



CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

BARBELLS AT
CHRISTMAS

HEATHER HOWARD

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Barbells at Christmas

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Warning: This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-burning*.

Christmas Crackers

BARBELLS AT CHRISTMAS



Heather Howard

Dedication

For my husband,
the greatest hero the world has ever known.

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Chapter One

Lisa Weller was not pathetic. She knew this because she told herself so, and lying to oneself would just be *silly*, so therefore she must be telling the truth. It was absolutely not pathetic that she was sitting in her freezing cold Honda Civic at eleven p.m. on Christmas Eve, dressed in her gym wear and staring at the double doors leading into her local 24/7 Fitness.

Surely lots of people worked out on Christmas Eve! People who wanted to give themselves the gift of rockin' abs, or pull a hundred kilos before the year was up. People wanting to stave off that holiday fat. People who were Jewish, or Muslim, or Buddhist or Hindu or nothing at all!

Or maybe, she thought, looking at the only other two cars in the parking lot, *people whose crazy mother got drunk and flew to Bolivia for a plate of frog legs from Lake Titicaca and whose father is too busy with his other family to bother calling and whose boyfriend dumped them yesterday so he could spend Christmas in Chicago with that cute blonde from accounting*. Not that she was bitter. She hoped Rick and Shirley were very happy together. Maybe they'd eat mustard-slathered hot dogs and go to a museum and take a romantic walk along Lake Michigan, and maybe they'd fall in and drown.

She'd even send flowers to the funeral. That's how magnanimous and un-pathetic she was. A spirit too great and generous to be broken by Rick's stupid wandering hands and roving eye, and he had a tiny dick anyway, *so there*.

Now that the pool of potential Christmas Eve gym rats had dwindled to pretty much just her, Lisa allowed herself to slump forward and bang her head on the steering wheel a couple of times. Just how little dignity did one have to have to even show up at the gym at this time of night on Christmas Eve? Apparently she'd hit the threshold because a few seconds later, she heaved a sigh, wrenched at the car door handle, and popped out into the freezing night air.

The cold hit her in the face like a slap, but riding on the air was the scent of the smoke from burning hearth fires. The soft, delicious smell curled gently in her head. The contrast

between the sharp night and the languid smoke seemed cruel, because it was the smell of someone, somewhere, having a cosy, loving yuletide night. Her heart ached.

Gritting her teeth, Lisa hauled her gym bag over her shoulder and slammed the car door, the echo in the mostly empty lot driving home just how sad it was that she was here. Lips drawn down into a miserable frown, she stalked across the dark pavement, the icy air worming its way into her clothes, and she jogged the last few steps and pulled the door open.

Inside the gym, it was warm and empty, and someone had made a half-hearted attempt to decorate the place for the season. There was a garland strung across the front desk, and here and there around the cardio room, bedraggled mistletoe hung from the ceiling. As if anyone drenched in sweat from a five-mile run really wanted to start sucking face. The place stank, as always, of old perspiration, dirt, and industrial cleaner.

The desk was unmanned. Lisa was grateful for that fact because the last thing she wanted was anyone witnessing her holiday humiliation. She pulled out her card--it had gotten a *lot* of use lately as her relationship with Rick had headed south--and scanned it in herself before heading back to the locker rooms. She didn't even bother putting a lock on the locker she'd chosen. It wasn't like there was anyone else here anyway, except for the missing employees. She threw her keys in the bottom of the locker and pulled her water, her towel, and her chalk out of the bag. She was here for some serious work, and maybe by the end, she'd be too tired to think about her mother, her father, or Rick.

The gym was still empty as she headed for a treadmill to warm up. Not that she'd expected to see anyone come in, but the deserted atmosphere was a little creepy. Maybe the ghost of Christmas Past would show up and tell her everywhere she'd gone wrong in love to end up here and now. Maybe he'd be hot.

Lisa shook her head. Best to put those thoughts to rest *right now*, or she'd just go to bed frustrated.

She hopped on a treadmill, stuffed her belongings in one of the cup holders, and cranked the speed up to six miles per hour. Just a quick little run to get her started, pump the old endorphins and take the edge off her misery. Fool-proof plan.

Four minutes later, Lisa wanted to shoot herself. She'd forgotten just how much she hated to run on a treadmill.

Sweat beaded her brow as she stared at the red numbers dancing in front of her. Just one more minute and she could get to her weightlifting. Just one more minute. Well, fifty-five seconds, now.

Fifty seconds.

Forty-five seconds.

Forty seconds.

Thirty-five seconds.

All I want for Christmas, Lisa thought as the numbers counted down, *is a cardio programme that doesn't make me want to die of boredom.*

Finally the numbers hit five minutes and Lisa slapped the stop button, more grateful than she cared to admit. It was a goddamn Christmas miracle. She grabbed her towel, scowled at its grubbiness, and mopped her brow.

Just as she finished wiping away the sweat, there was a movement at the corner of her eye. Still catching her breath, Lisa looked up, beheld the most perfect ass she'd ever seen climbing onto the treadmill in front of her, and forgot all about breathing.

She'd seen good butts before, but this one was...well. It was *perfect*. Round and juicy, like two peaches cuddling. Back when she'd been in college she'd taken an intro to philosophy class and they'd learnt about Platonic forms, the perfect instances of things and ideas from which all other things were derived. The form of the good. The form of the apple. The form of the chair.

This ass. It was the Form of the Ass. All other asses were but pale copies, mere shadows of Its glory. If Plato had talked about butts instead of virtues, well, maybe she wouldn't have fallen asleep so often in that class and ended up with a C.

She wanted to bite it.

Her lungs prodded her, reminding her that while *she* might not think breathing in the presence of the Greatest Butt Known To Man (Or Woman) was necessary, *they* certainly didn't agree. She wheezed, and the object of her sudden lust turned around.

For an insane moment, she thought she *had* summoned a smoking hot apparition of Christmas Past, but after a second she realised the Ghost of Christmas Past probably didn't wear a 24/7 Fitness employee's baseball cap. Everything else, though, was straight off of Lisa's personal wish list. He was Latino, and his rich, sun-kissed skin, hint of a five-o'clock

shadow, and wild black hair, the unruly curls peeking out from underneath his hat, gave him a rugged look, as if he just climbed down a mountain. He wore a form-fitting gym shirt in red, the long sleeves hugging and hinting at the ripped physique underneath, and each rock-hard swell of muscle made her fingers twitch. She wanted to squeeze him like a roll of Charmin. His well-formed back narrowed into a trim, hard waist before his body flared into that glorious butt encased in loose black nylon wind pants. He wore a pair of black and red sneakers, well-worn but also clearly cared for.

Lisa swallowed hard. She knew she was staring. She would stop. Any second now.

His dark eyes, the colour of rich hot chocolate, crinkled at her as he gave her a quirky half-smile. His teeth were bright white and that devilish smile made her cheeks flare, and she was suddenly weak at the knees as a flood of heat surged straight from her brain, down her spine to her clit, as if her pussy were hardwired to his grin. She hadn't felt such a swell of need since she was a teenager. She suddenly felt heavy and full, though the top of her head seemed as if it were going to unscrew and float away. Her mouth was going dry. She hoped it wasn't because she was drooling.

Smile back at him, stupid! the tiny part of her brain not focused on her suddenly aching groin shouted at her. Desperately she forced her lips to move, twitching until they peeled back into a rictus of want, which would have been embarrassing if it hadn't taken too long for her to get her face in gear and he hadn't already turned back around. Oh god, she couldn't even get a smile right. No wonder she was alone on Christmas Eve. Her face burnt as she grabbed her things from the cup holder and hobbled off the treadmill, her desire making each rub of her thighs a delicious agony.

He must be one of the personal trainers, she thought inanely as she staggered across the basketball floor to the free-weight area, although she'd never seen him before. Maybe he took midday shifts. *She* was an early-morning, late-night gym rat. And she wasn't about to start going midday, even if she wanted to convert to the Cult of The Glorious Ass and worship at Its beautiful, buoyant altar, because she had already embarrassed herself too much. She prayed he wasn't watching her weave across the full-court floor like a drunken sailor.

"O-kay," she muttered. "Time to get a grip." Grip. Squeeze. *Don't go there.*

Lisa came to a halt in front of the squat rack. Someone had tied ratty, red velvet bows onto it. She almost laughed, it was so absurd.

Forcing herself to focus, she adjusted the bar and the safeties. Stretching her hip flexors, she took a few deep breaths and tried to concentrate. She wished it weren't so damn warm in here. She needed some cold air right now to clear her head. She'd been doing powerlifts for almost a year now, and while her form was excellent and she thought she could do squats in her sleep, it was never good to be distracted. Injury could sneak up on you. Just like lust, she supposed.

She positioned herself under the bar for a few quick warm-up reps. With practiced ease, she lifted it from its pins, backed up, set her stance, and started the smooth descent.

Unbidden, she suddenly envisioned him laying there, he of the exalted butt, between her legs, naked and wanton, his full lips parted, his crinkly eyes half-closed, and as she lowered herself past parallel, she imagined his long, thick cock pushing past her swollen lips, sliding inside her, parting her body, hot and tight and slick and--

The bar clanged against the safeties like a church bell. She forced herself to clench her own less exalted butt and raise herself to a full standing position, though her knees were trembling. *Maybe I should just go home*, she thought, but immediately she knew she'd just crawl into bed and play with her own lonely self until she fell asleep unsatisfied, and somehow that seemed even more pathetic than being here at the gym at--she checked the clock--eleven fifteen on Christmas Eve.

Just concentrate, she thought. *Think of dead puppies or something!*

It didn't work. With each squat, she could almost feel him impaling her, could feel each ridge and vein of his dick sliding in and out, the mess of curls at the base rubbing over her pulsing clit. By the time she was on her last set, she was gasping for air, and it wasn't because of the two twenty-kilo plates at either end of the bar. She hoped there wasn't a wet patch between her legs on her grey sweatpants. Why hadn't she worn black?

Because you didn't expect to be so turned on you wanted to straddle one of those bouncy Swiss balls and go to town, she thought. She got into position for her final set, took a deep breath and looked in the mirror.

He was halfway across the weight room, staring at her. Not at her eyes. At her ass.

Her nipples perked up even as her legs wavered. This was too dangerous, even if she did want to do her final set so he could watch her go up and down, up and down.

Just duck out from under the bar, she told herself, and if her ass wiggled a little more than necessary, well, she surely couldn't be blamed.

She also wouldn't think of stretching a little, just to show off.

In the mirror, his eyes travelled up her straining body until they met hers. Almost immediately, he looked away.

Please come over here and fuck me, she thought. *I've been ever so good this year.*

But he was setting up his bar for some military presses. Their eyes met in the mirror again, and this time, it was she who looked away, not least because she didn't want to scare him off.

Lisa prodded her brain for her next lift, sluggishly trying to remember her routine. Bench press, wasn't it? Thank god. There was nothing suggestive about bench press, right?

She lay down on the nearest bench and immediately wished she hadn't. All the blood was in her pelvis, and when she put her feet on the bench and thrust her hips into the air to set her arch, she almost moaned aloud.

Damn, she thought.

She closed her eyes and lifted the bar. All she needed to do was concentrate on her form. In one smooth, unhurried movement, she lowered the bar to her chest, just below her aching breasts, then lifted it again. A few more times and she was done with her warm ups. She got up and loaded the bar for her first set. Another bone-melting hip-thrust, and she was ready.

Taking a deep breath, Lisa told herself to concentrate on her form. Form was all. She closed her eyes.

Form, she told herself. *Form, form, form, form –*

"Need a spot?"

Chapter Two

Lisa's eyes flew open and the bar dropped like a stone.

Two hands brushed against her breasts and she almost exploded as her trainer in shining nylon windpants caught the bar and raised it to the pins.

"Apologies," he said, his upside down face hovering above her own. "I did not mean to startle you."

"Hurplegurg," Lisa said, then kicked herself. She coughed. "No problem," she squeaked. Normally she'd tell any man bothering her during her workout, hovering and *being helpful*, to go blow it out his ass, but this was different. She wanted to sleep with him. Pride? What pride? "I do need a spot, thank you."

His slender, beautiful hands floated just under the bar. Lisa swallowed and did a rep, then did another. Each time those hands got close to her breasts, she thought she would blow a gasket, but they didn't touch her again. When she was done with the set, she hopped to her feet almost immediately.

"Thank you," she babbled. "Um. Thank you."

He was watching her intently. She resisted the urge--rather admirably, she thought--to hop on his shoulders, hug his head with her thighs, and ride his tongue to kingdom come. She felt her eyes unfocus as she began to follow this line of thinking to its natural conclusion.

"It's nice to meet you," he said suddenly, jerking her out of her fantasy-induced trance, and stuck out a hand. "I'm Angel. Angel Marino."

"Of course you are," Lisa replied, then her brain caught up with her mouth. "And I said that out loud."

He smiled. "You sure did." He was still holding his hand out. Lisa stared at it like it was an alien object that she'd never seen before. She knew if she shook his hand she was going to just grab on and yank him towards her and latch onto his ear like a lamprey. Oh god, his ears. Perfect shells, with small, plump earlobes and she was going to gnaw on them, just chomp away while she rubbed her swollen nipples against his chest until she came or got

arrested, whichever happened first. With how much she wanted him, she wouldn't be surprised if she beat the police at least twice over. *You'll never take me alive, coppers!*

She realised she'd been staring again when his smile widened and he reached out with his left hand, grabbed her right wrist, and drew it between them. His warm palm squeezed against hers, and it was rough and calloused and...*yes, please.*

"Nice to meet you," he repeated, then tilted his head forward, indicating that she tell him her name.

"Lisa," she managed. Her hand was shaking. She forced herself to clench it around his, and her pussy throbbed in tandem. This was simultaneously the best and worst handshake *ever.*

"Lisa," he repeated in his beautiful accent, and she almost melted. "What brings you here on Christmas Eve?"

Her lust wilted. She wished he hadn't said that. "The atmosphere?" she tried to joke.

To her deep gratification, his lips cracked into a grin. "You like it?" He pointed at the mistletoe hanging over the power cage. "I did that. I can't go home for Christmas, so I thought I'd make this place cheery."

Immediately she rekindled. There was just something so *earnest* about a guy decorating his place of employ for Christmas, but it was sad, too. Like her. She knew sad. "I'm sorry," she said. "Where's home?"

"Cuba. All my family lives there. I haven't been there since I was little, and most of my family I've only seen in photos and videos, and sometimes we talk on the phone... But there's where my heart lives, with them." His smile dimmed.

She was dying. She wanted to hug him and kiss him and fuck the sad out of him. She'd be his very own Christmas elf.

He cleared his throat and turned the subject on her. "And you? Surely a lovely woman like you has somewhere to be, someone to be with on this night?"

Lisa laughed. She couldn't help it. She wanted to lie and tell him she was Jewish or something, but instead what came out was the truth. "No," she said, "not really. I haven't talked to my dad since high school, and my mom called me two days ago and said she'd put too much flour in the Christmas cake. And by flour she meant vodka. And by cake she meant

glass. And that's why she was in Bolivia instead of here in Springfield like she was supposed to be."

To her relief, he returned the laugh and her toes curled. "But I mean like a husband or a boyfriend."

If anyone else had asked her, she would have cried. But he was not just anyone and she'd never been so happy to say: "Well, he broke up with me yesterday so he could spend Christmas in Chicago. With another girl."

"An idiot, then."

She was grinning so hard her cheeks hurt. "Yes," she said. "A total idiot."

Something tugged on her and she realised she was still holding onto his hand in a death grip. Embarrassed, she snatched it away. "Sorry!" she gasped.

"Don't be," he said.

"Oh. Okay. I'll get right on that." Of course! Why would she be sorry? Just a friendly handshake that went on too long, haha, with the hottest man she'd ever seen, haha! *Kill me!*

"Shall we continue your set?" he asked.

He still wanted to stick around? How was she going to concentrate? How would she refrain from leaning back and sticking her face in his crotch?

But she didn't say any of that. Instead she nodded, her mouth dry, and loaded her second set, her pussy tingling the entire time, and when she laid down to set her form, she couldn't get enough air. She was going to hyperventilate. Maybe she would pass out and he would give her mouth to mouth, then things went sort of hazy after that but maybe they could make use of the incline sit-up bench and perhaps their clothes would quantum tunnel across the room. That was how quantum mechanics worked, right? Ugh, she should have paid attention in class all those years ago; how was she supposed to know that it would come in handy?

Lisa was so preoccupied with molecular physics that she didn't even notice when he leant over her until she felt his fingertips alight on her stomach, and she gasped.

It was like five points of fire on her belly. Every nerve sat up and sang at his touch, and she wanted them to move, up or down, it didn't matter, just as long as he touched her *more*. God, he smelled *good*.

His gorgeous face smiled down at her. "Breathe deeply," he said. "Fill yourself up with air. Push your diaphragm down."

Say diaphragm again, she thought, then, *Air's not what I want to be filled up with*. This was a bad idea. She should have run away the second she laid eyes on him.

Lisa was never good at taking advice, not even her own. She nodded and took a deep, shaking breath.

Somehow they got through all her sets, although she didn't know how she'd managed it. He was so freaking distracting. He smelt like sweat and dust and cologne, and she almost dropped the bar on herself several times, imagining them sixty-nine-ing right there on the bench, his hot full lips on her pussy, her mouth locked around his cock, swallowing as much as she could, her nose buried in his petal-soft scrotum as she inhaled his musky scent at the source. She wondered how many security cameras were in this place, and if she cared. She'd never wanted anyone so badly in her entire life, not even Rick.

Especially not even Rick. Rick who? That was his name, right? Wait, who cared? Not her!

When the bar clanged down the last time, Lisa jumped to her feet, unable to remain eye-to-groin for a second longer. "Thanks!" she chirped, too-cheerful, too-nervous. "I'll, um, finish my last exercise on my own. Thanks for the help."

"What is your last exercise?" he asked.

Crap, Lisa thought. "Two sets of as many chin-ups as I can do."

"You can do chin-ups?" he asked. It wasn't an unreasonable question; many women couldn't do chin-ups. She still remembered how upsetting it was to go from ten chin-ups in P.E. class to zero once Aunt Flo started calling, but she hadn't been busting her ass doing dumbbell rows and barbell deadlifts for a year just to hang from a chin-up bar like a weakling.

She could do one. Maybe two. Three on a good day.

"A couple," she said, trying to sound nonchalant. Her voice cracked. *Thanks, body*.

"I will help," he said. "The more you are able to do, even with assistance, the stronger you will be."

Now her voice totally gave out on her, so she just nodded.

She picked up her things and moved to the power cage, acutely aware of him just behind her. Was it her imagination or was his breath a little ragged? Or was that her breath? She tossed her towel and water bottle down next to the cage and chalked her hands. Stretching up on tiptoe, she grabbed the bar and took a moment to admire herself in the mirror. This was when all her hard work showed the most, in her taut triceps and bulging lats. She loved looking ripped.

She loved looking at the ripped guy standing just behind her, too. Jesus, were those guns even legal? Did Illinois have concealed-carry laws? Because he needed a licence.

She needed to be committed.

His hands alighted on her waist. Lisa bit her lip.

"You can do it," he urged.

Shut up, she thought, and pulled, squeezing her shoulder blades together.

Once her chin cleared the bar.

Twice.

Three times.

Four times.

On the fifth rep, she stalled halfway up, then she felt the slightest of pressures on her waist, and a smouldering burn oozed its way from his fingertips down to her crotch, pooling in her swollen pussy lips like melted wax. She didn't even notice when she pulled herself above the bar the fifth time, or the sixth.

And on the seventh pull, as she lowered herself back down, his hands didn't stay on her waist. Instead they hovered in the place where her waist had been as she lowered her body. His fingertips trailed white-hot fire up her ribs, sliding over each one as though counting them. Then the lightest of touches skated over the outward curves of her breasts and Lisa's grip failed. She dropped to the ground, landing heavily on her toes. Their eyes, her blue ones and his brown, met in the mirror. She hoped he was thinking the same thing she was, because she was about to take a leap of faith.

It was more like a bump of faith. Quite by accident--really!--she took a stumbling step back, and her ass bumped into his groin.

His cock was stiff and straining. In the mirror, their eyes were still locked. His cheeks were flushed, his dark eyes growing darker. Lisa licked her lips.

"Locker room," she croaked. They weren't the sexiest words ever spoken, but she wouldn't have known that by his reaction. His Adam's apple bobbed, then his fingers were intertwining with hers and he pulled her out of the freeweight area and across the basketball court.

That court had never seemed so huge. It took forever to cross it, and the whole time, he walked in front of her, teasing her with his beauty. Her fingers shook where they met his, and when at last they darted into the locker room, Lisa thought she had aged at least a hundred years. She was the world's oldest, feistiest cougar, and when he gently trapped her against the wall with his body, she hoped, dazedly, that she still had all her original teeth. Then his mouth met hers and all her ridiculous thoughts evaporated in the sudden, blazing heat.

His mouth on hers was hard, fast, urgent, his lips moving on hers as if he wanted to swallow them. Two strong arms held her delicately against the wall as one hard-muscled thigh slid between her legs, rubbing against her clit, and her bones turned to glass. She was going to shatter, and she didn't even care. She brought her hands up, skimming them over his chest--it was a really, really *good* chest, too--before travelling over his throat and up to the back of his head, tangling her fingers in his hair. She dislodged his hat and it fell to the ground, unheeded as she let her tongue slip out between her teeth to meet his. He tasted of mint and something spicy. He moaned into her mouth and she felt it down to her curling toes.

Her hips bucked, rubbing her pussy against his thigh, and she groaned in response. "Fuck, *fuck*," she whispered, not knowing if it were a curse or a promise as he broke away and dragged his tongue down her throat. His teeth nipped at her hammering pulse and her eyelids fluttered. Their mingled gasps echoed off the tiled walls of the locker room, two animals in heat. She abandoned the wild tangle of his hair and moved her hands down until the slick, smooth fabric of his shirt met her fingers. She clenched it in her fists as she rubbed herself against him. He scraped his teeth over her shoulder and she needed something, *something*, and she didn't even know what. She was soaking wet, slick and ready, more ready than she'd ever been.

She leant in and ran the tip of her tongue around the shell of his ear, like she'd wanted to do back in the weight room. At the feel of the damp tip tracing the labyrinthine folds, he

gasped, made a strangled sound in his throat, and when her teeth closed on his earlobe, his hips bucked against her. His cock, hard as a diamond, pressed into her hip. She wanted it inside her and she didn't care where--her pussy, her ass, her mouth, god, if he wanted to fuck the soles of her feet she would let him--and she trailed a hand down his body, plucking at his waistband before settling over the straining outline of his dick through his pants. She traced the soft head, could feel dampness through the fabric. She swirled her palm over it as best she could, and he rocked against her again.

"Oh, Lisa," he said, then rattled off something in Spanish under his breath, and distantly she cursed her fourteen-year-old self for selecting to take German. German, for god's sake! Then she promptly forgot about regretting the ill-advised choices of her youth when he wove a hand through her hair and clenched it in his fist as the other hand slid down her back to her ass.

He squeezed a handful of flesh. She felt the lips of her pussy pull and peel away as he tried to grab as much as his hand could hold. She hooked a thigh over his hip and urged him closer.

Hmm, the tiny, functioning part of her brain mused over the din of desire in her head. Something about asses...

Oh. That was right.

She abandoned his cock, pressing her palm against him as she traversed the hard planes of his hip, until at last she crested the mountain of his glorious butt.

It was legendary. If her hand ever took it upon itself to write its memoirs, reaching the summit of Angel's Ass would be the crowning moment of its glory. She wished she had a camera, because a moment like this needed to be captured on film. It was firm and round and so squeezable she almost couldn't do it. It seemed like sacrilege. Then again, she was about to fuck a total stranger in a public place on what had to be Jesus' birthday by now, so perhaps she should stop being neurotic.

Lisa squeezed.

It was everything she'd hoped it would be. The flesh gave under her fingers, depressing slightly, and under that delectable flesh were glutes as rock hard as his cock. She sank her fingernails in, and he ground against her, his cock pressing against her belly, seeking

entrance into her body. She liked that so much she moved her other hand to his ass and dug in with that one, too. His mouth found her breast.

There were suddenly too many layers between them. She had to get her shirt off. Luckily Angel was way ahead of her and was already tugging at the hem, lifting it over her stomach--which was never as flat as she wanted it to be, and she hoped he didn't think her routine was lacking because of it--moving it past her sports bra, urging her to lift her arms. Reluctantly she abandoned his ass and acquiesced, and in one fluid motion, her T-shirt was over her head and on the floor. His fingers were tugging the hair band out of her long brown hair, letting it fall down her back and over his arms in silky ropes.

"You are beautiful," he said, and she believed it.

Strong, slender fingers shoved the tight elastic of her bra up over her breasts and his hot, wet mouth latched onto her nipple. She would have fallen if the wall had not held her up. She trailed her fingernails over his shoulders as he suckled, each long draw on her breast, each rasp of his tongue against her swollen nipple curling her toes and sending a jolt of electricity straight down to her begging pussy. She was white hot, burning with need, her clit like a fiery coal begging to be quenched with his mouth. Desperately she rubbed herself against him again, wild and uncertain, roaming over his landscape like a restless ghost searching for home. She tugged at his shirt, demanding that he mirror her, and when he pulled away from her, it was painful.

"Don't, don't leave--" she begged. But all he did was rip the shirt over his head and it joined hers on the floor.

He was amazing. He could have been a cover model. He could have been an anatomy lesson. He *was* about to be an anatomy lesson, and she wanted to stay after school every fucking day. Hungrily her eyes traced over his chest, down his six-pack abs, to the delicious lines of his hips leading down into his windpants, and she wanted to follow them with her mouth. He even had little love handles, bulging just a bit over his waistband, and for a moment, she couldn't decide if she wanted to suck his cock or wrap him into a bear hug. Then he was back, his teeth gently working away at her other breast and her dilemma was resolved. Blowjob all around!

His body was burning hot. The skin against her fingers was almost blistering, a furnace of desire, burning for her. She wanted more, now. Not knowing what else to do, she tugged

his mouth back up to hers, her fingers curling in his beautiful black hair, and pulled him with her farther inside the locker room. She needed him inside her, as soon as possible.

His tongue invaded her mouth as they stumbled past lockers and benches, his hands everywhere at once, running up over her breasts, across her back and down to her ass. Skin caught against skin as he bent and tried to gather her thighs in his palms, clearly needing to be inside her as much as she needed it. They ran up against a wall, and suddenly, he was lifting her up. His burning erection pressed against her, rubbing over her clit through four layers of cloth. It was so hot she thought she would melt, burn and heal around it, keep it close for as long as she needed.

"Oh!" she cried as he tried to suck her entire breast into his mouth. For the first time, she was glad she wasn't so well-endowed. She wanted him to swallow her whole.

Her fingers were on his waistband, tugging it away from his hips, dipping below the forbidden border, and through the cotton of his underwear, she felt the nest of curls at the base of his cock, springy and waiting to be drenched in her juices. She wanted to bury her face in it. She couldn't wait much longer.

"Let me," she said, incoherent.

"Mm," he murmured around her breast, and the vibrations made her want to sing. Her thighs clenched around his hips, urging him closer, deeper, faster, harder. If he was a summoned ghost of Christmas, he was the ghost of Christmas present, because everything but this had been banished from her mind. Her mother, her father, Rick and stupid Shirley, her friends with their boyfriends and husbands, her stupid job, her lonely flat, her weariness and longing heart—none of it mattered. She remembered none of it in this blazing moment of light. All that mattered was that Angel was in her arms, and she was in his, and she wanted him so badly she was going to implode and take half the universe with her.

But first, she had to get this stupid sports bra off. As much as it pained her, she pushed against his shoulders, and immediately, he acquiesced to her wishes and broke away.

"Am I going too fast?" he asked. His wide, dark eyes were so earnest, so needy, that she felt them pluck at something deep inside her, some forgotten heartstring.

"Not fast enough," she gasped, crossed her arms, and pulled ineffectually at the tight spandex binding her shoulders and chest.

He understood her need. His fingers appeared on the elastic, and together, they freed her from the horrible contraption. Her long hair brushed against her shoulders and back, sending shivers down her spine. He took a step back, just staring at her, and she had to fight the urge to cover herself.

"I want to watch you undress," he said.

She smiled at him, and she saw his cock twitch under the fabric of his pants. "Only if you return the favour."

He didn't smile, just licked his swollen lips, and lifted a foot. Carefully, slowly, he tugged at the shoelace binding the shoe to his foot. She heard the lace rub over itself in the sudden, pregnant silence of the locker room, the only other sound their ragged breathing. It felt as though he were pulling at something inside her, too, unravelling her, untying her, until she swung loose and free.

He slipped his shoe off, and repeated the actions with the other shoe. Laces abraded laces. Stocking feet were liberated. Footwear had never held such promise.

With practiced ease, he hooked a thumb inside each sock and peeled them off. He had perfect feet. If she'd been even remotely artistic, she would have bent to inspect them and kiss them, memorise them for that moment in the far distant future, when she needed the most beautiful foot in the world to complete her masterpiece.

"You," he said, interrupting her fascinated gaze.

She wasn't nearly as good. She bent and ripped at the laces on her sneakers and pulled them off without any sort of finesse or sensual desire. He didn't seem to care. The moment her socks and shoes were off, he slipped his hands under his waistband and yanked his pants down, underwear and all.

His cock sprang free of its prison, and Lisa forgot all about returning the favour.

It was stunning. Not overly large, nor too small. Straight and stiff and at attention and beaded with precum. For her.

Lisa fell to her knees and took it in her mouth.

The moment her lips closed around it, he hissed, his hips bucking, and she smiled. He was hot, and he tasted like sweat. She probed the slit at the soft tip with her tongue, letting the sweet precum mix with her saliva as she swirled her mouth around the head. Then she pushed forward.

He was perfectly still. She reached her arms around his hips and grabbed his ass, and she felt the trembling in his muscles as he struggled to keep himself from fucking her face. She wanted to make him lose control.

Pressing her lips down, she moved forward.

His cock slid into her mouth as she pushed towards his body. She'd never deep-throated a guy before, and here she was in a public place, trying her best. To her shock, she felt a thrill; it seemed so dirty, and yet so *hot*. Her pussy ached with anticipation and anxiety, and she hoped she could manage it.

"Oh god, Lisa," she heard him whisper just as his dick began to go down the back of her throat and her nose brushed the curls at the base. All she knew was the taste of his cock and the sweaty, spicy smell of his skin, the hard, flat abs in front of her, the quivering ass beneath her hands, the bite of the tiles against her knees, and her own aching groin. She pressed her thighs together, needing to relieve some of the aching pressure, and pulled back. His dick slid out of her mouth, wet with saliva. She took a breath and tried again as he whimpered in his throat. Someone could walk in on them at any moment, and she hoped they did, so they could see her reduce such a beautiful man to a quivering lump of desire with just a stroke of her tongue. She felt powerful and free.

Her lips found the base of his dick, and he groaned. She had done it. Lisa pulled back and pressed forwards a third time, then a fourth and a fifth, trying to find a rhythm. She loved the feel of the veins in his cock pulsing against her tongue, loved the way the velvety skin slid over her lips and bunched at the base of his shaft. She loved the way his balls bounced as she swallowed him whole.

She felt his fingers weave through her hair, but he didn't pull her head towards him. Instead he pulled her away, helping her to her feet.

"Oh god," he whispered, and his voice was hoarse with need. "If you keep doing that I won't have anything left for you." He kissed her again and his arms were around her, his hands working away at the waistband of her pants, dipping under the elastic of her panties, and Lisa felt the cold air hit her heated flesh as he worked them down over her legs. His palms skated over her ass, and she felt his fingertips trail over the backs of her thighs and knees, pushing fabric before them, ghosting over her calves. Then she was stepping out of

her pants and he was gazing up at her like she was the most amazing thing he'd ever seen. Her mouth went dry.

One slender, beautiful hand drifted up to the juncture of her thighs.

"May I?" he asked.

"I wish you would," she gasped, and his thumb parted her aching lips, dipping into the hot, damp space where she wanted him most.

She almost fell at the sensation that rocketed through her, the deep, dark pleasure spiralling through her limbs, winding down her arms and legs to pool in her fingertips and toes. To her surprise a cold, hard surface met her backside and she glanced behind her. The sinks. How did they get all the way over here? Did she care?

His tongue met her clit.

No. No, she didn't care at all. She sagged, grateful for the support as his tongue flicked over the burning nub of flesh. A hand on her ankle, urging her to open wide for him. With a moan, Lisa lifted her leg. Stubble from his cheek rubbed over the tender skin of her inner thigh, and she looped her knee over his shoulder, her heel digging into his back as she urged him deeper.

She jumped as she felt his fingertips part her lips and probe her entrance even as he suckled on her clit. Gently, he pushed a finger inside her, and curled it. She gasped.

"Oh, sweet merciful –"

She felt his lips curl into a smile against her as she doubled over. He withdrew his finger and replaced it with two, scissoring them wide as the tension mounted inside her. The sharp edge of the Formica sink bit into the skin of her hands, and it was a struggle to keep her eyes open, to watch his wide mouth and the dreamy concentration in his gaze. The hand not buried palm deep inside her moved slowly, rhythmically, and she knew he was stroking his cock, thinking of being surrounded by her wet heat. He wanted her just as badly as she wanted him.

She bit her lip, almost drawing blood as her thighs trembled. She was close now, very close, and each delicious thrust of his fingers pushed her higher and higher, and she was going to fall. Her toes curled, her back bowed, and her chest constricted as she inched closer and closer to the edge.

"Oh--oh god, oh god, Angel--"

Her body bore down on his fingers, on his tongue, and she shrieked with release. She was just a white hot ball of nerves, on fire and burning with abandon. He didn't stop as she came, but continued to plumb her body, coaxing every last twitch of pleasure from her, his gentle mouth drawing her completion out until it was almost pain.

"Stop. Oh, Jesus, stop," she gasped.

He pulled away from her with a smile, his long, slender fingers coated in her juices. Holding his gaze with those amazing brown eyes, he lowered his hand to his cock and wrapped it around the shaft, smearing her slickness over his velvety flesh. He stood, and she was gratified to see that he seemed to have as much trouble standing up straight as she did. He took her hand in his and gently led her to the shower. She watched, dazed, as he tossed aside one of the curtains and turned the handle, inviting a spray of warm water to cascade over his hand. He leant in and let his lips play on her neck for a moment, and she could have stood there forever as long, lazy ribbons of pleasure spooled out across her skin where his mouth met her flesh. He moved to her ear, and the feel of his warm, panting breath curling inside her head made her shiver and melt.

"Get in," he whispered. "I will be back in a moment."

What choice did she have? Lots of choices. She chose to do as he bid. The hot water hit her heated skin, and she could hardly tell the difference. All she cared was that he was backing away, across the locker room. His cock bounced with his steps, and while she couldn't complain about the view, she felt quite deprived. He was too beautiful to just leave her like this. She *needed* that dick inside her. Her body felt hollow and bereft, hungry for something only he could give her. Her legs shook. He disappeared around a corner.

Lisa let her hands wander over her body, linger over her breasts and dip into the still pulsing space between her thighs. It was almost painful without him here, and when he reappeared, she almost wept with relief. He had a condom in his hands, and he was biting his lip as he concentrated on opening it.

She almost giggled. His fingers were trembling so badly he couldn't get it open, so the moment he came within arm's reach, she plucked it from his fingers. Startled, he looked up.

She smiled at him, pinched it between thumb and forefinger, and peeled it open. Reaching into the wrapper, she pulled the little circle of latex out and squeezed the tip. Then she knelt down and placed it on the end of his dick. Never taking her eyes from his, she

rolled it down his shaft, and when she reached the base, he let out a sigh and sagged against the wall.

One hand alighted on her cheek, and he leant in and kissed her.

"Ready?" he murmured.

She couldn't even speak, so she just nodded. His calloused palms settled over her shoulders and he turned her around and moved her to the wall. She leant against it, the tile cool against her elbows. The warm spray of the shower cascaded over her back, and she felt his full lips move over her skin, kissing a path from one shoulder to the other, then down her spine, inch by inch, tongue swirling over each ridge of her backbone, tasting her. His warm hands smoothed over her breasts, pausing to pluck at her nipples, then continued down to her waist where he parted the cheeks of her ass. She felt the tip of his cock nudge her pussy lips, his thick-muscled thighs brushing against her own, the hair dusting them tickling her skin. Her core pulsed, an echo of her orgasm, and a promise of another to come.

"May I?"

His voice was warm and rich and she couldn't stand it anymore.

"If you don't, I'm going to hold you under the water and do it myself," she groaned.

He didn't even chuckle. Instead he pushed forward.

Lisa held her breath as he parted her, slicing into her body in a welcome invasion. The head of his penis cleared her entrance and she gasped as her flesh stretched and moved around him, inviting him further in. She was swollen and full, and he was filling her more, the shaft of his cock sliding inside, easing the hollow ache. Slowly he impaled her, and she swallowed, her heart pounding in her ears.

At last she felt the soft hair of his pubes brush her ass and the skin of his scrotum run up against her clit, and he was completely inside her. He let out a shuddering breath and let his forehead fall against her shoulder.

"You feel so good," he murmured over the sound of falling water, and she responded with a shaky laugh.

"Back at you," she said, and he began to move.

Lisa felt like she was flying. Her thighs quivered with the effort of holding still as he ground into her, her fingernails scrabbling at the tile as she gasped for air. Then his fingers

were on her clit again and he rolled the swollen nub of flesh between them as he pumped in and out of her, trying to coax her into coming a second time.

“Oh god, that feels good,” she gasped as he spread her juices between her lips. Their tandem breaths echoed off the walls, and her pussy bore down on him as her body began to respond to his ministrations.

The water, the heat, his breath, the cold air seeping in from the locker room outside their ceramic cocoon—she felt it all. Felt the sudden building pressure in her pelvis, his fingers, his tongue, his mouth, his cock, his thighs, his balls. Heard his cries, felt his teeth and her shaking legs, her straining limbs, her thundering heart as his hips rolled against her in an ancient rhythm.

“Don’t stop!” she cried. She couldn’t think, couldn’t feel anything but the delicious sensation of his cock moving in her and his hands artfully drawing her desire out. She reached for the sky as she moved with him. She was crawling out of her skin on a pleasure high, her mind unable to bear it, and when he gave her clit a final, quick rub, she shrieked again. The wave crested and washed over her. She was tumbling over and under, drowning in it, and somewhere far away, he gave his own strangled cry and bucked, stuttered and started, stuttered and stopped against her, and his arms held her close as he came.

Slowly, the world faded back in. He was breathing hard against her back, and she just wanted to turn around and kiss him.

Then someone coughed.

Someone who wasn’t either of them.

They both stiffened and froze. Lisa looked at him over her shoulder, and his wide eyes stared back at her.

“Oh shit,” she mouthed. They were busted.

This was *so hot*.

She started to grin and opened her mouth to make a loud, embarrassing moan, but he looked scared and brought a finger to his lips.

Out in the locker room, their secret watcher coughed again and shuffled very loudly as they exited. Lisa heard something rolling over the floor. It must have been the janitor, come to clean up.

Angel grasped the base of his cock and slid out of her, swallowing hard, and she felt another delicious contraction in her pussy, the ghost of her orgasm causing her toes to curl. She was sopping wet, inside and out, and she could barely stand as he stepped back.

"You should go first," he whispered to her, which sort of made sense. They were in the ladies locker room, after all.

She bit her lip and nodded, slipping past him and out of the shower stall. Craning her neck, she glanced around.

"Coast clear," she said softly.

"My clothes?"

The words sounded strangled and Lisa grinned. Poor guy. She hoped he didn't get fired for this.

The chill air shimmied up and down her skin as she darted across the floor, gathering garments, pulling her panties and gym pants on as she hopped first on one foot, then the other. She didn't bother putting her bra back on, just tugged her shirt over her head and stuffed her bare feet into her shoes as she trotted back to the shower.

"Here," she said, thrusting his clothes inside the stall.

"Thank you." His voice was strained. "You'd better go."

Stung, Lisa peeked around the shower curtain. He stood in the middle of the tile floor, as bedraggled as a drowned kitten. "You sure?"

He looked like he was about to say something, but then just nodded. "Will you distract them while I get back to the weights? I could get in very big trouble."

Understandable, Lisa thought. All right. She could be a big girl about this. She nodded as he frantically began to pull his clothes on and gave her a look of gratitude that made it almost worth it.

She knew this was a fun little fling, a Christmas Eve thing between two lonely people. Nothing more. Of course she knew that.

That didn't stop her from sighing a little as she retrieved her gym bag from her locker and fiddling with it until he emerged from the shower.

"Follow my lead," she told him in a chipper voice she didn't feel, and waltzed out of the locker room.

The janitor was standing in front of the men's locker room, tapping her foot. Lisa was extremely grateful she was a woman. She was old, with white hair, like a grandmother. For some reason, this made Lisa want to giggle more.

She plastered a grin across her face and approached the old lady, keeping their eyes locked until she was past her. To her relief, the old woman followed her, turning away from the locker room.

Lisa stopped walking and stepped in close, lowering her voice.

"Sorry," she told her. "You won't...you know, tell anyone about my little solo career in there, will you?"

The old woman stared. Behind her, Angel slipped out of the locker room and sprinted across the basketball court.

"Solo career?" the old woman said.

"You know," Lisa tried, "sometimes it gets lonely around the holidays." *Yes, yes, nice cliché, she thought, that'll be a hit with the Academy. They love that schmaltzy stuff.*

Then, to her shock, the old woman gave her a wink so quick she almost didn't see it and said, very clearly, "Hmmpf." She turned away, pulling her cart behind her. Lisa couldn't even see Angel any more. He was safe.

"Merry Christmas!" she called to the old woman.

The old woman raised a hand and Lisa grinned and made a break for it. She jogged to the front of the gym, pushed open the door, and darted outside, her face burning, but for once it wasn't from embarrassment. It was from satisfaction.

Chapter Three

Lisa cracked an eye open around noon on Christmas day and wondered why she felt so sore. She felt like she'd danced with a train, and the train won. Dancing wasn't even supposed to be a contact sport. That was how good this train had been. Like Fred Astaire with twenty-ton steel-toed boots.

Well played, my steam-powered nemesis, Lisa thought. Then she thought: *Wow, do I need coffee or what?* She rolled out of bed.

It was hard to walk. It was usually hard to walk after a trip to the gym. Did she go to the gym yesterday? Dim memories of pounding the treadmill and doing squats filtered down through her sleep-fogged brain as she stumbled from her room into her dull little flat. She paused in her office area, which was just a desk in what was supposed to be her breakfast nook. Things were a mess, which was weird because she was usually pretty neat. Rick was a bit on the OCD side and kept things tidy.

Rick. Wait. He'd broken up with her.

Fuck.

Lisa sighed. So that's why she'd been at the gym on a holiday, and that's why Rick wasn't here now. His unopened presents--just two, thank god, and she was going to have to return them, curses--sat on her unused fireplace. She didn't have any presents. She'd opened all the ones her friends had given her at the office, anticipating a nice little Christmas with her mother and her boyfriend, before that was all shot to hell.

She *really* needed coffee. Preferably with something alcoholic in it. Maybe later she'd go down to the corner store and get some eggnog, with extra nog, because that was what successful, well-adjusted people did on Christmas. She trudged to the refrigerator and stretched up to reach the bottle of Bailey's that sat on top.

A vision of herself flattened against the gym's shower wall flashed across her brain. Delicious, dark arms circled her straining body as she rode the hottest personal trainer in the history of mankind to an explosive orgasm and *oh my god*.

Lisa pressed a hand to her suddenly burning face as everything came flooding back. Angel's smile, his hands and mouth and fingertips, what they did in the locker room at her gym, what she would have done, the janitor coming in, the thrill of being caught and two best orgasms she'd ever had—all of it swept over her in a wave, and she didn't know if she should collapse in embarrassment or stick her fingers down her panties and live off the greatest memory she had ever made.

I can never go back, she thought. Never, never. I have to change my name. Cut my hair. Get a face tattoo. Move to Vietnam and tend my own little rice paddy because I can't believe I freaking did that!

What would her mother say? Lisa hoped she never found out!

And she'd totally do it again. And again and again, because Angel was hot as a nuclear reactor, and she just wanted his dick inside her *right now*. She felt dizzy.

She took a deep breath. Then another and another, until the memory had faded somewhat. She realised she was biting her own fingers with need.

Abandoning her boozy plans, Lisa turned heel and ran to the bathroom and wrenched at the shower handles. A spray of icy water spewed forth and she hopped under it, underwear and all.

It didn't work. She stuck her fingers in her crotch and worked her clit until her toes curled and she was gasped at the climax that rocked her. She'd never felt it so intensely before. Was every time going to be like this from now on? Had Angel awakened something in her?

She hoped so. Oh, she *hoped* so.

Shivering, she shut off the water and climbed out. She grabbed her towel and rubbed herself dry, discarding her bedraggled panties in the sink. She was just shrugging into her bathrobe when the doorbell rang.

Lisa froze. Could it be?

No. She hadn't even given him her number or her last name. But she *wished*—

She ran to the front door and peeked through the peephole.

Angel stood outside her door, something in his hands.

I'm a mess, Lisa thought, then laughed at herself because it was way, *way* too late for that. She opened the door, inviting a gust of icy air inside. Her teeth chattered.

Angel stood there, looking like sin in an Adidas track suit. He was adorable, and he was holding two cups of Starbucks in his hands. She wanted to tell him she loved him, but thought he might get the wrong idea. She'd love Stalin if he showed up at her door with Starbucks, or at least would give him a friendly hug.

"Am I interrupting you?" he asked. His eyes darted from side to side. Oh, he was *nervous*. That was so *cute*.

"No," she gasped. "Come in." And she stepped aside and let him in.

"I'm sorry for showing up like this," he said. He edged past her, but he didn't have to touch her for her to get turned on again. She just had to inhale as he passed by, and his scent had her hot and ready again.

Keep your cool, idiot, she told herself. She shivered again and shut the door. "No, not at all," she said.

"I just..." He swallowed hard. "To be honest, I feel like a creep. I looked up your address in the computer."

Oh. That was how he got here. Yeah, okay, that was a little creepy, but at least he knew it. She crossed her arms. "Um," she said. She obviously could not be trusted to think like an adult where he was concerned.

He finally seemed to get the courage to look at her. Their eyes met, and she tingled down to her toes.

"Lisa," he said, "I will go away and never come back if you don't want me here. But I had to tell you something."

Her heart dropped. He wasn't single. He had some sort of horrible wasting disease. He'd given *her* some sort of horrible wasting disease. He was Stalin in disguise. *Oh, crap*.

"What is it?" she asked, her mouth dry.

His lips thinned and he dropped his eyes. "Last night was...amazing. But I wasn't thinking straight."

Don't, she thought. *Don't even break up with me without first asking me out*.

A miracle happened.

He swallowed. "I wasn't thinking straight, and I forgot to get your number. And that's why I'm here. Because I would have called you today if I'd had it. I would have called and asked you out. And..." He trailed off. He clearly didn't know how to finish his thought.

Lisa didn't have that problem. "So you want to go on a date with me?" she said, and though she was floating, she had a sudden attack of doubt. What if they got to know each other and *hated* what they saw? What if they screamed and shouted and never talked again, and the memory of those minutes in the locker room were forever tainted because of that? What if, what if, *what if* – ?

And also, wasn't this backwards? Shouldn't she have gotten to know him first, then slept with him? That was the sort of advice she'd always been given, but Lisa had never been good at taking advice, and sex like that didn't come along every day, unless you were very lucky. Well, maybe this was her big break.

He was staring at her.

She grinned at him.

"I would *love* to go out with you," she said.

Tension she hadn't even noticed him holding suddenly drained out of him, and his shoulders relaxed. "Now?" he asked, just like a little boy on Christmas, so eager and ready to open his present.

"Yes," she said, "but you have to wait outside while I get dressed."

He grinned back at her and nodded. "I will wait."

She ushered him outside, looked around her disaster area of a flat, and couldn't even begin to care. She dashed to her bedroom, pulled on underwear and jeans and a sweater, darted into the bathroom and aimed the hair dryer at her head for as long as she could stand to wait, then smoothed on some lipstick and grabbed her purse. The whole time her neurotic brain rattled off item after item of things that could go wrong, of reasons not to do this, but she'd had enough of listening to her brain. She wanted to listen to her heart, or a reasonable facsimile thereof.

He could turn out to be a jerk. Maybe he'd leave the cap off the toothpaste, or maybe he hated Indian food, or perhaps he thought dogs were gross and only liked gerbils. A million things could go wrong.

Lisa opened the door. Angel turned and smiled at her, and held out a cup of coffee.

She took it. His fingers brushed hers, and in that instant, she saw, at the end of the concrete breezeway leading to her flat, the first few flakes of snow of the first snowfall of the year.

For a moment, she thought she saw the ghost of Christmases yet to come.

She raised her coffee in a toast and stepped out with Angel into the crisp, snowy day.

About the Author

Heather Howard lives in Texas with one husband, two dogs, and an ever-proliferating garden, all of whom seem to require constant feeding and attention. When they aren't looking, she talks to herself on paper. Sometimes, a book comes out!

Email: heatherpens@gmail.com

Heather loves to hear from readers. You can find her contact information, website and author biography at <http://www.total-e-bound.com>.

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