legs! That fine ass!

He put the paddle back in his coat and returned to her. He forced himself to keep cool. All he wanted to do was plumb her depths, but she could hate him for all he knew.

She was still crying fairly hard. He waited until she quieted some.

He laid a hand on the small of her back, and she jumped.

"Easy, Heather, easy. Take it easy. You did very well. I'm very proud of you. You obeyed me and took your punishment like a good girl. Now you won't disappoint me or yourself again, will you?"

"No," she croaked out.

"Good girl. Now, I want you to go over and lie face down on the couch. Your punishment is over. But I want you to keep your pants down, all right?"

"O-okay," she stammered, sobbing still.

She got up and gasped at the pain of movement. She obediently stepped out of her pants and walked over to the couch, completely naked from the waist down. He got harder. She was turned away from him, so hopefully, she wouldn't notice.

He walked into her kitchen and checked her freezer. Luckily, she had a pack of frozen peas. He got the peas, and went through her cupboards and found some aspirin. He got a bottle of water, the peas and the pills and returned to the living room.

"Heather? I want you to take two aspirin. Here," he said, handing them to her. She obediently took the pills.

He brought up a chair next to the couch. "I'm going to put this icepack on your rear end." He did so, and she jumped a bit, then relaxed.

"You did very well, Heather. I'm impressed. Very impressed."

She said nothing. He hoped she wasn't too angry with him.

He got up, went to his coat pocket and got out a can of Solarcaine. He returned to her and gently began rubbing her back.

"I know I hurt you. I wanted to. I meant to. That was the worst hiding I'll ever give you. I wanted to make an impression on you. In the future, I will make judgments based upon any other infractions you may make on your plan and modify the punishments accordingly. But this one, I wanted you to know the worst. And this was the worst I'll ever give you."

"Thank God."

He smiled. He removed the peas and sprayed Solarcaine on her rear.

"Since you were such a good girl, I'm rewarding you with Solarcaine. This should help with the pain."

He saw when the medicine worked; her entire body relaxed, and her sobs subsided. Good.

He petted her head, very softly, very affectionately. "I hope you don't hate me, Heather."

"I don't."

"I only did this because I care about you. All of this... was because I care about you. I would have never agreed to help you if I hadn't been interested in you. I will understand if you don't want to proceed with this relationship. But I hope you'll want to."

She finally turned and looked up at him. She smiled. "No, I got it. You *are* a kinda hard-ass, but... I did screw up. And I *have* been screwing up, and I don't want to. I knew I could've stopped you and ended this whole thing. This was my choice, having you spank me. It was horrible, but... I know I'll get my homework done this week. And if you keep helping me, I'll definitely get that master's degree and achieve all my goals at work. Which means a

lot to me. So, no, I appreciate this. Thanks. Thanks for caring enough about me to do all this for me."

He grinned. "You're very welcome, Heather. How are you feeling?"

"Better, now."

"Good. Uh, is it all right if I rub out some of the pain? It'll help as well."

"Sure, go for it."

He almost couldn't believe his good luck. All he wanted to do was bury his face between her legs, but he held himself back. He'd start slowly. Build her up so she'd really want him. He gently began massaging her rear, his sex responding accordingly.

After a while, she moaned and moved her hips against the couch. This was promising. He'd test her to see how far he could go.

He rubbed and massaged her buns, then dipped his hand between her legs. He was instantly rewarded. She spread her legs and arched her hips, inviting him in. Oh, God, he wanted her!

He slipped his hand down underneath her, and she raised that beautiful ass higher. He played with her tender folds, and then inserted a finger inside her. She was so wet that it slid right in. He nearly fainted with lust. He began fingering her, until she began writhing and grinding her hips into the couch.

He finally couldn't stand it any longer. He withdrew, grabbed her, flipped her over, spread her legs wide and buried his face between her legs. She squealed with delight as his tongue found her hardened clit. He flicked it lightly with his tongue, and she grabbed his head and brought him closer. She tasted so good, smelled so good—he was out of his mind with sexual joy. He could pleasure this woman forever and never tire. Heavenly!

He started off slowly and then built up and delivered a practiced assault on her sweet spot. She cried out and pushed her hips up, trying to get as much of herself into his mouth as she could. She contracted then; writhing, moaning, seemingly

barely able to handle the sensations.

She howled as she came, bucking up against him, smashing against the couch with her fists. After she calmed, he started all over again. This was so fun! He brought her to as many orgasms as he could before she pushed him away.

Her eyes were dark with lust. "I want you inside me, now," she growled.

He was so happy he was forty. In his younger days, he would have come just from that look on her face. As it was, it was hard to hold himself back. He made short work of his clothes, his member was so hard it hurt. He loved the way her eyes lit up when she saw him. He quickly grabbed a condom out of his pocket, eased it on and then fell between her legs.

When he entered her, he felt the connection. This was powerful. This was real. This was a bonding, not merely sex; the first time on a path with his future partner. He tried to hold himself back, control himself, but he couldn't. He lost himself in her. He thrust into her wildly, and she threw her head back against the couch and roared with release. He felt her sex spasm around him and nearly lost it right then. But he was determined to keep her going for as long as he could. Somehow, he stayed focused. He wanted to take her on a ride she'd never forget. Through some pretty fancy mental gymnastics, he continued driving into her with everything he had. No woman had ever fit with him like this. No woman had ever felt like this.

Finally, he could tell he was on the verge of coming, so he let loose on her. He plowed into her, slamming her g-spot with everything he had. She cried out loudly, grabbed his ass hard and pulled him into her. He lost it. He thrust into her, crying out as he came, almost blinded by his release it was so overpowering. He jerked and shook and drove into her, never wanting to leave her depths. But finally, it was over. He withdrew, took her into his

arms and kissed her. She was so soft and tasted so sweet. So loving, too, it felt like she kissed him back with her entire being.

When he pulled away and looked deep into her now darkened blue eyes, he could tell. He'd just fallen hard for her. It was beyond anything he'd felt before for any woman, not even his wife. This woman was everything he'd been looking for in a woman. Pure fire, pure fun, pure joy.

"Wow," she said.

"Yes... wow. You said it."

"You'd better be planning on spending the night," she said.

He grinned. "I don't think I could leave you right now, even if I tried. My God, you are something, woman. Some. Thing."

"No, you're the star. I've never been made love to like that before. Damn, I've never known it could be so good. No wonder my marriage failed. He couldn't do that to me. No man has been able to do that to me. You win the prize, boyfriend."

"I... yes, well, ditto there. Never felt this way with any other woman."

"If you'll excuse me, though, I need to attend to something," she said.

"Please." He released her.

He watched her bruised, lovely ass as she walked into her bathroom and felt himself grow hard again. Crazy, this was crazy lust. And the most powerful love he'd felt in memory. He hoped she felt the same way about him.

When she returned, he couldn't help himself. He had to have her again.

"I want you to do something for me," he said.

"What's that?"

"I want you to lie on your dining room table."

She looked confused. "What—okay," she said quickly, a mischievous look in her eye. She obediently rushed to the table, got up on it and lay down, length-wise.

He strode over to her, and he'd never seen a more beautiful sight. She was like a gorgeous buffet of sex, all laid out before him. He couldn't figure out what part of her he liked best. Her ripe, full breasts, the triangle between her thighs, her sweet rear end, or her long legs. He wanted to start with her mouth and dine all night on her amazing body. Beyond the sex, he wanted this woman. And not just as some passing fancy. He wanted her for keeps.

He visualized her tied to his bed at home where he'd teach her all about nipple clamps, and introduce her to his other fun sex toys. He'd experiment on her with his varied assortment of whips and paddles. His member grew painfully big again. He knew she liked that play spanking he'd given her on the night they made up her agreement. He might just have found the playmate he'd been searching for his entire life.

"Scoot down here," he commanded. She did so, and he pushed her knees up, pulled her down towards him and spread her legs wide apart. Her sex was so pretty, so inviting, so ripe and ready for him. He leaned down and carefully began tormenting her with his tongue, lightly, ever so lightly until she quivered and whimpered.

"Oh, please, do it harder, harder," she begged.

He reached up and pinched a nipple; she squealed and shoved her hips up to him and cried out in release. She made him feel so powerful! He rewarded her with a barrage on her hardened, swollen nub. She moaned and writhed, coming again and again.

He finally couldn't stand it. He grabbed her, pulled her off the table, turned her around, bent her over and entered her. Two thrusts in and she pounded on the table as she came. This time, he couldn't last very long. The sight of her punished cheeks; her arched back; the sound of her cries; the feel of her sex muscles contracting against him. He quickly drove them both to powerfully climactic

orgasms. Afterwards, she collapsed against the table, breathing hard, exhausted and spent.

He picked her up in his arms and carried her to her bedroom. He put her down onto her bed, lay next to her and took her in his arms. He'd never been happier in his life. Nor more satisfied, nor more in love.

He turned her to face him. When he saw the look, deep in her eyes, he knew it was time. "I love you, Heather."

Her beautiful blue eyes grew wide, and then they filled with tears. "Oh, God, I love you, Curt!" She pulled him down, and he kissed her.

It felt like his heart inflated to three times its normal size. He'd never fallen for anyone like this, not this hard, not this quick.

He brought her close to him and reveled in the feeling of her naked body close to his. He couldn't believe it, but he could feel himself growing hard again. This hadn't happened since he was a kid. This was so great!

"You're moving in with me, Heather," he told her.

"Was that an order?" she asked with a hidden grin.

"Yes."

"Are you going to spank me if I'm bad?"

"Oh, yes. But I know you'll be a good girl after tonight."

"Yeah..." she said, with a saucy look in her eye.

"Oh, so she wants to play, does she? If you weren't so sore, I'd show you just how fun a nice, playful spanking can be."

"Stop, you're turning me on, and I'm too sore to do it again."

He grinned down at her. "Are you sure?"

He reached out and gently began to explore her again.

She groaned and spread her legs for him. "You are going to be a very, very bad man, aren't you?"

"And very, very good, too," he promised as he bent down to kiss her.

Heather completed her master's degree, got her promotion and married Curt six months later.

And the only time she got the paddle again was when she begged him for it.

Her Secret Life Part One

As Willie sat there, smoking a big bomber of a joint with her connection, she finally took in her surroundings. Her friend was a paranoid nutcase. She'd known him since high school, but Melvin had been slipping further and further into the outer fringes of society. He had newspaper clippings all over the walls of his living room, some with huge red circles around the headlines. The books covering his coffee table ranged from manuals on how to build a trebuchet, to getting off the power grid, to military manifestos written by South American dictators.

"So, when are you building the bunker?" she finally asked the large, pasty-faced man sitting in the recliner next to her.

His large brown eyes practically popped out of his head. "How did you know about the bunker?" he demanded, sitting upright in his chair.

"Dude, dude, calm. I was kidding. I'm just a bit worried about you, man. You... this isn't good, all this reading of yours," she said, gesturing towards the coffee table.

"But Willie, the world is coming to an end, soon," he replied earnestly. "And the government is behind it."

"Honey, have you thought about therapy?"

"Therapy placates the masses and makes you all comfortable with this commercialized hell the planet has become. I don't want anything to dull my senses," he said, taking a huge hit off the joint. He handed it back to her.

She took the lit cigarette from him. "Nice irony, there."

"Marijuana sharpens my mind. I can think more clearly, see through all the distractions the government is bombarding me with. The iPod? Do you really think they're playing all music?"

Subliminal programming, they all come with subliminal programming that makes us want to buy more stuff. And TV now? They're sending two programs during most prime time viewing, they send the show or whatever, the Simpsons then, in images we can't even perceive, they're sending us messages to go out and spend ourselves into oblivion."

"I can see those images. They're called commercials."

"You always were a naysayer, Willie. You gotta open up your eyes and your mind, girl. They're subverting us."

"Oh, I feel subverted. This stuff is strong. Here, you finish it. I gotta be straight soon. Seeing my new boyfriend later."

"Are you still lying to him?"

"Of course. He'd bust me. Maybe not, but he could. He doesn't know about this whole other life of mine. He thinks I go to some cubicle in the city to work, he has no idea I'm one of the most successful erotica writers in the country."

"I think he started dating you to get to me."

"He doesn't even know you. Or know that I know you."

"I think you've lost your mind with this one, Willie. The biker, I understood. The shoe salesman, I understood."

"He was hot."

"I even understood when you went out with the hacker."

"He was cute in a sort of wild-coffee-addict-never-sees-the-light-of-day way."

"But what I cannot fathom is this new flirtation with the dark side," Melvin said.

"He's cute as hell and an awesome lay. What more could I need?"

"Someone who didn't have the power to arrest you," he responded acidly.

"He wouldn't," Willie scoffed. "Besides, he'll never find out about me. Or you. Or anything I don't want him to. We've been going out for three months and he still doesn't know anything about me. And I'm gonna keep it that way."

"A relationship made in heaven. The guy doesn't even know you. And this doesn't say anything to you? Trust in a relationship? Mutual respect? How can you say he loves you when he doesn't even know you?"

"Oh, he knows all the important parts."

Melvin snorted. "I'll bet."

"No, not those parts. It's not like I change personalities around him. He knows I like cartoons and I collect weird action figures. He knows I ride a motorcycle and I like to hike. He's met my parents."

"That's not saying much, they haven't known anything about you since you were twelve."

"I couldn't tell them I was dealing. Or that's how I worked my way through college. Or that I write erotica. They think I'm a computer programmer."

"What does he think you do?"

"He thinks I'm a technical writer."

Melvin burst out laughing. "You don't know the first thing about technology."

"I can use my computer."

"Only because I keep updating everything for you."

"Yeah, well."

"I don't know. So what kind of cop is he again?"

"FBI, baby."

"Damn, girl. When you travel on the dark side, you go all the way."

"Don't I know it. If he weren't so cute, I would've dumped him by now. And he's so nice. It's actually frightening what a goody two shoes the man is. I hope he never finds out about me."

"What if it gets serious?"

"Serious. Who, me?" Willie asked.

"Yeah. You."

"Never occurred to me."

"Are you in love with him?"

"Hell, yeah."

"And he loves you."

"He says so. He acts like it. I've met his parents and everything."

"So? Doesn't this say anything to you? What if he wants to marry you?"

"Marry me? Me?" She laughed. "No man has ever dared to tread that path with me. I think he'll come to his senses eventually and leave me. That's what they all do. Well, either that or I leave them. Marriage, ha. I've never even been proposed to yet."

"What about Mike? And Jack? And Daniel?"
Melvin corrected.

Willie waved a hand dismissively. "Oh, those didn't count."

"Why not? They were marriage proposals."

"They didn't count because I didn't love them."

"So what if this guy asks you to marry him?"

This stumped Willie. "I don't know. Never gave it any serious thought. I just figured he'd dump me. I don't know."

"How old are you, now?"

"Don't ask," Willie said.

"You have to be my age, like, thirty-three."

"I don't want to think about it. It makes me think that I have to be serious about my life and I don't like being serious. So, no, I'm not gonna think about it. Besides, I like him too much. That's always a sure sign they're gonna dump me."

"I hope you're right. FBI. Just gives me the willies thinkin' about it—no pun intended. Oh, have I told you about my new blog?"

"No, what one is this about?"

"About assassinating the president."

The words reverberated through her head. She stared over at her pasty-faced friend. "Are you nuts?"

"I want those bastards to wake up and realize that there are some of us who just won't take their crap anymore."

"Melvin, when did you start this blog?"

"About three days ago. Man, did it take off. Thousands of people commented on it. I'm finally getting the attention I've been needing. Now that I've got a platform, I'm gonna be tackling all the big subjects. How Russia is still controlling the planet, how antiperspirant causes brain damage—"

"I was wondering why you smelled so funky—"

"How those black helicopters are starting to follow major corridors of traffic, a sure sign the government is planning to implement martial law. Then I'm gonna launch into how our money is poisoned with a secret toxin that makes us want to eat junk food. You know the biggest threat we're facing on our planet?"

"Trans fatty acids?" Willie guessed.

"No, Chinese fast food joints. Think about it. They start in, they've got tons more people than the US does. If they start shoving their food down our throats, we'll be slaves to them and their ideals. It'll all go down hill from there."

"You're making me hungry. Man, some Kung Pao Chicken would be really good about now."

"You're hopeless."

Willie laughed. "Melvin, you gotta get out more, man. You spend too much time cooped up in..." A man outside the house caught Willie's attention.

"What?" Melvin asked.

"That guy getting out of that car across the street. He looks just like Gary."

"Where?" Melvin asked. He turned around to look.

Willie pointed. "See that guy with that other suit? I swear, he looks just like..."

It suddenly slammed her. Melvin's blog.

"Holy Moly! Melvin! It is Gary! He's coming here to question you! I have to get out of here!" she

cried, leaping to her feet. She grabbed her bag of pot, shoved it in her pocket and headed for the back door.

"Willie! Wait! I need a witness to the police brutality!" Melvin called after her.

Willie was already into the backyard. She raced through the overgrown grass, leapt up on the back fence and jumped over.

Right as she landed, she heard a voice call out behind her. "Wait right there! FBI!" It was Gary. She couldn't believe this. Willie ran for her life.

She leapt over lawn furniture, raced up to a table next to the fence, jumped up on it and vaulted over.

"I see you! Damn you, wait! FBI! I order you to stop!" he yelled after her.

Her heart pounding out of her chest, Willie ran across the next yard, leapt up on the fence and heaved herself over.

"FBI! Stop!"

How did this happen? Willie raced across one more yard, hopped the fence and landed in the street. Damn it!

She darted across the street, heading for an alley.

"Goddamn you!" came Gary's cry from behind her.

She ran down the alley, turned the corner and saw the train tracks ahead of her. It was then she heard the train. She had to make it, she had to make it in front of the train. It was her only way out.

Even though she was nearly out of breath, somehow the terror of being caught by Gary propelled her faster.

"FBI! STOP!" he shouted.

She checked over her shoulder; he was closing in on her. He was still a good fifty feet away, but he was getting closer by the minute.

The train's deafening horn blared. The crossing gates were coming down up the block.

"Don't try it! It's not worth it! I only want to talk to you!" Gary cried out.

Willie's entire focus was on the train and the tracks in front of her. It was going to be close.

She ran flat out for the tracks, the train was right there. Using every bit of her strength, she launched herself over the tracks. The conductor blared the horn.

She saw the train out of her peripheral vision; it looked like it was going to hit her.

She landed on the other side of the tracks just as the blast of the wind from the train hit her. She kept running, barely believing that she'd made it. She finally came to stop and checked behind her. The train was a long one; she'd made it.

Unable to believe what she'd just done, she turned away from the train and kept running. She had to get back home. She'd pick up her motorcycle later. Good thing there'd been no parking in front of Melvin's. She'd parked down the block. Hopefully, Gary wouldn't see the cycle. It least it was a stock Honda and a very popular model.

Willie didn't stop panicking until she reached the safety of her own home. She rushed inside, hid her pot in her stash place and headed for the shower. She had to ditch her clothes and get the sweat off. No clues. Gary was due in two hours. Of course, if they arrested Melvin, maybe Gary would be delayed.

Three hours later, when she heard the knock at her door followed by the sound of it opening, she was ready. She had her fake work out on her desk, had prepared dinner and was casually dressed in sweats and t-shirt. She even took off her make up in an effort to appear like she'd been home all day.

When Gary's face appeared at her office door, she didn't bat an eye. She leapt out of her chair and ran to him. He grinned and brought her in for a lovely kiss.

"So how's my favorite girl today?" he asked, his blue eyes twinkling down at her. She ran her hand through his flame red hair. "Better now that you're here."

He kissed her again. "So you been home all day?"

"Oh, yeah. Got a huge part of a manual done."

"Good girl. So what's cookin'? It smells great."

"Pot roast," she said.

"Mmm, sounds great. Tomorrow, I'm takin' you out."

"Ooo, where?"

"It's a surprise. Actually, I have a couple of surprises for you tonight, too."

"Really? What kind of surprises?"

He smiled down at her. "You'll just have to wait. Hey, I'm gonna throw on some sweats, too. You wanna come watch?"

"Food first, then sex. If I watch you, I won't be able to keep my hands off you."

"We could have sex before and after," he said, reaching for her.

"I'm too hungry. Go get changed, then we can eat. You're a bit late."

"Yeah, had some problems at work."

"Poor thing. Go change and meet me in the kitchen. You can tell me all about it."

Willie waltzed back into the kitchen, congratulating herself for running. This was so cool. Gary would never know that it had been her at Melvin's. Whew, dodged that bullet! She did a little dance in front of the fridge. Victory!

"Honey?" Gary called out.

"Yeah?"

"Could you come here a minute?"

Sex. That's what it was all about. Oh, why the hell not? "Sure. Just a sec." Willie put down her wineglass and went to her bedroom.

Gary had changed into sweats and a tight black t-shirt which accentuated his beefy pecs. He looked so hot!

"What is it?" she asked, walking up to him.

"Hey, look what I found," he said, handing her a small plastic object.

She looked at it. It was her Godzilla key ring. She'd spent a full hour searching for it that afternoon.

"God, I've been looking all over for this, where did you find it?" she asked.

The look in his eye changed. It darkened. His expression hardened.

"What? Where did you find it?" she asked.

"At 4545 Willow Avenue," he said as his mouth grew tight.

Willie felt like someone clubbed her over the head. The room took a spin, she collapsed on the bed and held her head in her hands. It was over. Over and done with.

He walked over to her laundry hamper and opened it up. He withdrew her red baseball shirt and sent her a glare. "It was you, wasn't it?"

"Me, what?" she asked as innocently as she could.

"Don't! Just don't. Tell me, I want to hear you say it."

"What do you want me to say?"

"It was you I chased, wasn't it? You who threw herself in front of that train."

"Uh..."

Gary's face flushed red. It almost matched his hair. He walked right over to her. "I obviously need to make some things clear to you," he said.

He sat next to her, grabbed her and pulled her across his lap. He couldn't. She was a grown

woman, wasn't she? He wouldn't be... spanking her, would he?

As if in answer to her mental question, she felt her sweats and panties being pulled to her knees. The air rushed over her exposed behind.

"Gary, what—"

Whack! Gary smacked her full force on the butt with his large open hand. The pain shocked her. She gasped, unable to breathe. He whacked her again, harder this time.

"Gary, stop! I'm sorry!"

"Not yet, you aren't! But by the time I'm through with you, you sure as hell will be!"

He slapped her ass with gusto. Her buns were on fire.

How could this be happening to her? This wasn't right. People didn't spank people when they were bad. Not adult people. She hadn't even been spanked as a child; her parents didn't believe in it. This was shocking. It was the first time she'd ever really had a consequence for one of her actions. Mind-blowing.

Not to mention extremely painful. But through the pain and tears, something else was clear. This man cared about her. Really, truly cared about her. Doubly shocking. A guy who cared about her this much? To actually be spanking her? Trying to get some sense into her?

She had to admit, jumping in front of the train was stupid. She'd been a split second away from death. She supposed his treatment was somewhat appropriate.

Even though the man was barbecuing her ass. She wasn't sure she'd ever sit down comfortably again.

Soon, Willie had enough. She tried to claw her way across the bed, but Gary's arm was like an iron bar across her back. The more she struggled, the harder he hit her. His hand felt like a flat piece of

wood impacting her poor behind. She finally let loose with bloodcurdling howls.

Gary finally stopped. Probably because he was worried that the neighbors would call the police. She continued bawling, absolutely torn by conflicting emotions. She was furious he'd dared to spank her; encouraged because it might mean that he really loved her and moreover, worried that he'd find out all the other stuff about her. What would he do if he found out she'd lied about her career? About her pot smoking? Would he spank her again that hard? Or would he just leave her?

She suddenly realized that she didn't want him to leave her. As much as the spanking upset her, this was a guy she actually cared about. She cared about what he thought of her. It had never been like this before.

He took her in his arms and kissed her. "Hey, hey, it's okay, it's okay, the spanking's over." He kissed her on the temple, reached up and wiped away some tears.

"I'm sorry."

"I wish you would've stopped," Gary said. "You're his friend, it was fine that you were there. I know you. I know you had nothing to do with his stupid blog."

"He'd just told me. He's no danger to society. He's an idiot."

"We got that. We still had to haul him in with the war on terror and all, but he'll be released soon."

"Good, good."

"So why did you run?" he asked.

"I... uh. I... don't know."

He examined her, almost looking through her. Never date a cop. Now all his detective antennae were turned onto her. This was bad. She always counted on the fact that most men lived inside their own heads. This guy just jumped out of his own and

into hers. He could easily find out everything. She could be in big trouble.

"What did Melvin tell you?" she asked.

"Nothing. Actually, not even your name. I found the keychain and then tricked him into telling me you were there. Plus there are only about twenty pictures of you with him all over his walls. That was kind of a big clue there."

"Crap."

"Honey, why did you run? The only thing I could figure was that you were stoned and paranoid."

She blinked. She didn't know what to say. Anything she said could and probably would be used against her. In his court of law. Why did she have to fall in love with an FBI agent? Why? Why?

"Honey, I won't break up with you. Were you smoking pot or not at his house?"

She stared at him. "I'd rather not answer on the grounds that it might incriminate me."

His brow furrowed. "Is it a once in awhile thing, or do you do this regularly?"

"Uh... do we have to talk about this?"

"No, but I would hope that you'd just be open with me about yourself. I don't like you hiding parts of yourself from me. You're safe with me. I love you."

"I... Not today, I just don't want to talk about it now."

"Why did you jump the train? Are you that afraid of me?"

"No," she lied.

"I think there's somethin' else going on here. You don't feel safe with me."

"I feel totally safe with you."

"But you're not being honest with me."

"Look, just because I don't want to talk about something doesn't mean I'm lying. I don't want to talk about it because I don't want to lie."

Gary thought for a moment. He sighed. "Look, I want this to go further, our relationship. But to do that I need to know all of who you are. Everything."

She had nothing to say. She hadn't counted on this at all. She'd never had a relationship that worked before. What was she supposed to do?

He studied her. It made her uneasy.

"Let's drop it for now," he said. "But I better set some ground rules, just so we're clear."

"Ground rules?"

"Well, you obviously broke one of them today, I just thought I ought to let you know what my parameters are. What I will and will not tolerate from you."

"Oh. Uh, okay."

"Good. Number one rule, don't jump in front of moving trains, okay?"

She laughed. Then stopped herself. "I know it wasn't funny. No problem. I just kinda freaked out."

"I'll say. So if you do that in the future, you bet I'll turn you over my knee and whack on you."

"Got that. You made that very clear."

"Next rule, you need to be honest with me. I understand if you want to keep some things to yourself, but honey, I want to know all of you. Don't worry; I'll love you no matter what. I'm not that much of a stickler. I'm willing to accept some differences."

"Okay."

"And my last rule is, never lie to me. Not only does it erode the trust between us, I just can't tolerate liars. I've got a bug about it, okay?"

"Gotcha. No problem. I'm surprised you thought you had to tell me that one. I know you well enough. I mean, today surprised me, but... I suppose it's understandable."

"You almost died today."

"I agree, I should have stopped. I just didn't want to lose you."

"Is that what you were worried about?"

"Yes."

"Honey, come here. Come here," he said reaching out and embracing her. "I couldn't leave you. Come on, I love you, baby. I want to go the long haul with you. You're my girl. There's nothing you could do—short of working in porn or something—that would turn me off to the point where I would leave you."

Working in porn. She wrote erotica. How far did this tolerance of his go? She should tell him. Get it all over with.

Or maybe she should wait, get him really bonded to her and then drop the bomb.

Gary squeezed her and said, "I'm not leaving you, but honey, it doesn't mean that I'm not going to put the wood to you if you screw up. That was crazy today, honey."

"I'm sorry."

"So don't lie to me and don't try to kill yourself and you won't find yourself over my knee."

He held her and petted her and then made love to her. She fell asleep in his arms, blissful.

At three in the morning, Willie woke up, paranoid. He was going to find out all her secrets and dump her, she knew it. She actually loved the guy. How was she supposed to reveal all her secrets to him? How did normal relationships work? She had no real idea how to approach this.

Oh, God. She had an erotica convention in the City that weekend. She'd forgotten all about it. She was even the guest speaker. What was she going to tell Gary?

Later that morning, Gary woke her up with a lovely kiss. "Hey honey, we're going to be late for work, get up."

Willie wiped her eyes and stretched. "Oh, yeah, work."

"Hey, this weekend, let's go to the City and ride the cable cars," he suggested.

"Uh... I have to work," she lied quickly.

He looked surprised. "Really? When did this come up?"

Willie said, "I'd completely forgot, but we're having some stupid seminar that I have to attend. All weekend."

"Bummer. Oh, well, maybe the next weekend."

"Sure, honey," she said. She was overcome by a sense of guilt. Which was odd. Had she ever felt guilty before? She couldn't remember.

That weekend, at the conference, Willie's keynote speech went great. Everyone laughed at her jokes, and she even got a standing ovation. Killer!

Later, she was at the book signing with all the other popular erotica writers. A huge line of fans stretched out in front of her table. It was so fun to talk to her readers and hear what they thought of her latest work.

She'd run out of books and leaned down to get some more. When she sat up again, she got ready to sign the next fan's book. She was fumbling to get the book open—the binding was tight—and before she looked up at the person, she asked, "So in whose name would you like the inscription?"

"Gary T. Hammer."

Willie froze. When she looked up, she found herself staring into the cool blue eyes of her lover.

Her Secret Life Part Two

Willie stared into the sharp blue eyes of her lover. Her mind became a cascade of questions. How did he find her at the erotica convention? Had he heard her keynote speech? When did he find out she wrote erotica? Was he going to break up with her?

An even scarier thought jolted her. Was Gary going to spank her again? She could barely sit as it was. She couldn't imagine what he would do to her ass now. Now that he'd actually caught her in a lie. He'd warned her what would happen if he did. What would be her fate? Would he dump her or spank her? Or spank her and then dump her?

She broke out of her stunned daze and came to her senses. Behind Gary was a huge line of her fans, all waiting for her to sign their books. She had to get it together. She had to cope and focus. At least until the signing was over.

"Uh... So, you'd like it made out to Gary Hammer? Or just Gary?" she finally stammered.

"How about just Gary?" he said, his blue eyes steely.

"G-good. Just G-Gary," she said, the pen shaking in her hand. She could feel the sweat break out on her forehead.

"Hey Willie, you okay? You look like you just saw a ghost," joked a fellow writer, Sara, who sat next to her.

"Uh, no. I... Oh, Sara, this is my boyfriend or was my boyfriend, Gary. Gary, Sara."

Sara stuck out her hand to Gary, who graciously accepted it. "Pleased to meet you, Gary. Oooh, you're cute. Hey, you're the red-haired guy in Willie's latest novel, aren't you? Man, I can see you really inspired her. This is her best book ever. What do you think of it?"

Gary flushed red. Willie wanted to die.

"He hasn't read it yet, Sara. I didn't want him to until it was published."

"Why? He came out really well in it. Honey, you've improved this woman's writing, let me tell you. That last boyfriend, well, let's put it this way, she had to work to make her story work. You, well it was clear the story just poured out of her. You aren't a cop, though, are you? Not like the guy in the story."

"No, I'm not a cop. But I do believe in certain rules. And that there are consequences when someone breaks a rule," he said, leveling his stare at Willie. She shifted in her seat.

"Ooooh, sounds like you guys are into B and D, very cool," Sara said. "I'm gonna look forward to your next book, Willie. Sounds like it's gonna be very spicy."

"Yeah, spicy," Willie repeated, now terrified.

Gary said, "Well, honey, sign the book, I'll wait for you to get done."

"Are you coming to the dinner tonight?" Sara asked Gary. "Your girlfriend is up for an award."

"Uh..." he said, staring at Willie.

"He had to work, so I didn't invite him, but he's welcome to come," Willie said awkwardly.

Gary said, "I was hoping to spend a little time with you before the dinner, honey. Maybe in your hotel room?"

"Oooh, I like the way this man thinks," Sara said, elbowing Willie in the ribs. "Hold onto him and never let him go, girlfriend."

"Yeah. My hotel room. I'll have a couple of hours to kill."

"Just make sure she can walk, talk and sit, Gary," Sara joked. "She may need to accept an award."

"I'll bear that in mind, Sara. Honey, I'll just be waiting in the lobby bar, okay?" Gary asked.

"Okay, honey," Willie replied mechanically.

The next hour was a blur. Willie put on a fake smile and made small talk with her fans while signing autographs, but all she could think about was that her life was over. Well, her life with Gary, anyway.

When the book signing was over, Willie checked her watch. It was four, the dinner was at seven. Three hours to be spanked, dumped and with just enough time to put herself back together again for the awards ceremony. Neat.

She walked out to the lobby bar and easily found Gary; that flame red hair stood out against the sea of suits at the bar. His expression was unreadable.

"Shall we go up to your room?" he asked.

"Can I have a drink first?"

"I'd rather have you clear."

"Okay, I'll drink afterwards."

"You'll probably need it," he said.

They went up to her room in silence. Poor Gary had to endure several fans stopping her for more autographs and their obvious appraisal of him as he stood next to her. She had no idea what he was thinking. It couldn't be good.

She let him into her hotel room and reluctantly followed. He walked across the room and looked out of her window, which afforded amazing views of the San Francisco Bay and the Bay Bridge.

"Nice view," he said.

"Uh, yeah."

"So how long have you been writing erotica?" he asked.

"Thanks for not calling it 'porn'. Uh, twelve years. Just really got popular in the last four. Erotica has seen a real boom in the past few years. Used to be hard to sell the stuff, now they can't get enough," she said.

She sat on the edge of her bed and regarded his stiff shoulders at the window. He still had his back to her.

"You lied to me," he said without turning around.

"I did."

"Why?" he asked, finally turning around to face her.

"Because I didn't think you'd approve. Not many do. I lie first, then see if the people are cool. Erotica puts off most people. And especially erotica writers."

"You had a long line of fans there."

"I did."

"So why didn't you think I'd find out?"

"I... don't know."

"This is the same excuse you gave me a few nights ago. Why don't you know?" he asked. □

"I guess I didn't expect you to hang around that long. They never do."

"Who never does?"

"Guys. Normally I've been dumped by now. Well, by the guys I care about. The other ones, I dump."

He regarded her. He rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Are you angry with me?" she asked.

"Yes. But I guess I'm more hurt that you didn't trust me. So what else is there? What other secrets do you have? Could you please just tell me everything so I don't get blindsided like I did today and last week?"

"How did you end up here?" she asked instead of answering him.

"I had lunch with Tom in the restaurant at the top of the hotel. Tom was cracking all kinds of jokes about your conference. We decided to peruse the book signing to see what kinds of people wrote those books. We were both surprised by all the older ladies sitting there behind tables. And you can imagine my surprise when I saw you sitting there with that huge line of fans. Luckily, Tom didn't see you. I pretended to have somewhere else to go. I

walked him out and then came back and got in line. So you were the keynote speaker, too, huh?"

"Uh, yeah."

"Some lady standing behind me really enjoyed you. So, how do you think you did?"

"I got a standing ovation. Sorry about Sara. I..."

"So did you really put me in that book?" he asked.

"Kinda."

"Kinda. You either did or you didn't."

"I did."

"Huh." She couldn't tell what he thought about that.

"So you don't do any tech writing, do you?" he asked.

"No."

"All those books, those papers—"

"Window dressing. All fakes. I put them out when my parents come to visit."

"Or me," he added curtly.

"Or you."

"So you do smoke pot, don't you?" Gary asked. "You bought some from Melvin, didn't you? That's why you were there."

"Yes."

"I thought I smelled pot on your breath a few weeks ago."

"I normally don't indulge when you're around. I don't like to keep stuff from you."

He snorted. "Really? Sounds like you've kept a lot from me."

"I got used to hiding myself from people. Guess it's a habit now."

"Nasty habit."

She said nothing.

"What else? Do you have a criminal record?" he asked.

"No."

"Let me put it this way, what about you is the truth that you told me?"

"That I love you."

"Aside from that."

She sighed. "That I'm a writer. That I like weird action figures, riding my motorcycle and hiking. You met my parents. And one of my friends from high school, Melvin there. I'm not leading a complete double life. I smoke pot and I write erotica. Okay, fine. All my dark secrets. You're gonna probably dump me so I'll just tell you all of it."

"Might be nice," he added with an acidic edge.

"I dealt pot from when I was twelve through college, I guess, twenty-five. It's how I made my money. I put myself through school that way. Never was caught. Quit as soon as I could, basically as soon as I made money through the erotica. I belong to NORMAL, I vote Green Party and I have no record. I graduated with a degree in creative writing, not tech writing. I was never a girl scout. I am the top grossing erotica writer in the country. I make appearances several times a year at various conventions, I do radio and some talk shows, but on cable networks and under my pen name, Lissa Dubois. I like metal music, not that crap I play when you're around. And I've been proposed to three times, all by guys I didn't love. Oh, and I hate sushi. And light beer."

"Anything else?" he asked.

"No, I think that covers it."

"Wow," he said. He got up and stared out the window for a few moments. Willie didn't know what he thought or what to do. So she just sat there and watched him.

"Do you want to accompany me to the dinner later on?" she asked.

"Am I invited?"

"Certainly. But..."

"People will assume I am the model for the character in your book."

"Yes."

"And they would be correct."

"Yes."

"O-kay," he said. He still didn't look at her.

He put his hands on his hips. He ran a hand through his hair. He paced. She waited.

He finally turned and looked at her. He was clearly not pleased. It was all she could tell. He walked over to her and gazed down at her with disapproval. Abruptly, he grabbed her by the wrist and pulled her to her feet.

He sat down, yanked her across his lap and she knew what was coming next. He pulled up her skirt, pulled down her undies and got her settled over his knee.

"Have you told me the truth?" he asked. A leading question.

"Yes."

He whacked her one; she nearly jumped out of her skin.

"What about that story about when you were camping in the girl scouts and you made out with that boy scout and got in trouble?"

"Truth, well, partial truth. What I didn't tell you was that I was camping with my family, snuck out of my tent and hunted down the boy scouts."

Whack! "OW!"

"Okay, that's funny, but honey, you have lied your head off to me."

"I mainly omitted the truth or grunted when you asked me questions. I let you draw your own conclusions. I don't like lying."

Whack!

"I don't! I'm not lying about lying!"

Whack! "You see my problem. How am I to believe anything you tell me now?"

"That's the problem with lying. Erodes trust."

He let loose with a flurry of swats. Rapid fire spanking. He was hitting hard, too. The man was clearly angry. And she didn't blame him.

As she lay there, crying, some part of her took a back seat to the event. A man was spanking her.

Not because he was mean, because she'd been mean to him. She'd never really thought about her penchant for untruths; she hadn't realized it, but she'd never been in love before.

But she had no idea what to do to regain his trust. Stop lying, that was easy. But how was she supposed to repair the damage she'd caused? She'd never had to worry about this kind of stuff before. It was so shocking. All this love and trust and commitment stuff.

The searing pain in her rear finally distracted her enough to get her thoughts away from self-reflection and back to this very strong, domineering man spanking her. She used to think spanking was kind of fun. Not anymore. Even though, for some reason, this whole disciplinarian thing Gary had going on was a huge turn on. Despite the pain.

He seemed to be beating a rhythm into her ass. Almost a staccato drum performance. She wished she could appreciate it more, but he was slaughtering her butt. She had no idea how she would make it through the dinner that evening.

After her throat was raw from yelling and her ass felt like the skin had been burned off, he stopped.

"You know what will happen if I catch you in another lie?"

"Yes," she croaked.

"I'm buying a paddle in the Castro before I leave the City. You get me?"

"Got you. Ow."

"I hope it hurts. Can't compare to what you did to me."

"I think you came close."

He pulled her up and sat her next to him. Which hurt.

He got up and stood in front of her. He reached down, pulled off her stocking and undies and then undid his own pants.

"I've got a different kind of punishment for you," he said with a deadly cool look on his face. A thrill went through her.

He reached down, took her by the hips and threw her back on the bed. He was undressed in two seconds flat with his face buried between her legs. All she could do was scream.

After more orgasms than she could count, he was on his knees and inside her. She cried out in ecstasy at the feel of him.

The man proceeded to bonk the hell out of her. He rammed her straight on for a time, then lifted one of her legs up and came at her from a different angle. The look in his eye as he gazed down at her didn't waver. It was dark, this energy of his, predatory and dominating. He was both punishing her and pleasuring her. He lifted her off the bed and into the air, doing target practice on her g-spot. He flipped her onto her knees and did her from behind. She'd never had more orgasms in her life.

He grabbed her hips and thrust into her with a ceaseless motion. He let go with one hand and began spanking her in time with his thrusts. She went over the edge, bellowing her fool head off, coming like she'd never come before. This was insane sex. Mind-blowing.

Right after she'd come, he withdrew, flipped her onto her back, grabbed her wrists, held them over her head and drove into her. A feral intensity in his dark gaze, the man launched her into the most sublime rapture she'd ever experienced. All she wanted to do was to spend her lifetime making love to him. Being his. Doing whatever would please him the most. She was enslaved to him.

When he finally allowed himself release, he growled like a wild beast which grew into a roar as he exploded inside her. His animal ferocity shot her out into the outer reaches of sexual pleasure. She reached the pinnacle. This man was it. Her sex god.

And boy was she going to make some money off this one—whoo-hoo, weren't her readers going to love this!

Afterwards, she lay exhausted, both from the spanking and the sex (not to mention the keynote speech) completely overwhelmed emotionally and physically.

"So is that gonna end up in a book?" he asked.

She burst out laughing. Had he read her mind?

"Probably," she admitted.

"You little bitch. Damn. An erotica writer. You had to be an erotica writer."

"Most guys dig erotica."

"I didn't say I didn't like it. It just blows my mind that my sweet little girl is a pot-smoking erotica writer. Who chased boy scouts. I thought I knew you."

"You do. None of that stuff really matters. It's not like I'm going to be any different with you. You'll just know what I'm up to. Oh, and I do work at home, I don't commute."

"Turn over."

"No, honey, you wasted my ass."

"I know," he said and grinned. "It felt really good to me."

"Not to me."

"Good. Okay, okay, a reprieve. But I owe you one more. With a paddle. When you heal up. I'm gonna tie you to a chair, bend you over as far as I can make you, then I'm gonna spank you until you're black and blue. And that, I hope will be the last time I ever have to punish you for real."

"For real?"

"Oh, maybe there were a few things I forgot to tell you," he said with a sly smile on his handsome face. "But now that I know you're an erotica writer, watch out, little girl. This man's got some kink in him."

"Uh, oh." A shiver of lust raced through her sex.

"I was going to work you into some of my... uh, favorites. But now? I'm just going to let loose on you. You want inspiration for those books? Boy, honey, are you going to get it."

The look in his eye made her want to come all by itself.

"Oh, dear."

"Don't worry, I'm not too kinky, but I love to spank little girls more than anything. I like to tie them up, I like to make them pay."

She was nearly speechless with desire. "Uh, oh."

"Now what you've experienced from me are punishment spankings, which should be no fun at all."

"They aren't."

"You haven't felt my fun spankings yet. They'll toast that little ass of yours, good, but they won't leave marks, nor are they designed to hurt you. Much."

"Uh, oh."

"But I have a whole leather bondage kit with your name on it. A really nice cat o' nine-tails—"

She gasped. He smiled.

"And a whole collection of nice leather paddles. But those are all for fun. That's why I'm picking up a nice thick wooden paddle with air holes for your punishment. My hand is killing me. I don't want to feel pain, I want you to feel pain when you've been bad."

"Oh, dear."

"Yeah. Oh, dear." He brought her to him and kissed her roughly. "You got a lot of payin' to do for your crimes, honey. A lot." He kissed her again.

When he pulled away, she leapt on top of him and attacked him. She rode him into a fiery orgasm; they came together. Spectacular sex.

As she lay in his arms afterwards, he asked, "What time is your dinner?"

"Huh? Oh, dinner. Man, I have no brains left. You literally porked my brains out."

He laughed.

"Dinner? Um. Seven. Awards are at eight."

"You think you'll win?"

"I hope so. Will you come with me?"

"I don't have anything to wear."

"This is not very formal. People will be wearing some..."

He broke into a wide, eager grin. "Okay, yeah, I'm going," he said enthusiastically.

She laughed. "I need a shower."

"So do I."

"You come in there and we'll never get to the dinner."

"Sure we will."

After amazing sex in the shower, Willie got ready for the dinner. She put on her make-up and changed into a very sexy red dress. When she walked out into the room she found Gary buried in her book.

"Uh, oh," she said.

He sent her a very predatory, smoldering look. "Oh, honey," he said in a low tone. "Are you inspiring. This is going to be fun." He returned to the book.

"Uh, oh. I think I've created a monster. I thought you were a goody two shoes."

He rested his fiery gaze on her. "Think again."
She got wet.

Later, at dinner, they were seated at a table of eight; two friends and a few strangers.

Gary appeared to be having a good time. He was relaxed, he engaged in the conversations and was sweet to her. But there was a look in his eye that would appear from time to time. It was an evil kind of a look.

The awards ceremony began. As the lights dimmed in the audience, Willie felt Gary's hand on her thigh. She looked over at him; he was watching

the stage. She turned to the stage; he slipped his hand under her skirt. Since she couldn't protest or it would attract attention, she was helpless. He slid his finger under her panties and slipped it inside her. No one could see. He began fingering her.

Willie had never been more turned on in her life. He slipped his finger out, slid it up and found her engorged bud. She nearly cried out. She grabbed her program and fanned herself.

The MC began calling out names of candidates for the award for best erotic sci-fi, one of the categories for which Willie was nominated. But she could barely hear the announcer over the blood rushing in her ears. She stifled a scream as Gary increased his pace with his finger.

Just as she was ready to come, the MC announced the winner. Lissa Dubois.

At this point, Willie's brain didn't really register the name. She was too focused on coming. She screamed "Yes!" without even realizing it. But the "yes" sounded exactly like what it was—a cry of an orgasm.

Her response brought down the house.

It took her a good minute to figure out what was happening. Thankfully, she was excellent at covering. Gary withdrew his hand, right as she stood up and she waved to everyone like she'd just copped off a good joke.

She couldn't believe she had to be lucid after that hellacious orgasm. She'd get him later for that.

She accepted the award and realized she had to make a speech.

"I'd like to thank the academy and all the little people," she began. Laughs. "No, really, this is quite an honor and I hope that all of you go home and have great orgasms tonight."

Cheers.

The MC, a fellow writer named Cheryl Marie, said, "Thanks, Lissa, but what we all want to know

is if that hot red-haired guy that's with you tonight was the inspiration for Toby in your book."

The audience whooped and hollered.

"Uh... Well, you caught me. Of course, he was. Everyone, this is my boyfriend, Gary. Who is not a cop, by the way."

The all applauded. Gary, who looked totally embarrassed, waved at everyone.

The MC said, "Stand up, Gary, so these people over here can see you."

Gary reluctantly stood.

"—And so the people behind you can check out that fine ass of yours."

Willie smacked Cheryl on the arm.

"We want to hear from the man," Cheryl said. "Bob, hand him the roving microphone."

Willie watched, horrified, as poor Gary was forced to take a microphone.

"Hey folks. Actually, I'm glad you handed me this. Gives me a great opportunity to say something about my girlfriend. And to my girlfriend. Not only is she a great writer, she's a wonderful person. So wonderful, I'd like to ask her this question."

"Uh, oh," Lissa said into her mike. The audience laughed.

"As all of you know, Lissa is her pen name and I can't say this using her pen name. So, for those of you who don't know, I'm going to call her by her real name."

"Oh, man, I'm outed," Willie cracked.

"Willie, honey, not only am I happy to be that man in those books for you..."

People hooted.

"I want to be that man forever. Willie, will you marry me?"

A hushed silence fell over the crowd. Willie was stunned. Tears stung her eyes.

"Uh..."

"Folks, we've got tears, this is looking good," Cheryl announced.

"Really?" Willie asked.

"Really honey, will you be my wife?"

"Uh, yeah. I mean, hell yeah. Really? Wow! I'm gonna be married!"

The crowd erupted. Willie jumped off the stage, raced to Gary and leapt into his arms.

"Hey, Lissa, you forgot your award!" the MC said.

Willie grabbed the mike from Gary. "I got all the award I need tonight. I won the best prize ever! I love you, honey," she said to Gary, her voice echoing through the huge auditorium.

Gary said, "I love you too, baby." Into the mike he said, "Folks get ready, I think her next book is going to be about a fantastic honeymoon in Hawaii."

The crowd's roar was deafening.

Curiosity Killed the Brat

Part One

Gerry clicked into Buddy Miller's e-mail file and couldn't believe it. It was really there! An e-mail from a local judge acknowledging the receipt of a bribe. Bingo! Now all she had to do was to investigate the proper way and bring the judge and the man down for their crimes. This was going to put her into the big time. Once she broke this story, her boss would surely promote her. She may even be able to jump to a serious newsmagazine. So cool!

Gerry was about to shut down the computer when she saw a file marked, "Sargo". The only Sargo she knew was a notorious drug dealer in the city who'd been busted the week before, a nasty man named Nick Sargo.

Curious, Gerry clicked on the file and read it. It became quickly clear to her that Miller also worked for Nick Sargo. This was not good. Miller was much more dangerous than she'd originally thought. She'd continue the investigation, but she'd be much more careful. She had to get out of that apartment and right away.

Gerry shut down the man's computer and heard something coming from the other room. Sounded like a... key going into a lock. Holy Moly, Miller was home!

Panicked, Gerry searched for a place to hide. She dashed into his bedroom, saw the closet, raced for it and jumped inside—right as the man entered the room and turned on the light.

Her heart pounding, Gerry froze in terror. How had this happened? She'd seen the guy get into a taxi and leave. Why had he come home?

She heard footfalls approaching the closet. She pressed herself up against the back wall of the darkened closet and stopped breathing.

He put his hand on the doorknob to the closet and turned. What was she going to do? She was trapped! This was it! He would surely kill her if he found her!

Right as he opened the closet door, someone pounded on his front door.

Swearing to himself, Miller shut the closet door and left the room. Gerry began breathing again.

She hoped that it was someone who would get him out of the apartment long enough for her to escape. This was crazy!

More pounding, Miller swore even louder. Running footfalls. A loud crash, like the front door was burst down.

A man shouted loudly. "Halt! Police! Miller! Halt! You're under arrest!"

Gerry nearly fainted from fright. The police? The police were there? How much worse could this night get?

Unfortunately, much worse. If Mitchell was among the policemen that were in the apartment, then her life would truly be over. She knew he worked on the Sargo case, but that was from other sources. Mitchell was careful never to discuss his work with her. But if he found out that she'd broken into a very dangerous man's apartment to gather information—she couldn't even go there. He'd kill her.

She squished herself back in the closet and pulled all the man's clothes in front of her.

She heard a struggle take place in the other room. Soon, it was clear that the police had subdued Miller. Hopefully, they'd take him away and be done with it.

A voice rang out, "Search the premises, people. Take this place apart. I need that evidence."

Gerry nearly fainted. She'd know that deep baritone voice anywhere. It was Mitch.

It was over. Her life was over. Mitch would kill her. Kill her. Actually, not her, a part of her. She'd

pissed him off before and it hadn't gone too well. In fact, she hadn't been able to sit for a good five days after that little ugly encounter. She'd just happened to see a file of his sitting on his desk and had barely opened it when he'd caught her. It was the last time she'd ever tried anything like that again. The man had chased her down, yanked her pants off and spanked the daylights out of her. Mitch didn't have any tolerance for her nosiness where his business was concerned. He understood it was her job as an investigative journalist, but the agreement between them was that their jobs would never overlap. He'd made that rule on their first date. He told her it was the only way it would work between them. Since she was privy to information that he might require at some time, she'd agreed. No way did she need him busting her sources.

What she'd never counted on was this particular situation. She'd never been caught breaking into a subject's apartment—although she'd done it countless times before. Nor had she investigated someone who was linked to someone as dangerous as Nick Sargo. All in all, this little job had turned out badly. Very badly.

And now, what was she to do? Maybe she should clobber herself over the head and pretend that Miller had caught her outside his place... No. How would she explain being there in the first place?

Suddenly, the closet door opened, the light came on. She pressed herself as far as she could go against the back wall.

The clothes were ripped aside and she found herself staring into the pale blue gaze of her boyfriend. He gasped, surprised.

It took him a minute to get his bearings. He stared at her, confused. Quite quickly, the light dawned on him and he got mad. Really, really mad. His pale blue eyes went cold; his mouth became a fixed line.

"Well? Are you gonna come out of there?" he finally said.

"I wasn't planning on it."

"Gerry, come out of there, now," he ordered quietly. When he was quiet, she knew he was even more furious than when he shouted. She'd crossed the line with him. She hoped he didn't break up with her over this, but it wouldn't surprise her.

Gerry said nothing, but walked towards him. He moved out of the way and she walked out into the room, surprising two officers who'd just walked in.

"How'd she get in here?" asked Tom Mallory, one of Mitch's favorite uniformed men.

"I was just about to ask her that question myself, Tom."

"Isn't that your girlfriend, Detective Marshall?" the other uniformed officer, a young woman asked.

"She is," Mitch replied without breaking eye contact with Gerry.

"Uh. Okay, okay," Gerry said quickly. "Look, I broke in because I found out that Miller bribed a judge. I wanted to know if it was the truth before I wasted any time on him. Well, he did bribe the judge, you'll find that on his computer and he works for Sargo, which I would expect is the reason you're here."

Mitch said nothing, just gazed at her with those cold blue eyes. She wished he'd have some other reaction; this freezing cold energy coming from him was wholly disturbing. It contrasted so sharply with his warm, loving kisses and that sweet look on his face when he'd woken up that morning and spotted her gazing at him.

Gerry continued on, stammering with fright and shame. "So I was just finishing up when Miller came home unexpectedly. I suppose this is the part where you arrest me."

"I would love nothing more than to arrest you, Gerry," he drawled in a controlled tone. "But unfortunately, we don't have the manpower nor the

money to waste on the effort. I will be contacting your office to complain, I hope they fire you. But unfortunately, that snake you work for will probably be beside himself with joy at the lengths you went for a story. I don't suppose you understand how dangerous Miller is."

She shrugged and looked away. "Got a clue."

"Could you leave us?" he asked his subordinates.

"Certainly, Detective," they said and left.

She was close to begging them to stay. She'd never been more scared of being alone with her boyfriend. Mitch turned that cool blue gaze back on her. Disapproval was the only thing she could discern from his nearly blank expression. Mitch was a man of few words and rarely showed his emotions. Now was no different. She really couldn't tell what he was thinking.

He said nothing for the longest time. Gerry couldn't think of anything to say that wouldn't incriminate her. There was no way out of this one.

"So is it over between us?" she finally dared ask.

"No," he replied. He did not elaborate.

"I'm in big trouble, aren't I?"

"What do you think?"

"I can't excuse what I've done. You know me well enough that no excuse is going to work. I planned to do this, I thought it through and I executed it."

"I realize that."

"But I didn't realize how dangerous Miller was," she said. "I had no idea he was mixed up with Nick Sargo."

He just stood there, looking at her, apparently trying to decide what to do with her.

Finally, he said, "I'd like to take care of you here. Right now, right here. Pull those pants right off you and spank you into the middle of the next century. But unfortunately, this place needs to be searched. But oh lady, you have me fired up," he

said, his tone belying very little emotion. The effect of his calm measured words combined with that cold look in his eye terrified her. She'd never seen him this angry before. "Make no mistake," he continued, "you will pay for this crime."

"Got that."

"Go home. I'll see you later."

"When later?" she asked.

"I'll call."

"If I said I was sorry, it wouldn't matter, would it?"

"No. Because you're only sorry you got caught."

Gerry sighed. "You're right."

"Go home."

"Okay, Mitch," she said.

She walked by him, her face flushed red with shame. She couldn't force herself to make eye contact with any of the other police there; she knew most of them. This was super embarrassing, mainly for Mitch. She'd never meant to make him look bad in front of his people.

Damn this. She'd been worried about this. She had low moral fiber, it was the reason she did her job so well. But Mitch was so upright, so forthright, she had been concerned from the beginning that her behavior might eventually be the deal breaker in the relationship.

But it wasn't like he didn't know who she was; they'd met when he'd arrested her. After she'd been let out of jail and the charges dropped, they ran into each other at Starbucks. She bought him a cup of coffee for his trouble. She was surprised when he'd asked her out. He said he liked her spunk. She'd have to see how far that love of spunk went.

Gerry went home, wrote down some notes about Miller and waited. One hour. Two hours. No call, nothing. It was near bedtime, she had a meeting in

the morning. She probably wouldn't see Mitch that night.

She got ready for bed. She reached for her cowboys-and-Indians print flannel pajamas and hesitated. Not very sexy. If Mitch came by now, he'd think solely about her punishment. She pulled out a sheer, black shift. This would make him think twice. This plus her silk leopard print robe would conjure romantic images of that recent weekender in Tahoe. If he were horny, he'd cut the punishment short to get to her goodies. Heh-heh-heh. Good plan.

Gerry made herself some tea and decided to watch a bit of tube before heading to bed. She figured Mitch was late at the office, if he didn't show up by ten, she knew he'd wait until the next day to see her. Which would give him some time to cool off. At this point, as much as she missed him, she hoped he wouldn't come by. The man spanked hard.

At ten minutes after ten, she heard the key in the lock. Her stomach twisted. Mitch. Damn it!

When he walked into the room, her heart skipped a beat. Whenever she saw the guy, her knees went weak. He was so handsome. That carved face, those large, pale blue eyes, his sensual lips. Too bad there was still a coldness to his gaze.

She got up and went to him. He took her in his arms and kissed her hard. She hoped this meant she'd get sex instead of the spanking.

He pulled away and stared down at her for a moment. He jerked his head towards the bedroom.

"Get going, Gerry," he said. Her entire body froze with fear. Guess the nightie didn't work. Bummer.

Reluctantly, she walked into the bedroom. He walked in behind her, took off his coat and tie and rolled up his sleeves. He walked up to her, grabbed her by the arm and pulled her over to the bed without saying a word. He sat down, pulled her

down across his lap and lifted up the back of her nightie and robe.

Spank! The first swat was a terrible one. If this was how it was going to proceed, this would be the worst spanking he'd ever delivered. This was not good.

The man laid into her. His hands were monstrously large; the full impact of the flat of his palm was awe-inspiring.

Why did she have to fall in love with a cop? Of course, her last husband divorced her because of her job and the dubious practices she used. Why was she attracted to super moral men? At least her last partner had not been a spanker. This was shortsighted.

Mitch thundered into her poor behind with fearsome strikes. Tears spilled from her eyes. She cried loudly, hoping her shrieks of pain would dampen the strength of his spanks. But no. Mitch was like a machine; delivering a rapport of spanks so sharp and stinging, she was sure she'd lose her mind from the pain. His huge hand spanked both cheeks at once, then he swatted one bun at a time in turn.

Throughout his vigorous attentions to her tender rear, he said nothing. Not a word. It was like he was doing a job. A job he took very seriously from the feel of it.

The spanking seemed unending. The bedspread was soaked with her tears; her ears were ringing from her loud cries. She couldn't believe how long it went on. Every nerve jangled, every muscle was tense. Her ass felt incinerated. It was clear he was making a point.

She kicked her legs and begged for him to stop, but on he went. Finally, when she thought she was on the verge of fainting from the spanking, he stopped.

She hadn't even caught her breath when he lifted her off his lap and swept her into his arms. He

kissed her though she still cried. He reached up and wiped her tears away. He brushed her hair out of her eyes and kissed her again. He nearly crushed her in a hug.

"I don't know what I'd do if I lost you, Gerry," he said, his voice revealing the first emotion he'd showed all night.

He pulled away, kissed her and with one flick of a finger, removed her nightie and her robe. He laid her back on the bed, his mouth closed over hers. He cupped a breast and thoroughly explored her mouth with his tongue.

His hand traveled from her breast, down her abdomen until he found her sex. As angry as she was with the spanking and as ashamed as she was that he'd caught her breaking the law, his show of dominance went straight to her libido.

When he slipped a finger inside her very wet and receptive sex, he groaned into her mouth. He withdrew his thick digit and circled her engorged clit. She moaned and opened her legs to him.

Before she could catch up to his actions, he'd moved down between her legs and put his tongue on her. She nearly jumped off the bed at the sensation. Mitch pinned her hips to the bed and brought her to orgasm after orgasm. She began shrieking again, this time with ecstasy. She pitied her poor neighbors.

After he'd made her come several times, Mitch pulled away and made short work of his own clothes.

The man's body was a work of art. From his incredibly broad shoulders to his narrow hips, to his massive thighs, to his amazing member, Gerry never tired of looking at him.

He climbed up next to her, flopped on his back, grabbed her and swung her up on top of him. He carefully entered her, then took hold of her hips and slowly pumped into her.

Gerry threw her head back, screaming as she came. He pulled her down on top of him and kissed her as his magic hips continued their amazing action, driving her wild with desire.

Gerry lost track of all time and space and thought. All she could think about was how marvelous he felt inside her, how fun it was to come this many times and how deeply she loved the man.

While still inside her, Mitch flipped her onto her back and thrust inside her so deeply, she gasped with joy. One-two-three, he slammed into her g-spot and sent her into another explosive climax. And another. And another.

As he thrust inside her depths, the look in his eye was serious, dark and predatory. She nearly came just from his expression alone.

Gerry relaxed as he built himself up for his climax. She took the ride with him, allowing him to take her all the way to the edge. When he finally released, Gerry was shot out into the stratosphere. Nothing felt this good, this satisfying. And she had to admit, having her backside tenderized only added to the sensation. This was rapture on a scale she'd never experienced before. This man was by far the best she'd ever had. He was pure sex, pure joy, pure fun.

He pulled out, lay beside her and took her in his arms. He gazed deep into her eyes and then kissed her. The man's effect was potent. She was about to give up her stupid job, anything to make this man happy.

Which was totally unlike her to even think that way, but for this guy, it would almost be worth it. Almost. Unfortunately, her next greatest love after Mitch was her work. As much as she loved him, she knew there was no way she could quit. But in that moment, she wished she could.

They were quiet for a long time, just holding each other.

Finally, Mitch spoke. "I really don't want to know what you do to get your job done. I don't want to think about it. I know you can't quit... but did you really not know what Miller was all about?"

"The only thing I knew about Miller was from a source of mine. The source said that Miller was involved—or could be involved—with the bribing of Judge Hackett. Since Hackett's up for re-election and everyone knows he's corrupt, I was hoping I could bring the jerk down with my report. It was all I was focused on. My source said that Miller was a go-between for some big businesses that wanted favors from Hackett. I had no idea—and I mean it—that he had something to do with Nick Sargo. Honey, I may crave a good story, but I don't crave my own death. I only broke into that place because I figured if I got caught, the worst that would happen would be that the guy would call the police. I never thought I was putting my life on the line. I only figured that out when I broke into his computer."

Mitch was quiet, thinking. He played with her hair, kissed her on the temple and hugged her tight. "I just don't want you hurt, Gerry. I knew you... well, didn't exactly follow the letter of the law when you did your work. Not that I approve—because I don't—but I just figured you normally stayed away from dangerous types. I don't... I couldn't believe it when I found you in that closet."

"You? Me. Jeez. First I find out that Miller is not only helping to bribe judges, but that he works for Nick Sargo. Then I heard that key in his lock—which made me nearly pee my pants— then you guys break in and bust him. Some timing."

"I'm glad I was there. Miller is a killer. His rap sheet is a mile long. He's out on parole because he flipped. If he'd found you..."

"I figured that," Gerry said.

Mitch looked deep into her eyes. "Honey, I want you to drop the story."

She kissed him and said, "Well, I can't pursue it anyway because now it's a criminal investigation. Will you guys go after the judge?"

"We have to. I don't want to say any more than that. But if I were you, I'd get another story. Or wait until we break it. I can probably get you the first crack at it, if you give us what you've got on Miller and the judge."

This sounded good. "A collaboration huh?"

"Not an official one."

Gerry nodded. "Gotcha. Okay, honey. Sure. I've got a couple other irons in the fire, I'll pursue those."

Mitch heaved a sigh of relief. "Good girl, baby."

"I just... there's just this chasm between your morals and mine."

He chuckled softly. "I don't think there's as much of one as you think."

"You'd never break any laws."

"I wouldn't go that far. Sometimes you have to, to get to the bad guys. Sometimes you have to go around the rules. I understand that. However, that being said, it is never a good idea to break into someone's property. It puts you at too much risk. Like tonight."

"Yeah..."

"I know you think that our morals are worlds apart, but they aren't, really. You're a good person. I mean, you definitely employ some questionable practices to get at your story, but the bottom line is, you want to see justice done. You've helped break a bunch of cases, honey. You've brought down how many civil servants?"

"Enough to have gotten some pretty scary death threats in the past," she admitted.

"Yes. But they were all government people. Just see that you don't cross the line into criminals. Those people don't play around. They don't make threats. They just act."

"I know, honey. I won't. I promise. No Nick Sargo associates for me."

"Good, good. I love you, Gerry."

"I love you, too, Mitch."

"Good girl."

They fell asleep in each other's arms. The next morning, Mitch woke her up with more fantastic sex, and then it was off to work for the both of them.

"Why the hell didn't you tell me Miller worked for Sargo, Chicken?" Gerry demanded once she got her source in her car.

Chicken was a small time bookie, a short wiry guy who talked too much and smoked too much. He knew everyone and everything, practically. She'd got him out of a jam once; he'd never forgotten it. He'd been a wonderful source of information and had never steered her wrong before.

"I didn't know until last night. When I gave you that tip, I didn't know. You know me, Gerry, I'm on the level with you, honey. Never want to see a hair harmed on your head. I knew he worked for someone, but not Sargo. I wouldn't have put you in the middle of that for anything."

"Good, good. Yeah, that scared the crap out of me."

"I'll bet. But man, it's too bad you can't use this other piece of information I got. It's red hot," Chicken said.

"Does it involve Sargo?"

Chicken nodded enthusiastically. "Yeah. See, he got busted for drugs and is gonna be busted in that scam with that judge, but that's nothin' compared to this other thing he had goin' on. The man has got connections to Congress. Our congressman Wilt Turtino. Sargo bribed him so that Wilt would help him. He's been bringing in women from China, sellin' 'em."

"Slavery?" Gerry asked, shocked. "Sargo is into *slavery*?"

"Yeah. Creepy, huh? See, the way I heard it, he bribed the congressman who helped him set up a fake company in the port. The slaves go right to him, bypassing customs. They all take a cut," Chicken explained.

"Oh, my God."

"Yeah, some company named... what was it? Sutton. That was it. Sutton Shipping."

"Really?"

"Yeah, but you don't wanna go there. That's dangerous."

"No, no, I won't," Gerry promised, mentally crossing her fingers.

Later, Gerry was on her computer at home, looking up Sutton Shipping. She found the owner's name and ran a check on it. Turned out fake. She inputted Sargo's name and Wilt Turtino's name into the search, but got nothing.

"Is that Sargo's name I see there?" came a deep voice from behind her. She hadn't even heard him come in the door.

She jumped a foot and spun around to face Mitch.

Those cool blue eyes looked through her. "Someone broke a promise."

"Wait! I can explain!" Gerry cried.

"Spanking now, explanation later," Mitch said, reaching for her.

Curiosity Killed the Brat Part Two

Gerry couldn't believe Mitch was there. He wasn't due home for hours. Right in the middle of her computer search on Nick Sargo, Mitch had to walk in. What timing! How would she get out of this one?

Mitch grabbed Gerry by the arm, hauled her up out of her seat and dragged her to her bedroom. He sat down on the bed, pulled her across his lap and pinned her there. He yanked up her skirt, pulled down her pantyhose and panties to her knees and swatted her powerfully.

"Yeee-ow! Mitch! Wait! I didn't do anything!"

He fired into her behind with forceful spanks. "Tell it to the judge," he said through gritted teeth.

She hadn't recovered at all from his first spanking; this was pure hell. The slaps were so sharp, so strong; they sent reverberations throughout her entire body. The man was careful to be thorough. On and on the spanks came, pushing her hips against his rock hard thighs. He didn't leave one square inch of her poor rear untouched.

He hauled her up and sat her on the bed. "What did I say to you?"

She sobbed, "But I found out something."

He pressed his fingers against her mouth. "No. I don't want you involved with Sargo. I don't even want to hear what you think you heard. You have to stop. All of it. This is from your boyfriend, not the cop. The cop wants to know everything. But whatever you tell me, I'll have to tell my superiors and there is a man in my department who is on Sargo's payroll. I think I know who it is, but I can't tell for sure. You can't tell me anything. Don't worry, we probably have the same sources. I've probably heard it. So stop. Okay? Just stop."

"But—"

"Don't break your promise to me again. I need to trust you, Gerry."

She sighed. He did need to trust her. She had to stop this. A story was not worth their relationship. There would be other stories. This wasn't the only one.

"I know."

"Listen to me. I want you alive. I don't think this is asking too much. I don't think I'm being unfair."

"You're not," she said.

Mitch's face clouded. "I don't want to worry you, but I think Nick already got wind you were investigating Miller. Which means you could be on his list."

"But Mitch—"

"Which means, you need to move in with me."

"But Mitch—"

"No. I mean it. I can protect you there. I can't protect you here. You got flimsy locks, flimsy windows, no security. Cops are two miles away, drug dealers and the filth that hangs around Sargo is only a half a mile away from here. You have to protect yourself and listen to me. Stop the story, pack your stuff and move in with me. Don't argue, just do it. I came to tell you that. So pack your stuff, I'll be back in two hours. Get it all. I don't want you coming back here for a while. I didn't want to call because I think they might have your phones tapped."

The pit of Gerry's stomach fell. Adrenaline fired through her system. "For real?" Gerry asked.

"For real. This is on the level, kid."

"Okay, Mitch."

"Good girl," he said, throwing an arm around her shoulders. "I'll be back in two hours. Don't answer the door to anyone but me. Don't trust any unexpected deliveries. Now I could be being paranoid— you may not be on his list—but I'm not willing to take any chances. So pack your stuff and I'll be back."

"Won't they look for me at your place?" she asked.

"Yes. But that's different. Like I said, you're protected there. I picked that building specifically because of its security. Don't worry, just pack now."

"Okay, Mitch."

"I'll be back," he said. He took her in his arms and kissed her. A nice deep, lengthy kiss. She melted.

He pulled away and grinned down at her. She could barely breathe for a second; she felt a tingle that started at the top of her head and traveled all the way down her body until her toes nearly vibrated.

After he left, Gerry sighed and then watched as he left the building and got into his car below. Mitch was such a handsome man. Those clear pale blue eyes, the masculine lines of his face, that straight nose, those full sensual lips. Beautiful man. She could barely believe he was hers. Her love for him went way beyond the exterior, too. While he was wonderful to look at, it was what was inside that counted the most. No one had ever loved her like this. This was why she'd do whatever he asked. This was why she'd stay with him forever if she could. He was an amazing person.

Gerry rushed to pack. She had most of her clothes in her suitcase when the phone rang. She answered it.

"Gerry, Gerry, are you alone?" came an insistent woman's voice over the phone. Husky, she was clearly a smoker.

"Uh... wait. Who is this?" Gerry asked. "Wait... uh, I think my phone is tapped."

"I know it is. That's why I'm gonna say this fast. You know who this is. Meet me at our usual place."

It was Miranda, a cocktail waitress at a seedy bar and an informant of Gerry's for the past three years. Her information was spotty, but recently she

helped Gerry with a story that led to the resignation of a state assemblyman.

"Wait, I can't. I—"

"All I need is ten minutes. Ten minutes, Gerry. Come here fast. You will want this information. It could save your life." Click.

"Oh, man," Gerry said, totally conflicted.

Their usual meeting place was only five minutes from Gerry's house. She could get there, have her ten-minute meeting and get back before Mitch returned to pick her up.

But was this the trap that Mitch had warned her about? But Miranda couldn't know Nick Sargo, could she? No.

Gerry was torn. Mitch would kill her if he found out. With her rear stinging as badly as it did at that moment, she knew it was sheer madness to go running off to a secret meeting.

But her life was on the line. Maybe the information would help Mitch. Maybe it would save her life. She had no reason not to trust Miranda.

Gerry put on some jeans and a t-shirt, a black hooded sweatshirt, a black knitted watch cap and some sneakers. Didn't want to attract any unwanted attention.

When Gerry pulled up at their designated meeting place—a parking garage for a shopping mall—she saw Miranda sitting in her yellow Volkswagen bug in her usual spot, next to a stairwell. There was a parking place open right next to her, but the giant SUV two parking spaces over barely left enough room for Gerry's car.

Gerry slid into the narrow parking spot and opened her door. It wasn't easy getting out, but she managed. She went to open Miranda's passenger side door, but realized there was a huge pile of stuff on the seat.

"Come around here, I've got a package for you," Miranda said, looking even more jittery than normal. The woman needed to give up her caffeine habit. Gerry had never seen Miranda without a cigarette in one hand and a coffee cup in the other. Today, neither was evident. Which probably accounted for her nervousness.

Gerry walked around the Bug and up to Miranda's open window. "Where's the package? What have you got for me?"

"Sorry, Gerry," Miranda said, looking as though she was about to cry.

"Sorry for—" were all the words Gerry managed to get out before someone threw a black sack over her head. She screamed in terror.

Strong arms clamped around her, pinning her arms to her side. She fought as best she could, but was easily picked up by whomever held her. She felt herself carried a few feet, she heard a door open, she was thrown into the back of a vehicle where someone else grabbed her and pinned her to the floorboards.

The vehicle took off fast. Gerry was thrown around the vehicle as it raced out of the parking garage.

"Where are you taking me?" she demanded.

"Shut up," came a rough growl from next to her. "Or I'll beat ya until ya pass out."

They drove for what seemed to be a long time. She was shoved out of the car or van or SUV, whatever it was, and made to walk. She walked for a long time. They went up stairs, around corners; Gerry had no real idea of where she was. She'd never been more scared in her life. Sargo, it had to be Sargo.

Finally, they arrived somewhere. She was shoved into a chair, her hands were tied behind her back, her legs tied to the legs of the chair. The hood was pulled off.

Gerry blinked at the brightness of the lights in the room. She was in an office somewhere. There were three nasty looking thugs in the room, all watching her. They didn't look welcoming.

"What is this about?" she asked.

"Shut up," a thug ordered.

Just then, the door opened and a man walked in. She'd know those mean dark eyes anywhere. Nick Sargo. He walked right up to her and slapped her across the face. Amazing pain. Nick was built like a fireplug. Short, stocky, he was an ex-boxer with curly gray hair, dark skin and a square face.

"So you were lookin' into my business? Well, you found me, sweetheart. And won't your boyfriend be happy that you're all nice and safe with me?" He slapped her again. Her head rang with pain.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Sargo," Gerry bit out.

"And you, Miss Nosy Reporter. So... I wanna know. What were you doin' breakin' into Miller's apartment? You were helpin' your boyfriend bust me, weren't you?"

"No. I was after Miller on a tip off about bribing a judge," Gerry replied. "I wanted to bring down the judge. If I'd known the judge worked for you, I would have moved on. In no way did I mean to take you on, Sargo."

"You're lying," he said, slapping her again.

Tears stung her eyes, she tasted blood in her mouth. "I am not."

He slapped her again and again.

"Must give you a real charge to hit a woman tied to a chair," Gerry bit out.

Nick punched her so hard she grayed out; her head slumped over.

As she fought for consciousness, she heard Sargo say, "I'm gonna go call her boyfriend. If he wants to see her alive again, he'll help me out."

Dazed, Gerry's head throbbed with pain. Her jaw was killing her; some teeth were loose. She could feel blood running down her neck from her face.

Hours passed. Gerry's arms were numb, as with her butt and legs. She'd probably never seen Mitch again. Her only hope was that Nick wouldn't kill him.

Gerry had no idea how much time had passed when she was suddenly woken up by a loud explosion. The man who guarded her leapt to his feet and rushed to the door. Gerry heard shouting and myriad loud noises coming from the hallway. She couldn't tell what was happening.

One of the thugs that kidnapped her, rushed into the room. "Manny, get out of here, it's the cops."

"What about her?" the thug guarding her demanded.

"Who cares about her? We have to get out of here."

"Nick said he'd kill me if I left her."

"Fine, you get busted, I'm out of here," the other thug said, rushing away.

The man that guarded her was clearly torn. He wanted to leave, but was too afraid of Sargo.

He looked at her then at the door. "Nick would kill me," he said, agitated.

The door suddenly burst open; the guard was thrown back into the room. Gerry almost cried when she saw who it was. Mitch.

Mitch barely acknowledged her; instead he focused all his attention on the man that held her. He rushed into the room and punched the guard. A violent struggle ensued. The fists were flying so fast, Gerry couldn't tell who had the advantage, although it seemed like Mitch did. After a brutal fight, Mitch finally knocked the man out.

He rushed to her side and untied her. "Sorry it took me so long, baby. I had to make sure you were here first."

"I'm so sorry about all this, Mitch, I should have listened to you."

"You sure as hell should have," he retorted. "We'll talk about that later, for now, I have to get you out of here. We're still not out of the woods; there are a hell of a lot more guys here than we thought. Back up is on the way, but it's gonna be tough to hold off these guys until help gets here."

Since her arms and legs had been asleep so long, she couldn't stand properly. Mitch bent down and vigorously rubbed her legs and arms.

"We have to get out of here, honey, can you walk now?" he asked after a minute or so.

"I can try," she replied. Her first few steps were wobbly, but quite quickly she could move freely.

Mitch led her to the door to the office, he looked out—she heard a shot, Mitch ducked down. He slammed the door and locked it. He rushed to the window just as it shattered.

He dropped down, grabbed Gerry and pulled her down with him.

"Sorry, baby, I thought my guys had the outside covered," he said.

"What are we going to do?" she asked.

"I don't know yet."

Gunfire. Lots of gunfire from outside the room. Mitch crawled to the door, opened it and waited. Nothing. He checked out into the hallway.

He turned back to her, "It's clear, come on," he urged.

Gerry crawled over to him, he stood, took her by the arm and lifted her up. He put her behind him and withdrew his gun.

"Follow me. Whatever I tell you to do, do it."

"I will, Mitch."

Mitch led them down a darkened hallway. They passed two bloodied bodies lying in the narrow hallway; Gerry tried to ignore them.

They turned the corner; the corridor was clear. They rushed down the corridor, turned another corner and stopped. Nick Sargo stood there with a gun pointed right at them.

"Drop it, Marshall," he ordered.

Mitch had no choice but to drop his gun. Nick walked right up to him and smashed him in the face with the pistol. Mitch absorbed the blow and righted himself.

"You think you're gonna take me down? Well, I'm takin' you with me, cop," Nick seethed. "And your girlfriend."

Like lightning, Mitch struck out and sent Nick's gun flying.

"Duck, Gerry!" Mitch cried, attacking Nick.

Gerry hit the floor just as bullets whizzed over her head and impacted the wall. She wanted to get out of there, but all her thoughts went to Mitch.

She saw a man down the hallway, aiming a gun at the two struggling men. Right near her was Nick's gun. Without thinking, Gerry dove for the gun, grabbed it, and aimed it at the man down the corridor. She fired. The man reeled back and fell to the floor.

Now emboldened, Gerry got to her feet and approached Mitch and Nick as they fought each other.

Mitch cried, "Get out of here, Gerry, save yourself!"

But there was no way Gerry would leave him now. She waited until Nick had his back to her and then she slammed down on the back of his head full force with the gun. He cried out in pain, but didn't stop. Mitch punched him full in the face and Gerry hit him one more time with the gun. Sargo barely reacted.

"I said, get out of here, Gerry!" Mitch ordered loudly, struggling with Sargo.

"No!" she shouted. Sargo hit Mitch so fast and so hard, Mitch reeled back and hit the wall of the hallway, looking dazed.

Suddenly, Gerry was on the floor of the hallway, her vision blurred, her head exploding with pain. Sargo had punched her flat.

Gerry was barely aware that Nick and Mitch were fighting again. She shook off the dizziness and searched for Sargo's gun. It had fallen on the floor, near the struggling men. She dove for the gun, got a hold on it.

Impact to her jaw, searing pain, she was on her back. Nick had kicked her. Though she was stunned and her head rang with pain, she realized she still had hold of the gun.

She looked up to see a dazed Mitch, being punched repeatedly by Sargo. Mitch fell to his knees; Sargo pulled out a knife, and lunged for Mitch.

Gerry aimed the gun and fired at Sargo. Blood went everywhere; Sargo fell on Mitch. Gerry couldn't tell if Mitch had been stabbed or not. She rushed to his side, pushing aside a bleeding Sargo, who fell into the hallway. The knife was stuck in the wall, Mitch was barely conscious, but alive.

She threw her arms around Mitch and burst into tears.

There was a commotion at the end of the hallway. Gerry turned and saw at least a dozen SWAT team members rushing towards her. She collapsed next to Mitch, relieved. It was all over. They were going to live. They were going to make it.

Three weeks later, Gerry inspected her reflection in the mirror of her vanity in her bedroom. The damage was mostly healed; only the barest trace of

a bruise was visible under one eye. As she prepared to put on some make-up, Mitch strolled into the room.

She leapt up from her chair and rushed to him. He grinned, caught her in his arms and kissed her.

"You're here early," she said. "I'm almost ready, I just have to put on some make-up."

"I was hoping to catch you before you did that."

"Why?"

"Part of my surprise. I have two surprises for you actually."

"Really?" Gerry said, excited.

"Yep. A present for me and a present for you."

"Really?"

"Yep. First, let me see how you're dressed. Perfect," he said, checking out her dressing gown.

"But I don't even have my clothes on yet."

"I know," he said with a sexy grin.

She burst into delighted giggles. "Let me guess."

"Not yet. First, I want you to open something. Just a minute."

He left the room and returned with a wide flat box in his hands.

"My present?" she asked.

"No, mine, but you get to open it," he said, handing it to her.

"You're being mysterious. Why would I get to open your present?"

"Open it up and find out," he said, taking off his coat. He untied his tie.

"Hmmm. Must be a negligee."

"Open it," he said. There was a look in his eye she couldn't decipher.

She sat on the bed and unwrapped the gift. When she opened the box, the present inside was wrapped in tissue. She picked it up, it felt hard and flat. Weird. When she withdrew the tissue, there in her hands was a large, wooden paddle.

The implication of what it meant hit her like a ton of bricks.

He ripped it out of her hand, sat down and had her across his lap before her mind could catch up. He swept aside her flimsy dressing gown, exposing her bare behind.

"Mitch, wait!"

"Thought I'd let it all go, didn't you?" he demanded. "Thought you were just gonna get away with disobeying me, didn't you?"

"Mitch—I—OW!"

She thought his hand had been bad, but it didn't even compare to the paddle. The wood was hard and unforgiving. He swatted her again firmly; the pain took her breath away.

This was intense!

"Mitch, no!"

"This is for disobeying me and almost getting the both of us killed," he growled. He inundated her tender behind with a rapid flurry of excruciating swats. Gerry couldn't even think, all she could do was scream.

Mitch made mincemeat out of her poor behind. The flat of the wood caused the sharpest pain she'd ever felt. Damn it, she thought he'd forgotten to punish her, he'd just waited until she'd healed.

Mitch swatted her all over her butt and upper thighs. There wasn't one part of her entire rear that wasn't searing with pain.

He stopped for a second; she thought he might be done. He said, "This is what you call a wife tamer, Gerry." He smacked her hard with the nasty device. "You disobey me again like that and I will spank you from here to Kalamazoo," he promised, punctuating his threat with a hefty swat with the paddle. "I'm going to hang it in our closet in our new apartment as a warning to you." Swat! "One wrong move and you, my girl, won't be sitting for a very long time." Spank! Spank! Spank! "You get me?"

"I get you, I get you!" she cried.

He threw the paddle aside, pulled her up and into his lap. Her buns were on fire! He wiped the tears from her eyes and kissed her.

"No wife of mine is going to disobey me like that, you hear?"

Finally, his words began to sink in. "Wait," she sobbed. "Wife?"

"Oh, yeah. Which brings me to your present." He reached into his shirt pocket and withdrew a small red velvet box. He opened it up, a huge, at least three carat diamond ring sat there, staring up at her.

She blinked away the tears. He withdrew the ring and slid it onto her finger.

"Will you be my wife, Gerry?"

"Yes! Yes!" she said, throwing her arms around him.

He kissed her, fell back against the bed and lifted her on top of him. They made out for a bit, he undid his belt, slid off his pants and slipped inside her. She rode him into a fantastic orgasm; both of them came fast.

After they were done, she fell beside him and nuzzled into him. She pulled away to check out her killer ring.

"This is so beautiful."

"I'm glad you like it."

"I could do without that paddle, however," she said with a pout.

"I'm sure, but you've made it clear to me that I can't." He kissed her, pulled her on top of him and playfully swatted her sore behind.

"Ow! Honey, that hurts."

He grinned. "Good, maybe it will remind you to obey me the next time."

"There won't be a next time. Wait a minute, new apartment?"

"Oh, yes, we're moving into together right away," he said, kissing her. "I got us an apartment overlooking Golden Gate Park."

"Really?" she said, excited.

He laughed. "Really, baby."

"God, I love you, Mitch."

"I love you, too, Gerry."

"So if I do what you want, will you hit me with that thing?"

"Nope. I'm only gonna keep it around as a reminder for you to listen to me."

"I'll remember," she promised.

"I'm going to make sure of that. Now lie down on your stomach, honey. Let me rub some of that pain out for you."

"Okay," she said, flopping onto her belly.

Mitch gently massaged her hot buns. It was very painful at first, but soon melted into a wonderful sensation.

"I got another present for you, baby," he said.

"Better not be a whip."

He laughed. "No. Although, it isn't a bad idea."

"Hey!"

"Kiddin'. No, we found evidence today enough to put Nick away for the rest of his natural born life."

She rolled over and hugged Mitch hard. "Oh, thank God, honey."

"And it's good you didn't kill him, honey, I know you wanted to, but it's better if the man pays for his crimes. There are a ton of guys in the slammer that can't wait to get their hands on him," Mitch said with a satisfied grin on his face.

"Good."

"And I have more good news, too. I'm not supposed to tell you..."

"What? What?" Gerry demanded.

Mitch chuckled at her enthusiasm. "Your evidence against that congressman, Wilt Turtino is going to stick. He's going down, honey and it's all due to your good work," he said proudly, gazing down at her.

"Right on!" she cried. "This is great news. Maybe this time *Newsweek* might pay attention when my resume hits their desk."

His expression fell, his brows knitted together. "I thought you were going to give up your job and go into teaching."

"Oh. Yeah, that. Well..."

"Gerry," he said in a warning tone.

"Well, you know me. I need the excitement, I need the—"

"I know what you need," he said, pulling her up on top of him.

"Mitch, I—"

He swatted her a good one on her bare rump. "Seems like that paddle is going to come in handier than I thought it would."

"Mitch, no!"

He grinned up at her, pulled her down, his mouth closed over hers and he slipped inside her once more. Gerry moaned into his mouth, happier than she'd ever been before.

What a man!

Wife School Part One

Roy stood next to his brother, Tim, as they both gazed out the window at his new wife, Emma, while she worked in the garden. Her golden hair was illuminated by the sunlight and her sweet oval face seemed radiant from the bright light reflected off the full rose bushes. She wore pink shorts and a white tank top, which clung to her tanned body beautifully. She looked very blissful, stopping occasionally to smell a particularly attractive rose. It was quite a picture. Looked like it almost belonged on a greeting card.

That was if one wasn't privy to what was taking place inside that beautiful head of hers.

"She looks so innocent, doesn't she?" Roy commented.

Tim turned to him, confused. "Who? Emma?"

"Just cutting her roses, trimming the yard. So innocent. But that woman right there is the most devious woman you've ever met in your life."

Tim seemed shocked by his brother's words. "Who? Your new wife?"

Roy nodded. "Uh-huh. Devious, cunning, mercenary, greedy, a complete little spitfire. I mean, I knew it when I proposed, I knew what kind of a girl she was, it was hard to miss. But she's even better than I thought she was. She's a genius at getting what she wants."

"This is your wife we're talking about? Emma?"

"The same."

"But... she... I mean, I just thought she was sweet as can be. I mean... look at her," Tim said, gesturing towards his sister-in-law.

Roy laughed. "God, no, but she's good at the act. She tells me whatever I want to hear and then she goes out and spends all my money."

"So, reel her in."

"Oh, my boy, I'm in the process. This little girl

won't know what hit her. You see, she thinks I'm blind to her games. That I'm some big dumb schlub who hangs on her every word. While I'm madly in love with her—and sex with that little vixen is better than any woman I've ever bedded—she's a con artist."

Tim seemed shocked. "Con artist, really? Well... why are you with her?"

"Because I love her."

"Well... does she love you back, then?"

Roy stroked his bearded chin thoughtfully. "Not sure. I mean, I think so. She had many other men to choose from; she picked me. I think she thought I was an easy touch, but she also liked the way I didn't give into her at times. See, I set some limits early on. Told her I saw through her game. Which just intrigued her. She came after me like I was the prize pony. Then, of course, I fell for her and let her run me around a bit. I mean, she didn't know I was wise to her, she thinks she's got me wrapped around her little finger. But quite shortly, she'll discover otherwise."

Tim studied his older brother carefully. "What do you mean?"

Roy grinned. "I'll show you what I mean," He walked over to his desk and opened a drawer. He withdrew a large, solid, wooden paddle and held it up proudly for his brother to see. Engraved on one side was the name *Emma*.

Tim practically choked. "You aren't going to paddle her with that, are you?"

"The hell I'm not."

"But will she stand for that?"

"She doesn't have a choice. If she wants to stay my wife, she'll submit to it. I've let her go far enough. It's time she learned to respect me and obey me. She needs to know that if she breaks the rules, she pays the price."

Tim still seemed flabbergasted. "Have you told her this?"

Roy nodded. "Oh, yes. I warned her. I told her that I would be providing some consequences to her actions if she didn't follow my rules. I didn't specifically name a paddling, but I gave her plenty of warning. Which just made her double her expenditures. She loves to think of herself as a rebel. Well, she's going to learn that rebelling against me when I've been more than fair and generous with her has some consequences."

"So take away her credit card."

"Oh, I've tried that. She just got another one. Then I put a limit on all her cards and she called up, impersonated me and got the limits raised."

Tim was floored. "She what?"

Roy laughed, but he wasn't amused. "Oh, yes. It gets better. Like I told you, the girl is a total con artist. I mean, I can afford it, but I don't like it. She's not only impersonated me, but she's used the entire household budget and fixed the books to cover her tracks. And that's not all. Her treachery doesn't stop with the overspending. Last week, I asked her to take a load of my old things to the thrift store and found them in a Dumpster behind the store. Two days ago, I asked her to get the car's oil changed and all she changed was the sticker up in the corner and pocketed the cash I gave her."

Tim gasped. "Emma did all this? And you still want to stay married to her?"

Roy grinned at his brother. "More than anything. If there's anything I love, it's a challenge. And this little girl is quite a challenge. Reining her in won't be easy, but I'll tame this little wildcat if it's the last thing I do. You watch. In six months, I'll have her in line and exactly the wife I want. By the time I get through with her, she won't dare over-spend and if I ask her to do something, she'll do it without question."

Now it was Tim's turn to laugh. "You're lying to yourself."

Roy sent him an evil smile. "Wanna bet?"
Tim's grin widened. "As a matter of fact, I do.
How much?"
"A hundred bucks?"
Tim eagerly extended his hand. "You're on."
They shook on it.

Emma talked on her Bluetooth while pruning her roses. "Yeah, I swear, he is so dumb, Gina, so dumb. You know how long it took me to get credit cards in my name with Carlos?"

"A year."

"This guy? Three months! He is so easy."

"Sounds great."

"Oh, he *is* a dream. A bit wimpy, a bit stupid, but fun in the sack and boy, is he loaded. You ought to see my new Jimmy Choos! They're so cute!"

"I thought you had a few pair already."

"Well, you can't just buy one pair of Jimmy Choos," Emma said and then laughed delightedly.

"I thought he put you on a budget."

"Oh, that lasted a minute. Of course, he doesn't know that. Poor guy. He's so easy to fool. He put a limit on my card, so I just called up the stupid company, impersonated him and got my limit raised. Easy!" she crowed.

"What did he do?" Gina demanded.

"Nothing. He doesn't know. He isn't paying attention. He only cares about sex and that dumb business of his."

"Dumb business? Doesn't it pay for all your goodies?"

"True. I just don't get why he likes it," Emma said. "I like being home so much more. Oh, you have to see my new roses, they're darling and they go so well with the new outdoor furniture I got. I swear, Roy didn't know anything about decorating, but I straightened him out. I've redone his whole house. He's so lucky he found me. He needed me."

"Sounds like he's paying for it, too."

"He should." Emma checked behind her to make sure Roy wasn't overhearing her conversation. She saw him and Tim in the window. She waved brightly, Roy waved back.

"Oh, God, I hope his brother doesn't stay for dinner. I am so not in the mood to cook. I was planning on seducing Roy and making him pay for a dinner out. All I gotta do is blow him and he's my slave. So easy!"

Gina laughed. "Is his brother available?"

"Who? Prince Charming? No. He's married to Patty Perfect. They are so dull. So nice, so dull."

"I thought you said that Roy was nice."

"Oh, he is. The whole family's terminally nice," she said with a tinge of disgust in her voice. "At least Roy has an evil streak. Or had one. He had a lot more edges before I married him. I hope he doesn't stay this big pushover. I actually feel bad at times, how much money I get out of him."

"He didn't have much of a choice, I mean, you lied to him. And practically stole from him."

Emma snorted. "Well, if he was paying attention, I wouldn't be able to do that, would I? It's his fault."

The girls giggled and said their good-byes. Emma finished her roses and went in to see if she could get out of cooking dinner.

When she got inside, she was relieved to see that Tim had gone home. She found Roy in his office going over some paperwork.

"Hi honey, what are you doing?" she asked. She tried for a caring tone. Roy liked it when she appeared to care about his work.

"I was just going to come look for you. I want to talk to you."

"I wanted to talk to you, too. About dinner."

"That can wait for a bit. I want to show you something. Come here, honey."

"Okay," she said. This was good. All she had to

do was to rub up against him and he'd fall in line. She was thinking either California Pizza Kitchen or Chinese.

Emma walked over and stood next to him at his desk. She was about to put the moves on him when she happened to look down at the paperwork he had on his desktop. It took her a second. Then it was like someone slammed her over the head with a two-by-four. He'd documented every one of her scams on a huge spreadsheet. He'd noted what her budget was and how much she'd overspent on the credit cards. He had a whole section on the cards she'd gotten "without his knowledge" and totals of what she'd spent. Below that section was a simple listing of all her other shenanigans. He'd figured out everything. The thrift store stuff, the oil change scam, all of it. She was stunned, standing there, staring down at the figures and huge list of the bad things she'd done.

She couldn't get her head around it. He'd known about it all. All of it. He wasn't stupid or blind. He was ten times smarter than she thought he was and way ahead of her in the game. She was beyond words.

"So, what do you have to say for yourself?" he said in a tone she'd never heard from him before.

She finally met his gaze and was shocked again. He looked stern and strong and commanding. Not to mention angry. She'd rarely seen this expression on his face and certainly never directed at her. His eyes were dark and there was something in them that scared her. She'd never been scared of him before.

She instinctively tried to move away from the desk, but he put an arm around her and kept her there.

"Emma? Why have you been lying to me? Cheating me? Impersonating me? Throwing my stuff in a Dumpster instead of taking it to the thrift store? Cleaning out the household budget for yet

more Jimmy Choo shoes? Emma?"

She could only stammer. She tried to get away again, but he held her there, firmly.

"Emma, I want an answer."

She didn't have an answer. "I... I... I... didn't think you were paying attention."

"That's a hell of an excuse."

"It's the only one I have."

"Well, then let me tell you something. You'll stop all this. Now."

"Okay." She pulled back, eager to escape this suddenly very scary man.

He held her firmly. "Not so fast. It isn't that easy. This isn't a case where a trite apology is going to work. I know you, Emma. I know you aren't really sorry you did any of this. You're only sorry you got caught. You broke all my rules, destroyed my budget, overspent your allowance, lied to me, disobeyed me and probably gloated about it all to your friend, Gina."

She gasped. "Were you listening in on my conversation?"

He laughed, but he wasn't amused. "No, but I guessed correctly, didn't I?"□

"No. I mean, no. No, I wouldn't do that..."

His eyes narrowed. "You're lying to me again."

"Uh..." She couldn't get her bearings.

"Now what do you think I should do to you?" he asked. "Do you think I should put up with this disrespectful behavior from you?"

Emma was practically choking. "Uh... well, no. But... um. I won't do it again."

His jaw set, his gaze darkened. "You're damn right, you won't. And I bought myself a little insurance policy to make sure of it."

"An insurance policy," she repeated, not understanding.

"Would you like to see it?"

"Uh... I don't know..."

"Oh, I think you should. In fact, I think it would

be really good for you if you got personally acquainted with my new insurance policy."

"You're scaring me, Roy."

"Good." He reached down to a drawer in his desk, opened it up and withdrew something big and wooden. He held it up for her to see.

It took her a minute to get it. It was a fraternity paddle. He flipped it over and her name was engraved on it. The pit of her stomach dropped, her limbs froze.

Before she could come to her senses and run, Roy leapt out of his chair, grabbed her and bent her over his desk. He held her arm behind her back with one hand and with the other, he set down the paddle, then pulled down her shorts to her knees.

"Roy! No!"

He laughed. He actually laughed. "I warned you, I warned you time and time again. I gave you plenty of chances to stop your nonsense, but you went behind my back and lied to me and stole thousands of dollars from our bank account. And now it's time for you to learn a lesson about what it is to cross your husband. You took me for some sort of compliant idiot wimp, didn't you, girl?"

"Uh, no..." she said, very unconvincingly.

"Oh, honey, were you wrong. And you're just about to find that out. And when I get through with you, you won't forget this lesson for at least a week."

"Roy! You can't hit me with that thing!"

"The hell I can't!"

To her horror, she felt him pull her undies down to her ankles. Now her entire rear was exposed, she was bent over and pinned to his desk, leaving him free to whap her with that torture device. This was terrible! How did this happen?

"Wait! I won't do anything else, I won't disobey you! I didn't know you knew! I thought you were..."

"What? A pushover? Some wimp you could push around?"

"Well, you let me push you around! This is all your fault!"

Whack! The solid wood paddle came down on her ass, igniting it. She'd never felt such pain in her life. She gasped, unable to believe that her dear, sweet, wimpy husband was such a brute!

"Owwww! Roy, no!"

"Too late, brat! Welcome to the new world, sweetheart! I'm the one who runs this show! Not you! You broke the rules, now suffer the consequences!"

He laughed and spanked her again with the wooden paddle. She felt seared. She thought maybe he'd stop with those, but it turned out that they were just warm-ups. Roy began thundering into her behind with vigor, letting loose with more blows than she could count. She screamed bloody murder and could hardly catch her breath. It hurt so bad! Who was this man?!

Again and again, the paddle impacted her poor, burning behind, making a hideous, loud, *thwap* sound in the process. She had no idea a spanking could hurt this bad. She cried and she pleaded and threatened and bellowed, but Roy just kept spanking her with the horrid wooden implement.

Why did she think he was dumb? Why had she messed with him? Where had this amazingly strong man been? It was like a different man here punishing her. She suspected he had this edge to him, but it was more than an edge, the guy was a total disciplinarian. Who would have thought?

The paddle scorched her behind; Roy put his all into his swings. Emma wailed and sobbed, feeling certain she would lose her mind from the pain. Her ass was blazing!

Finally, after she was hoarse from screaming and her butt felt barbecued, he stopped. She continued to cry, but he talked over her.

"Okay, now, you. I'm not done with you yet. Take off your clothes and go stand in the corner.

And if you protest or talk back to me or do anything other than stand in that corner, by God, I'll spank you all over again, you hear me, woman?"

"Y-y-yes, Roy," she sobbed.

"Good girl. Now go. That corner, there. All your clothes off. Now."

Blinded by tears and wracking with sobs, Emma quickly pushed her shorts over her ankles and stepped out of them. Her ass felt branded; just the mere movement to step out of the shorts caused a new wave of pain. She ripped her tank top off, unhooked her bra and tossed both on the couch of his office while Roy watched.

She quickly moved to the corner and stood facing it, terrified, her heart beating fast. Would he hit her again? What else was he going to do to her? She couldn't match the man she married with the guy in the room with her.

While upset, freaked out and scared, there was another factor coming into play. Despite the pain, the man was turning her on. Fiercely. While she'd always enjoyed sex with him, she normally fantasized that he was some commander or king in bed, as his normal acquiescent behavior didn't inspire her much. But now, she'd no longer have to pretend he was in charge; the man clearly was.

But would she ever be able to go shopping again? She could have married Carlos, even though he'd gotten sick of paying for her bills, but he'd been too much of a pushover. There'd been those few times that Roy had laid down the law with her, which is why she'd married him. But then he'd become like all the rest and quite frankly, she'd begun to get bored with him. Well, that was all done now. She knew she should be screaming at him and filing for divorce, but suddenly, he'd become so much more interesting. So much more of a challenge. So hot.

Which upset her, too. She wasn't used to losing. Or capitulating. But there was no way she was

fighting him now. Not with that horrid paddle in the picture. His insurance policy. She'd either get used to obeying him or she'd have to get more clever. Both options turned her on. And now that there was this new element of danger, the whole prospect of their future had her excited. This was a man she could actually love and respect. Weird.

But after this little scene, the first order of business was destroying that paddle. Well, after she got him back under control. Even though at the moment, she had no idea how she'd do it. Or if she could do it.

She heard Roy move up behind her.

"Now. We're going to have a little talk. And if I don't like what you tell me, I may just spank you again. Understand?"

"Yes, Roy."

"Good. Now, since you've overspent your budget three times over for the entire year, you will no longer be able to shop for anything for yourself—and I mean *anything*—for the next... oh, six months."

"Six months?!"

Whack! The paddle came down hard and swift onto her poor burning buns.

She shrieked. "I'm sorry! Six months! Fine!"

"Yes, it *is* fine. And from here on out, if I catch you in a lie or if you overspend your budget or if you don't do exactly what you promise to do— and I *will* be checking—you'll find yourself on the business end of this paddle, right?" Smack! A good one across both buns.

She yelped. "Right!"

"Good. Now you'll stand here for the next half hour. If you move from this spot, I'll spank you. If you complain, I'll spank you. If you do anything other than stand here, I'll spank you. Understand?"

"Yes, Roy."

"Good girl. Now I'll be at my desk, working up your new budget. So don't get any ideas."

"I won't."

"Good."

He walked away and went to his desk.

The half an hour seemed like twenty hours. Her legs hurt; her butt hurt; she was bored and scared, but she stood there.

"Emma? Come over here."

Hesitantly, she turned around and walked over to him. His expression was unreadable. She was still scared of him. Not to mention totally turned on. Finally, here was the Alpha Male she'd been searching for. Who would have thought he'd turn out to be her husband?

But how could she go six months without shopping? She never had before. Her parents had always bought her whatever she wanted. This was going to be a whole new way of living. Luckily, she still had new purchases in bags, but the styles would certainly change in six months. How was she going to make it?

"Come on, on this side of the desk," he said, gesturing to where he wanted her to stand. Right where he'd spanked her. Terrified, she walked up and stood where he indicated. He pointed to the paper on his desk.

"This is your new budget. For the house, for you personally. However, as you will notice, your clothes budget is zero for the next six months. Then I'll allow you five hundred dollars a month."

She almost screamed.

"I know you don't think that's enough, but too bad. You blew it. You earned a full year of punishment for these indiscretions. You're lucky I didn't add a spanking a month, just to remind you of your obligations. And I might if you don't shape up. I reserve the right to spank you anytime I see fit. Whether you did something or not. If you give me attitude I don't like, if you don't follow through on a chore I've assigned you, by God, I'll spank the fire out of you. I'm keeping you on a short leash

from here on out and for the foreseeable future. Now, on the other hand, I *will* be rewarding good behavior. If you do everything I ask of you, I'll be doling out bonuses. A hundred, five hundred, maybe even a thousand dollars if you do well. I want to encourage you to do well as well as discourage you from doing something bad. Is that understood?"

"Yes, Roy."

"All right, then. Now here's the budget and here's an additional list of rules, just in case I haven't been clear. I want you to know exactly what's expected out of you. These are your copies and I'll be posting copies up in the inside of my closet. So you be a good girl and you'll be rewarded. But you be a bad girl and you'll be punished. Understand?"

"Yes, Roy."

"Good girl. Now bend over the desk," he clipped out.

"But—"

"Are you talking back to me?" he demanded.

She quickly bent over his desk, now completely frightened. It felt like forever before he moved. Her heart was beating out of her chest; she was sure he was going to spank her.

But when she felt his hand lightly touch the back of her thigh and his fingers begin to slip up her leg, she began to get encouraged. Was she going to get sex?

He gently rubbed her rear end, which was sore, but his touch felt good.

"You're going to be a good girl for me, won't you, Emma?" he purred.

"Yes, Roy. The best," she said, her breathing growing heavier.

"Good girl," he said. He ran his finger lightly down her crack and reached underneath until he found her sweet spot. She gasped at the contact.

"Now if you're good..." he said as he rubbed her.

She moaned. "You'll get lots of this. But if you're bad..." He pulled his hand back and smacked her buns with his open hand. She cried out, but thankfully he didn't hit her nearly as hard as he had with the paddle.

"Do you understand?" he asked.

"Yes, Roy."

But she had no idea how she was supposed to avoid shopping for six months. How would she do it? Could she do it?

Wife School Part Two

The desk was cold on her bare skin as she bent over it, but Emma didn't care. All she cared about was this very strong, very commanding husband of hers who was currently rubbing her naked behind. The man she'd thought was a wimp had turned out to be more dominant than she'd ever imagined he could be. He was past dominant, and on his way to strict disciplinarian. With that new "insurance policy" of his—a large fraternity paddle with her name engraved on it—he'd certainly made his point about his disapproval of her recent behavior.

Of course, she'd pushed him all the way to the wall and beyond. She didn't know what had angered him more: lying to him, impersonating him to the credit card companies to get her limit raised, cooking the books on her household budget or shirking her household responsibilities. Of course, in retrospect, they all had been rather egregious transgressions against their marriage and him. But how was she to know he wasn't a pushover? While he'd warned her to stop her games, he'd never mentioned spanking her. Not that she would have believed him.

Roy was the smartest, the sweetest and the richest man she'd ever netted. While, admittedly, she'd seen him as a big walking checkbook, she certainly enjoyed his company. But now, weirdly enough, after that horrible spanking he'd given her, she'd just fallen in love with the man. So unexpected. She never imagined she'd fall in love again, and she'd settled for liking her boyfriends and husbands. The only men she'd ever loved were poor, but she hadn't allowed herself to marry one because she knew herself too well. She was a spend-aholic. She'd married Roy because he was so bloody rich. But she'd never imagined she'd really fall in love with him. But now, she had. Albeit after

the fact, but that didn't matter. What mattered was that she'd finally found a man who would stand up to her. Terrifying, but much more interesting.

She was just a bit concerned about Roy's new restriction: her six-month shopping suspension. She had no idea how she'd make it through. But if she was good, he said he'd give her bonuses, so maybe she'd be able to shop soon. And if not, she'd figure out a workaround. Now that she knew he was actually paying attention to her, she'd just have to be smarter, if she wanted to spend more than he'd budgeted. Much smarter.

"Just so we're clear," Roy said, startling her out of her reverie, "If you're a good girl..." He reached underneath her; a talented finger found Ground Zero and began gently massaging it. She gasped — it felt so good! "But if you're bad..." He withdrew his finger and spanked her a good one with his bare hand. She cried out. While he hadn't hit her that hard, she was bruised all to hell from his earlier paddling.

"Are we clear, Emma?"

"Very clear."

"Good," he said, reaching underneath her once more. "Good girl." He pulled up closer to her and kissed her sore behind while his finger found her swollen nub. He lightly rubbed her hungry sex; she groaned and clutched the edges of the desk. He slid his finger back a bit and slipped inside her. He chuckled deep in his throat. "Hmmm, something tells me my wife wanted me to stand up to her."

"I didn't want a spanking."

"No, but you wanted me to set down the law with you."

"No. Well, but... standing up to me... ooooooh, that feels so good. Oh, Roy please keep doing that."

He reached one hand underneath her and continued lightly rubbing her clit, while he began fingering her with his other. A few seconds of that and she exploded into a violent orgasm, crying out

and pounding the desk in her throes.

After she was through, he stood her up, turned her around and kissed her. She nearly fainted with lust. God, he was so hot! He cupped a breast with one practiced hand while the other found the wetness between her legs. She moaned into his mouth, while he thrust his tongue further inside her, dominating her, taking control, forcing her to kiss him back the way he demanded. She nearly came just from the kiss. Who was this man?

He quickly picked her up and set her on top of his desk, spread her legs and sat in his chair, burying his face between her thighs. He began an amazing assault on her tender and swollen folds. She cried out and launched into orgasm after orgasm, nearly crushing his head with her thighs.

Right when she didn't think she could take it any longer, he pulled away, grabbed her, bent her over the desk once more, and in record time, he had his pants down and had entered her.

Roy grabbed her hips and thrust inside powerfully, ramming her against the desk as he pummeled her. It felt so divine! She exploded into a climax that seemed unending. With each thrust, she was sent into the outer stratosphere, so lost in him and the joy of release, she lost all rational thinking. She didn't know if it was because her behind was so sore, that he'd just asserted his dominance over her, or if he was just exceptionally motivated, but this was the best sex she'd ever had with the man. He thrust into her so deeply, so perfectly, all she could do was scream and writhe with pleasure. She lost count of her orgasms; all she could think about was this astounding man and giving herself to him. Submitting her entire being to him. What awesome sex!

Afterwards, he withdrew, took her in his arms and kissed her.

"I love you more than I've loved any other woman, Emma."

"I love you, too, Roy. And I won't ever disappoint you again. I'm so sorry."

He grinned. "Good girl. Now why don't you get showered, and then I'll help you fix dinner, okay?"

"Okay, Roy."

"There's my girl."

For three months, Emma followed all of Roy's rules to the letter and managed to avoid the horrid paddle. She'd searched for it, too, to get rid of it, but he'd moved it from his desk drawer. Eventually, she gave up her search. Mostly, his rules weren't hard to follow. She had no new duties, she just actually had to complete the ones she'd agreed to do originally when they'd moved in together. So, actually, she had as much free time as she had before, the only significant and rather horrible change was the lack of shopping in her life. She was only allowed to spend money on the house, the gardens and on food. And that was it. Roy checked all her receipts and did inspections of her closet and all the kitchen cupboards, plus her garden shed to make sure she wasn't hiding anything from him. She couldn't overspend, which wasn't too hard to avoid, as she couldn't argue that he wasn't generous with his budgets.

But not being able to go to the mall was torture. She had no idea how she'd last three more days, let alone three more months. Even though Roy had mentioned the possibility of bonuses, she hadn't seen one as yet. Nor did she dare ask. He was still very prickly about the bills and her budget. While she hadn't blown it, he was still very distrustful of her.

Which made her dilemma even worse. She couldn't stand to stay away from the mall much longer. But she needed money to go. Which left only a few options. Get a part-time job that he wouldn't know about or pawn some of her stuff.

As if by divine intervention, Gina called with a job offer. Gina had been the only one Emma told about her new arrangement with Roy. Gina thought it made him hotter, but she told Emma she wouldn't stand for the spanking. But then she added that Emma had pushed him pretty good.

"So I have a solution to your problem," Gina said. "I mean, the money won't go far, but it's something. Help me serve and entertain at this hotel function, and I can get you four hundred bucks for the evening. Goes from eight to midnight. Four hours, a hundred bucks an hour."

"The one at the Ritz?"

"That's the one."

"So I'd be a cocktail waitress?"

"Yeah, just like the old days. It's super high-endy, and they've hired a bunch of models to hang out and flatter these guys. They wanted the staff to be equally pretty, and it pays."

□ "Wait, when is it?"

"Next Saturday."

"Oh, that's right. What happened? I thought you had that all together."

"Harriet cancelled last minute."

"Okay. Let's see... oh, my God, Roy has got a conference! I'm in the clear! Whoo-hoo, he won't even be home, and we can party afterwards!"

"Great."

"This will be fun. God, I haven't been around people like that in awhile. Roy never did approve of my job. Even though it's how we met."

"Men are all like that. He just wants you all to himself. Doesn't want any other guys lookin' at you."

"God no, he's so possessive. He hates it when I go out and my dresses are too short."

"Well, then don't let him get a gander at what you'll be wearing at this function. You're still a four, right?"

"Oh, yeah."

"Perfect. Not that there's much to this thing."

"Sounds cute."

"Oh, they are. This will be great. We have the potential to make some great tips, too."

"Cool!"

Come Friday afternoon, Roy was packing for his conference. It was being held at a hotel only a half an hour away, but since he'd be having late night and early morning meetings, he'd decided to stay.

"You sure you don't want to go with me? I'll have a suite."

"No, honey, I'd just be bored. Besides, I've got a lot of gardening to do."

"It looks great, Emma, all the work you've done on the yard. It looks so professional."

She glowed from his compliments.

"Oh, and I have something for you."

"Yeah? What is it?" she asked.

He grinned and gestured her over. She went to him, and he kissed and hugged her. When they pulled away, he handed her a plastic card. It was a gift card from Nordstrom!

"Really?" She was so excited she could barely see straight.

"You've been so good, I just had to reward you, honey. It's for a grand, too."

"Yay! Oooo, this is so cool. A thousand bucks, yay!" She was so excited, she danced around while Roy beamed at her.

"You've done so well, and I'm so proud of you. You haven't lied or cheated or pulled anything on me, and you've done all your chores; you're like a new girl. You've made me very happy."

"I love you, Roy!" she said, leaping into his arms. They kissed, and before she knew it, he'd thrown her onto the bed and attacked her. She laughed and allowed him to undress her for a quickie. This was so cool, sex and money, all in one

shot! Could life get any better?

After they finished, he kissed her and went into the bathroom to clean up. Then it hit her. She'd made a commitment to work with Gina the next day. Now she didn't even need to. Damn it. But it was too late to cancel. She had to go.

What was that feeling deep inside her? Was it...? No, it couldn't be. Was it guilt? Was she really feeling guilty about Saturday?

How weird. She'd never felt a shred of guilt in her life. What had changed? Was she really so in love with the guy that she wanted to stay on the straight and narrow? No, it couldn't be. Maybe it was PMS. That was it; it was probably just PMS.

She'd told Roy that she was going to Gina's for dinner on Saturday and would be out, but that she'd have her cell phone if he needed to reach her. She sincerely hoped he wouldn't. She had no wish to directly lie to him. Hopefully, he wouldn't ask too many questions. When he got home, she'd seduce him, so he wouldn't think about her weekend. Easy!

It had only been two years, but Emma had forgotten how hard it was to waitress. She'd been a top waitress at "the" club in San Francisco in her heyday, just two years before, but it felt like it had been ten years. She'd forgotten how difficult and demanding the work was. Thankfully, it was still very lucrative. She'd only been there for two hours, but she'd already made two hundred in tips. And she'd earned every penny of them.

The function was for some computer firm that had just done its IPO and spawned a ton of millionaires. So they were generous, but very grabby. She'd had to remove hands from her rear end more times than she could count. She did it very carefully, so as not to offend, but she was sick of the idiot customers and still had two hours to go.

It didn't help that her costume was incredibly

uncomfortable. A tiny little corseted thing that crushed her ribs and exposed way more of her breasts and butt than she would have liked. Plus the five-inch heels were killing her feet. This was hard work!

When she was getting a tray of drinks at the bar, Gina came up to her and said, "Okay, I hate all these guys in this entire room. Have you ever met more freakin' doggy men in your life? All hands and mouths with no brains whatsoever. I don't know how they made all this money. At least, they tip big. How are you holding up?"

"Oh, sure, had worse. And the tips are great."

"They are. Only two more hours to go, thank God!"

Emma nodded, weary, "Yeah, I don't think I'm gonna be up for the after-party. I just want to go home and get into a nice hot bath after this and count my money."

"I hear ya. I'm tired, too. And this costume sucks," Gina said.

Gina got her drink order and hustled off, Emma right on her heels.

Roy got out of his meeting at the hotel a bit early. He wanted to call Emma and see how she was doing. He couldn't believe how much he missed her. It had only been one night, but all he could think about was her long legs and that sweet body of hers. He smiled when he thought of all the things he planned to do to her when he got home. It would be quite a make-up session. One she may not recover from for some time. Heh-heh-heh.

He walked down the hallway with the ballrooms. He passed one ballroom that obviously held the remains of a large wedding. The next was empty, the one after that was... very loud. He saw the sign for Bugle, a new computer firm that had experienced meteoric success in the past two years.

They were more than likely celebrating their IPO. He passed by the open double doors and couldn't help but stop and peek inside.

Oh, yes, it was a huge party with many scantily clad females and males serving the partygoers. They had equal exploitation, but still, it did not reflect well on the company. Oh, well. That was their choice. They were all young men who'd started the company, and they probably didn't know any better.

But he had to admit, some of the cocktail waitresses were shockingly beautiful. Dressed in nearly nothing. Their legs seemed to go on forever due to the high cut of the costumes, and their rears were... very exposed, as were their breasts.

Roy flashed back to when he'd met Emma at that exclusive club in the City. Oh, she'd caught his attention, all right. But after their third date, he'd asked her to quit. He just couldn't stand the thought of all those men ogling her even though he'd been one of the worst. But he cared about her. He respected her. Most of her clientele had not.

Roy was just turning away when the backside of one of the cocktail waitresses got his attention. He stopped and stared, then smiled. No wonder that rear caught his attention, it looked just like his dear, sweet little Emma's behind. He had to get to his room to call. Maybe she'd have phone sex with him.

He'd turned to leave when the cocktail waitress with Emma's behind turned towards him to serve a man. Roy froze. He blinked and looked again. He couldn't believe it. It *was* Emma. No wonder that backside had looked so familiar, it was his wife's backside! Emma was there?! Wearing almost nothing? What?!

Just then, the man she served reached up and grabbed her butt. She gently pushed his hand away and then accepted a huge tip. A nuclear bomb of rage exploded inside Roy.

A second later, she glanced in his direction, and then looked away. Her head snapped back, and she stared at him. Her mouth fell open.

Roy stormed into the ballroom and walked right up to his wife. "Emma? Could you please tell me what you're doing here?"

"Uh... uh... I thought your conference was at the Marriott," she stammered.

"No, here," he bit out.

"Uh, waitress? Can I have another cosmopolitan?" a man slurred. "Hey waitress," he said, and then he made the fatal error of grabbing her ass.

Roy punched the man flat. People stopped and stared, but he took no mind of them. He took Emma's drink tray out of her hand, put it down on the table, grabbed her and threw her over his shoulder and began stalking out.

"Roy! Wait! I can't! I—"

He smacked her butt a good one. She yelped.

Three hotel employees tried to stop him at the door.

"This is my wife, and I will take her wherever I see fit! Now get out of my way before I sue your asses!"

They all looked to each other for direction.

Gina came racing up to Emma. "Emma, what's going on?"

Roy spun on her. "You stay away from my wife! I know you put her up to this, and if I wasn't a civilized man, I'd take you across my knee and spank you good for it. Now leave us alone!"

Gina shrank away; the hotel employees got out of his way, and Roy strode out of the room.

"Roy? Look, I can explain—"

He smacked her again.

"Ow! Roy, wait, let me explain!"

"You'll have all night to explain this to me, if you can get out any words other than 'Roy, stop spanking me!' Oh, girl you've pushed me this time.

You've pushed me harder than ever, and boy, are you going to regret this!"

"I already do! Roy, please, I'm sorry!"

"Not as half as sorry as you're going to be!"

With her sobbing and crying and begging him to put her down, Roy carried her onto an elevator and up to his room. Once inside, he locked the door and threw her down onto the bed.

"Take off that ridiculous costume and do it now!" he thundered down at her.

Tears streaming down her face, she cried, "I'm so sorry, I felt so bad about lying to you, and I never feel bad about stuff like that. I swear, I have a conscience now, Roy. I'm so sorry I disappointed you."

"Get the costume off, now!"

She did her best to wrestle herself out of the outfit, but in the end, Roy had to help her. The thing clung to her like a second skin. Once she was out of it, he sat down on the bed, pulled her across his lap and pinned her there.

"Roy, no! Look, I learned my lesson! Disappointing you is the worst kind of punishment. I'm sorry! I'll—"

Smack! Roy came down on her little butt so hard that he felt a quiver of pain go through her whole body.

"Roy, no!"

"Roy, yes!" he exclaimed, powering into her behind with every ounce of strength he could muster. "No, disappointing me is not the worst kind of punishment I can think of, this is! I just wish I had my paddle!" he pronounced, spanking her with vigor.

He slapped and swatted and spanked her bare cheeks with everything he had. He spanked the sides, the middle and then he let loose on her sit spots with a machine-gun report of solid spansks.

She howled and begged and pleaded for him to stop, but he was the one in control now. He dictated

when he stopped and if he stopped. Because, at this point, he was so fired up, he had no idea when he'd feel the punishment was sufficient.

Her rear was bright red, but he wouldn't stop until it was black and blue. She wouldn't be sitting for two weeks, hopefully. The little liar!

"You will never lie to me again!" he declared, smacking her soundly, one cheek than the other. "You will never expose this ass to anyone but me," he roared, punctuating each word with a solid swat to a reddened bun. "When I think about how you had me fooled! Going to Gina's, ay? Just hanging out with a girlfriend, huh?" Spank, spank, spank! "Was the money worth it? Huh? Was it worth it?"

"No! No! No! Stop! Please, Roy stop spanking me!"

"No! You're not in control here; I am, and I say when and if I stop spanking you! And I say, no! I won't stop!"

He fired into her behind with awesome strikes. Each time he came down on her red little behind, her whole body shook from the impact. The bed was wet with her tears. He was pouring sweat, and his hand hurt like hell, and yet, he still didn't feel done. But his hand was giving him problems.

So, he stopped for a moment, reached down and removed his loafer. He let loose on her little butt with the flat of his shoe. She screeched. He held the shoe so it would cause the most amount of pain, aiming it so it would hit flat against her tender flesh.

Now that his hand had a rest, he could continue a while longer. Her rear was beginning to get mottled; soon, it would reach the exact color he desired. She'd never cross him again. After this, she'd obey him to the letter.

He spanked her with his shoe until all the fight went out of her, and her rear end was bright red and nearly purple. With a few final strikes, he stopped.

He pushed her off his lap; she crawled up on the

bed and lay there, sobbing.

He left her to go clean off the sweat and get out of his suit. When he returned, she hadn't moved. Something about the contrite, puffy-eyed look on her face and the color of her poor bottom turned him on something fierce.

He quickly lost all his clothes, grabbed her by the feet, hauled her down to the end of the bed, pushed her up onto her knees and entered her. She submitted readily. He took her as fiercely as he'd spanked her. He wanted to claim her, show his dominance, and ensure that she knew that she was his and his alone.

She began howling again, only this time with pleasure. He brought her to a more explosive orgasm than he'd ever felt her experience before. She shuddered and quaked and begged him to keep doing her. To never stop making love to her. Her pleas pushed him over the edge, and he rammed into her with everything he had, which just sent her further into the throes of her climax.

When he finished, she turned and clutched onto him.

"I'm so sorry, Roy. I promise I'll never do anything bad again. I promise, I'll be good."

He hugged her tighter. "I love you more than life itself, Emma. I only spanked you for your own good and the good of this marriage."

She nodded, her tear-stained cheek wet against his chest. "I know, Roy. What I did was stupid and thoughtless. I just wanted to go shopping and... I made the promise to Gina, and by the time you rewarded me with that card, I couldn't get out of it. I hated it, though. I hated all those men pawing me. I just want to be your wife. I don't care if I ever go shopping again. Please, please forgive me. I felt so bad about lying to you."

He kissed the top of her head. "I think you learned your lesson, and of course, I forgive you. I love you so much, Emma."

"I love you more, Roy."

Emma never lied to her husband again. And after another six-month penalty, her shopping budget was restored, and Jimmy Choo's stock soared.

