

Stories
to Keep You Warm at
Night

by
OTKRomance

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Dedication

For Seth.

Thank you for always accepting me for who I am, every part, no matter how thin, fat, silly, weird, or *kinky*. You are the best husband that a girl could ask for, and I love you with all my heart. Never stop keeping me warm.

J.

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The Practical Joke

It's hard not to giggle as he steps out of his shower into the bedroom to dress for the dinner party. I quickly slip past him into my own shower where I allow myself a silent laugh.

Knowing that it won't take him long to make the discovery, I make my shower short. I'm just stepping into the bedroom, wrapped in a bath sheet, as he booms my name-- first, middle, and last, a sure sign I'm in trouble -- from the closet.

"Yes, dear?" I call sweetly. Okay, maybe the 'dear' is a bit much.

My handsome appears at the door of the walk-in closet in his terry cloth bathrobe, his hands on his lean hips. His blue eyes narrow on me.

"What did you do with my underwear?"

"Your underwear?" I play dumb, as I walk over to him and peek past him to the open, empty drawer where he keeps his boxers.

"Yes, Miss. Innocent, my underwear. And don't act like you don't know what I'm talking about! I had a full drawer this morning, now it's empty, and I can't find any of them!"

I bat my eyelashes at him and pout a little, acting hurt by his accusations. "Honestly, honey, I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Mmm-hmmm." His hand falls from his hip to grab my waist and before I can blink, he has me face down over his lap. He yanks the bath sheet up to my waist and lands a loud smack to my bare bottom.

"Maybe this will help you remember," he says, adding more spanks to the first. My bottom is quickly warming up from his attention, and it feels wonderful. I play dumb still, not wanting him to stop yet.

"I don't know what happened to your damn underwear!" Ouch - that 'damn' got me a really hard swat. "Ouhhh! Ouch! You meanie!"

"We have guests due to arrive in fifteen minutes, little girl. I suggest you tell me where you hid my boxers so we can both get dressed before they show up. Or maybe you'd like me to continue your spanking for their enjoyment...?"

"You wouldn't!" I am both excited and appalled at the idea.

"Try me." Each word is ground out and accompanied by an especially smart slap.

"Okay, okay!" I relent, reluctantly. "I confess! It was me! I hid your underwear! It was just a practical joke...."

He has let me up from his lap and now holds me between his legs. "Well, your little joke just earned you another session over my lap at bedtime tonight. You definitely need to learn some respect for other people's belongings." His hand moves from my hips to caress my breasts, now bare since the bath sheet has come undone and fallen away. "For instance, these are yours. See how I respect them?" His thumbs gently flick over the hard nipples and he bends his head to suckle one tip.

By this time, what with the anticipation all day of waiting for my surprise to be discovered, my newly warmed bottom, and this new attention, I am nearly crazy with wanting him. I can see through his robe that he is aroused as well. I reach one hand out to touch him, but he grabs my hand and pulls it back.

His eyes are knowing and his smile is wicked. He knows exactly what he is doing to me. The only comfort is that he is obviously in a state of painful arousal as well. "No time for that now, little one. Guests due in ten minutes. Now, where are my boxers?"

Grumpily, I kneel to pull the bag of underwear from its hiding place under the bed. He gives me a stinging swat that sends me towards the closet and I reluctantly go inside to choose clothes for the dinner party I am suddenly wishing I could cancel.

His voice carries in to me as I pull my underwear drawer open. "NO panties. Hear me?"

An entirely new wave of arousal washes over me. Not only am I going to have to wait all night long, with a red hot bottom, for another delicious spanking and then finally the sex I want, but I'm going to have to do it without panties on as well. I don't know how I'll survive the anticipation.

"I hear you," I grumble.

His laugh carries into the closet. In the distance, the doorbell chimes. "I'll go greet our guests," he calls.

I can hear the conversation and laughter downstairs from the landing outside our bedroom and I pause to compose myself. My panty-less bottom feels like a neon sign through my dress. I'm sure that everyone will know I'm not wearing any underwear.

I am still gathering my courage, eyes closed, and counting to ten, when he appears at the bottom of the stairs, a teasing grin on his handsome face. He climbs the stairs and takes hold of my hands, one in each of his.

"You're very pretty," he says, still grinning that obnoxious grin. "Let's see, did you obey me?" He turns me around and lifts the full skirt of my dress. His chuckle makes me want to turn around and smack him in the face, even as my sex twitches when he gives my bottom a possessive pat. "Good girl. Come on, sweetheart, we're just waiting for you."

I face him again, take his hand and descend the stairs, forcing a smile on my face, and mentally preparing myself for a long evening.

If You Can't Stand the Heat

I hear his key turn in the lock, followed by the squeak of the front door opening and my heartbeat immediately quickens. I pause in my dinner preparations and shed the bathrobe I am wearing.

He is in the living room still, putting his coat away, hanging his keys by the door. He calls out a hello to me that I purposefully neglect to answer.

I hear him greeting our two cats, Magee and Doolie: "Hi boys. Where's mommy? Huh?"

Then he is in the kitchen doorway and I turn from the stove to see his eyes as they widen to take in my surprise image before him: The silky pink bra and matching g-string panties, white high heels and ruffly white half-apron tied around my waist.

Nothing else.

I flash him a grin.

"Hi! How was work?" I ask, as though standing there in my ugliest every day sweats.

His open-jawed expression slowly changes and his blue eyes twinkle; he always likes it when I'm in the mood to play. A smile is tugging at the corners of his mouth, but he is doing his best to look stern and angry.

"Jessica Lynn! What the hell are you doing?"

I bat my eyelashes and look as innocent as I can manage while standing there half-naked.

"I'm making dinner," I answer sweetly, gesturing to the scattered cooking supplies on the counter. Actually I haven't gotten much farther than setting out the supplies I will need.

The tiniest smile breaks over his handsome features before he can hide it. He clears his throat, maybe to cover up a chuckle. When he speaks, his voice is stern again. "You know what I mean, Miss. Innocent." He gestures towards my scanty get-up, then towards the kitchen window over the sink. The window looks out over the pathway between our townhouse and the one next to us, and is only

curtained with white lace. There is no blind.

"Anybody could glance in here and see you half naked."

"Oh that," I give a negligent wave of my hand. "Let 'em look if they want. It's so hot out here, I'm just trying to cool off some."

"Oh, you'll be hot all right," he promises, and I can't help myself - I giggle. We're still pretty new at all of this spanking and role playing stuff. "You think that's a joke?"

I shake my head quickly, for he is advancing on me and I suddenly wonder how far he might take the game. He wouldn't spank me right here in the kitchen, where (as he pointed out) anybody could glance in and see..... would he?

He stops in front of me and braces his hands on both sides of the counter behind me. I am efficiently trapped. His face is so near to mine that I can smell his sweet breath and feel it on my face like a caress, but he doesn't touch me.

"You listen to me, Jessica Lynn. You are mine, mine alone. No one else should see you but me. Your body -- your breasts, your hips, your thighs, your face, your BEHIND belong to me alone. Do you understand me?"

I am breathless and nearly dripping between my legs already -- and he hasn't even touched me yet!

I sneak a glance at his stern face, being careful to maintain my chastised-girlfriend-eyes-lowered facade. I remind myself that I'll have to tell him later that I was in my bathrobe until I heard him come in the house.

"Now..." he continues, his gaze following my shoulders down to my breasts... and below. "I think you'd better get your butt upstairs and get ready for a good spanking for this little stunt."

I nod gravely, looking at my hands. But when he removes his frame from my path, I stand there for a moment in hesitation. He does as I am hoping, by turning me forcefully towards the door and giving

me a smart slap on my nearly naked rear to get me moving.

I go upstairs and enter our bedroom to wait for him. In the past I've always sat on the edge of the bed, but tonight I turn my nose into the corner. He has yet to put me in the corner after a spanking, as sometimes happens in the spanking stories I've read on the Internet. But there is some part of me that wants him to do just that, so that I stand there for his witness with my red bottom bared and my nose in the corner. Who knows why I want this, or why I crave the spanking over his knee in the first place. It's something I admit I don't understand myself; I doubt honestly that I ever will.

It is a little while I am standing there before I hear his tread on the stairs and then the sound of the door opening. He is silent for a moment, looking at me in the corner and I feel a moment of the old insecurity where these strange urges of mine are concerned. Certainly many people would think I was strange, even perverted for these things I crave. I am still occasionally worried that he might one day see me as such too. I hold my breath, looking down at the carpet below my feet, awaiting his reaction.

My love, he does not disappoint me.

"Very appropriate for you to be in the corner, you naughty girl," he says.

I hear him moving around behind me and somehow resist the urge to turn and look to see what he is doing. After a moment, he says, "Come over here, please."

I turn away from the wall to see that he is sitting in a straight backed chair in the middle of the room. This is a surprise, since all of my previous spankings have been given over his lap on the bed. This, apparently, will be a true 'over-the-knee' experience. I catch his eye and there is a smile there as he pats his knee. I move to his side then.

"I must tell you baby," he says. "I like what

you're wearing. You're beautiful in it as you are in everything else." He pauses to reach up and lift my chin so that I must meet his eyes. "However, it is most definitely not appropriate to cook dinner in, is it?"

I grin winningly and ask innocently, "Breakfast?"

"Very funny missy," he scolds, but I see the sides of his mouth twitch as he fights back a smile. He looks down my body now and I feel such a rush of excitement I wonder if I can stand to wait to have him inside me.

"Take those heels off before you break your neck." I step obediently out of the shoes, kick them away and wait for more instructions. He makes a 'tsk 'tsk sound and gives the elastic waistband of my panties a snap. "I believe, Jessica Lynn, that I told you to come up here and get ready for a spanking. Isn't that what I said?"

"Y...Yes..."

He nods. "And how do naughty girls get their spankings?"

"On their... bare bottom...."

"That's right." His eyes are dancing away as he looks at me. He's really enjoying this! What a wonderful spanking monster I've created! "Panties off. And that's ten extra."

I wiggle the tight g-string down my hips and step out of it. Like the skimpy piece of cloth would have been much coverage anyway!

"Now... this is going to be your first true over-the-knee spanking. It probably won't be as comfortable as the ones I've given you over my lap on the bed. You won't have anywhere to rest your pretty little head. But I think your little stunt downstairs warrants this."

He takes my wrist firmly in his hand and tugs me over his lap. My naked bottom is upended and I am acutely aware of my complete vulnerability to him. As he positions me 'just so,' I become aware

of something else as well -- the rock hard erection straining against his Levis. My crotch cushions it when he finally finishes arranging me for my punishment.

One hand caresses my bottom for a few minutes and I can't help but wiggle a bit in anticipation. He is drawing it out because he knows it will be that much better, but I feel like I'm going to go crazy from the waiting.

"Such a pretty little butt you have," he sighs. "Such a pity I have to spank it."

And with that bit of melodrama, the first swat fires down. I gasp and arch myself against his erection. The first stinging spank is followed by a fast flurry of more and my bottom quickly begins to tingle with each additional swat.

"You are such a naughty girl!" He scolds, punctuating each word with a spank. I am moaning in his lap, raising my backside now to receive his spanks.

The moderate heat from before is beginning to actually hurt, but at the same time it feels so good that I never want him to stop.

He slows his pace as my legs kick out reflexively and my moans turn to squeals. I know he is worried now, despite the safe word that we previously arranged. We are still new to this and I know he is still occasionally worried that he is hurting me badly. I feel a bit of disappointment in the decrease of intensity. Although I don't want to ruin the mood, I figure I may have to reassure him that I'm ok, and he can pick up the spanking pace again.

Suddenly, he traps my wiggling legs between his so that I am now over only one knee, my head hanging towards the floor. I realize that he's getting over the fear of hurting me. He trusts me to tell him to stop if it gets to be too much for me. He knows I'm enjoying this, and so he quickens his spanks again.

The spanks rain down on my bottom, until every

inch is hot and, I am sure, thoroughly reddened. When I finally am about to call out "Stop!", not because I am hurting too much, but because I can't wait another minute for him to be inside me, he stops himself. His big hand massages my glowing cheeks.

"So hot back here," he says, and he sounds proud of the job he has done.

His fingers reach around to dip inside of me and he chuckles at how wet I am.

"Let's cool you down a bit, hot stuff."

And then I feel the bite of something extremely cold and I jump a bit at first, startled. When I glance back at him, he is holding a rapidly melting ice cube against my stinging backside, swirling the chunk of ice around to cover every inch of both cheeks. The cold numbs my bottom a bit and takes away some of the warmth he has brought on. Where did he get this idea? I wonder. Maybe he has been reading the same Internet stories I have....

While I am in a dreamy, horny haze, he finishes the ice procedure, and then whispers to me, "Only ten more to go baby -- For not following my instructions to get ready for your spanking."

The first of these last ten lands on my still damp bottom, giving it an extra special sting. I can't contain the little shout that erupts from me.

Four more strokes rain down quickly, alternating each cheek of my bottom. I wiggle my crotch against his erection, and grin at his moaning response.

"Just for that, these last five will be the hardest of all," he promises me. And, as promised, each spank seems to sting more than the last until he is finished with my last ten.

Almost instantly, he helps me up so that I am sitting - tenderly-on his lap facing him. His strong spanker's hands lace together beneath me to give my bottom a cushiony seat. His lips nuzzle my neck, my ear, and travel to my breasts, which are

still encased in my bra.

"You were... hot earlier," he whispers between kisses and nips. "You must... be on firenow."

I have no response except
"Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmm...."

He laughs again and I feel the wonderful rumble against my collarbone.

"Well then..." His hands are at the back of my bra, unfastening it. "Let's get you out of this thing."

Homecoming

I hear the sound of the truck's engine as it pulls into the parking lot and throw open the door to see Shay backing into his usual parking space. I give out a little squeal of excitement and run down the steps to jump into his arms as he steps out of the truck.

He makes an exaggerated sound as he catches me, and chuckles at my exuberance. After a week apart, it feels so wonderful to have his strong, warm arms around me again. He swings me around until I am giggling and slightly dizzy, then sets me back on my feet with a playful swat to the seat of my black leggings.

"Hi!" I grin up at him. It's crazy how I can feel so shy around him after he returns from a business trip, like we are starting over from scratch again.

"Hi yourself," he grins back. He pulls me back into his arms and proceeds to rid me of my shyness with a long, sexy kiss in plain view of all of our neighbors. I lose myself in the teasing touch of his tongue and the cherished feeling I get when he cradles my face between his callused hands.

When we pull apart, he levels this odd look at me and asks, "Were you a good girl while I was away?"

Strange question, considering we spoke on the phone each day of his absence -- and I answered that question each and every day.

"You know I have been," I answer, feeling like I just stepped into a trap, but not really sure why.

Shay lifts one toasty brown eyebrow questioningly and I find myself sorting through the past week trying to think of what he could be referring to. He's joking around, I tell myself. He's just role playing so he can have an excuse to take me over his knee for a great spanking before some homecoming sex. But there's something about the

seriousness of his expression that has my stomach suddenly in knots.

"Well, Jess," he says softly, with this annoying disappointed look on his face. "Let's go on inside." He picks up his bags, one in each hand, and gestures with a tilt of his head for me to lead the way. I feel very self conscious as I start up the sidewalk.

Inside our little townhouse, Shay sets his bags down by the stairs and greets our two cats who immediately appear to rub against Daddy's ankles, meowing pitifully of their week without him here to play with them.

"Can I make you a sandwich, honey?" I ask, wincing inwardly at how unsure my voice sounds.

"No thanks, I stopped an hour or so ago for lunch." He rises from petting the cats and motions to the couch. "Have a seat, Jessie."

Oh, boy. I take a seat on the couch and try to convince myself again that he's only playing. But the usual playful twinkle is absent from his blue eyes.

"Shay, what's your problem?" I blurt out.

His eyes widen for a moment, then he shakes his head. "I guess I shouldn't be surprised, considering you obviously haven't listened to me about this before....."

"About WHAT?"

Now those baby blues darken and narrow. He waits an eternity, then says, "Patrick called me this morning before I left the hotel."

"So...?"

"And he told me that he stopped by yesterday to check in with you."

"Yes, he did." I'm getting really confused here. Patrick is Shay's best friend, and he's like a brother to me. Before Shay and I were financially able to move in with each other alone, Patrick had shared an apartment with us. What could be the problem with him stopping in yesterday?

"He also told me how concerned he was because the door was unlocked and when he rang the bell you just called for him to come in, without even checking to see who it was first."

Oh, that. OH! THAT.....

"It was two in the afternoon, Shay," I tell him. "Broad daylight. Jenny and Brian and Emma <our neighbors and their daughter> were outside playing....."

"I don't care if it was nine in the morning with the entire police department outside. We've been over this before, Jessica Lynn. When you're home alone, the doors are locked, as soon as you get inside the house."

I manage not to roll my eyes, though the inclination to do so is strong. Sometimes Shay treats me like a two year old.

"Obviously I've been wasting my breath all this time trying to get you to realize the importance of this," Shay says. "So I think it's time I made a more lasting impression."

"Shay, look, I'm sorry. It just slips my mind sometimes and I forget to lock the door. Nothing bad happened and I'm fine. You just got home. Can't we enjoy being back together for the moment?"

My shakes his head. "No. I want to take care of this first. Maybe you'll be more likely to remember your safety after today."

At this point, I'm staring at him. He sounds like he's going to punish me -- which he has never done.

"I want you to go upstairs and get ready for a spanking. Take the wooden spoon with you...."

"You promised you wouldn't ever use that!" I whine. That damn spoon hurts! He playfully swatted me once with it over jeans and I was surprised by how much it hurt through the denim protection. I'd told him it hurt and he'd promised not to use it.

"I've decided that it will be good for your punishment spankings," he says as if the news that I will be punished at all is nothing important. "Obviously you're not going to learn anything from just my hand -- in fact, that would be a reward, not a punishment, since you enjoy it. Now, I want you to get the spoon, go upstairs and get ready. I'll be up directly and we'll get this over with."

Fuming because he's taken back his promise, I stomp off to the kitchen, grab the spoon from the drawer and bang it shut. I push back past Shay and thump my way up the stairs, making sure to slam the bedroom door behind me.

I can't believe that this is happening. I throw the hated spoon on the bed, only to stand there staring at it. It's a big spoon, the one I bought to use when I make my big batches of cookies at Christmas. I remember how much it burned through my jeans with only one swat and I can't even imagine how much it will hurt to get a whole spanking with it.

My distraction with the spoon keeps me occupied until Shay appears at the door to our room. He shoots me a disappointed glance.

"You're not ready yet, Jess," he says, stating the obvious.

"Because you are not going to spank me with that THING!" I dare to say. One of his eyebrows raises skeptically. I'm embarrassed by the way the strength leaves my voice and next I hear myself pleading. "Please, Shay, you can't. You promised me..."

"It's for your own good, Jessica Lynn. I want you to remember to be safe the next time you're home alone, and I think this will help you to do that." He places one long forefinger to my lips as I start a new protest and he shakes his head. "Don't argue with me anymore." He takes me by the hand and pulls me to one empty corner of the room. Next he shucks my leggings and panties down to

my ankles. He turns away from me then, but returns with the spoon, which he places in my hands. "Since you didn't listen to me about getting ready for your spanking, I think some corner time would be good for you," he says. "I'll be back in fifteen minutes."

I hear the bedroom door shut quietly behind him. Apparently today is to be a day of firsts-- my first corner time, my first punishment spanking with the spoon. Although I'm not exactly a willing participant in this spanking, I also don't even think to get out of it by reminding Shay that punishment spankings have never been discussed between us and I have never agreed to accept them. There is a part of me that gives him control, even in this situation, and even though I'm not looking forward to my punishment it doesn't even enter my mind to oppose his decision.

I wish I could be anywhere but in that blank corner, all too aware of the large, unforgiving spoon in my hands and the horrible reality that it will soon be whacking away at my bare bottom. I bite my lip to keep from crying.

The fifteen minutes that I have to stare into the corner seem endless. I'm suddenly angry with myself for being here, and being in trouble today when Shay and I were supposed to be making love in celebration of his homecoming. Guilt gnaws at my heart as I think about how he will be giving me my first punishment spanking instead. The worst part of it is that I know I deserve it -- he has warned me over and over about keeping the door locked when I'm home alone, and yet I continue to disregard my safety.

Finally, I hear him behind me. In a moment he is at my side and he uses one hand under my chin to turn my face to look at him. He looks so sad and disappointed that all I want to do is look away again, but he maintains our eye contact.

"Why are you here in the corner waiting for a

spanking with the spoon, Jessica Lynn?" he asks quietly.

I swallow, take a deep breath, and squeak out, "Because I didn't keep the door locked while I was alone in the house and you were away."

Shay nods. "When Patrick stopped by yesterday, it wasn't the only day I was gone that the door was unlocked, was it?"

I don't even allow myself to consider lying to him. "No."

He nods again, looking even sadder. "Did you lock the door after Patrick left?"

I blush, remembering the ear blistering, brotherly lecture Patrick had given me about the door. "Yes. He stood on the outside and waited for me to lock it before he would leave."

Shay smiles at this. "After you are I are finished, I want you to call Patrick and thank him for being such a good friend to you. He was very concerned when he called me this morning. You should thank him for calling me and I want you to tell him we've dealt with your behavior so it won't happen again." I blush. Shay chuckles. "Don't be embarrassed, sweetheart. When Patrick called me this morning, I was so angry at his news I accidentally slipped and said you wouldn't be able to sit for a week after I got home. He knows about your spanking; in fact, he told me he was close to taking you over his own knee yesterday. We can trust him not to tell anyone else."

I nod, though still embarrassed that Patrick knows I get spanked by my . Shay is right, though - we can trust Patrick with anything.

Shay motions for me to step out of the pants and panties that are bunched around my ankles, then he takes my hand and leads me over to the bed. He sits down and I stand at his side, mourning the loss of the intimate erotic spanking I had been waiting for upon his return. He takes the spoon from my other hand and sets it on the bed right

where I will see it when I am over his lap. He gives my hand a warm kiss.

"I love you, Jessica Lynn," he says. "I am doing this for your own good. I want you to learn this lesson today so you will remember your safety in the future. I don't know what I would do if anything happened to you. It's very important for you to take care of yourself. Do you understand?"

I nod, unable to look up from the floor, tears choking my throat.

"That's my girl." He runs one hand over the back of my head and I close my eyes, savoring this last gentle touch before my spanking begins. "Okay, over my knee please, Jessie."

I lower myself over his lap as I have countless other times, feeling as if it's the first time ever. Shay arranges me to his liking, my bottom up high. I start to lay my head on the bed only to see the wooden spoon where it sits awaiting its turn at my backside. I squeeze my eyes shut only to see it in my mind.

Shay's hand is cupping my bottom as he asks again, "Why are you here, Jessica Lynn? Why am I about to punish you?"

My voice sounds like it belongs to another person -- someone very small and far away. "Because I didn't keep the front door locked when I was home alone this week."

"That's right. Why is that a problem?"

"Because it's unsafe. Anyone could just come in and...." My voice trails off and we are both silent, thinking of the possibilities. Then, with a sudden stinging WHAP!, Shay's hand falls onto my bare behind for my first spank.

The second is fast to follow, as is the third, fourth, and so on. "I want you to think about all the things that could happen to you if a criminal did get into this house," Shay orders harshly as he spans away. "Leaving the door unlocked is practically inviting burglary, rape, murder...." SPANK!

SPANK! SPANK!!!

The hand spanking, though fast and stingy, isn't that bad and if it weren't for the wooden spoon sitting next to me and the images his words are calling to mind, I might actually have enjoyed this warm up.

The rapid pace quickly builds the warmth into my backside and the spansks begin to get me squealing and wiggling. Shay clamps one iron hard arm around my waist and successfully ends my struggling movements. His hand reins down on my fiery bottom and the only sounds in the room are the clapping of skin on skin accented by my cries. I am on the verge of tears when he finally pauses.

I can feel him reaching over my head for the wooden spoon. I keep my eyes pressed closed, wishing I could run away. But his arm is still imprisoning me to his lap.

"Tell me again, Jessica Lynn, why you are going to be spanked with the wooden spoon?" he asked, tapping the hated object softly on my reddened cheeks.

"Because I left the door unlocked while you were away!" I cry.

"That's right." I hear him sigh. "I don't like doing this, sweetheart. I'd much rather give you the playful spanking you want then make love to you for the rest of the day. But I don't want to worry about this happening again, so I am going to punish you. It's going to hurt you and I hate that. But hopefully next time you'll remember to be safe."

There's a pause of silence after his words, then the loud SPLAT!! of the spoon making first contact with my backside. I hear the spank before I feel the sting of the wood, then the deeper burn that makes me yell out.

Shay ignores my protest and gives me a matching smack with the spoon on the other cheek. I can feel the twin ovals like brands, standing out on my bottom. That is only for a

moment however, because my fiancé sets the same rapid pace he assumed for my hand spanking and the individual smacks of the spoon are quickly overlaid with multiple ones.

My control snaps and I find myself sobbing over his lap, kicking and wiggling and trying to avoid the spansks. Shay doesn't say a word, just pins me tighter with his arm and fires away with frightening accuracy on my behind.

I hear myself begging him to stop, promising everything under the sun if he will only stop. I don't know how much more I can take. One thing is for sure, though -- I won't ever forget to lock that damn door again!

Finally -- finally -- Shay stops the spanking and sets the spoon aside. He lets me sob a while over his lap and he strokes my hair away from my face and rubs my back in silence.

After I have calmed a bit, he helps me off his lap and takes my hand. He leads me to the full length mirror on the back of our closet door, turns my glowing red behind to it and invites me to look. I gasp as I look over my shoulder at the evidence of my punishment.

"This is what will happen from now on when you do something dangerous or very wrong," Shay informs me quietly. "If you do that same thing again after being punished with the spoon, I will whip you with my belt." He closes his eyes at my shocked gasp. "I don't want to have to do that, Jessie, but I will when you need it. You are too important to me and I won't ignore it when you need help remembering to do the right things."

With that said, he leads me back to the same corner as before and instructs me to stay there. I hear him close the door behind him when he leaves the room.

I am in a state of shame, pain, and shock. It was bad enough that he clearly meant to spank me with the wooden spoon again if he thought it

necessary, but just the idea of my normally easy-going spanking me with his belt made me dizzy. I can't imagine it, even. But as I stand there in that corner trying to compose myself and waiting for my toasted backside to cool, I promise myself never to earn such a fate.

Shay returns a few minutes later with the portable telephone. He hands it to me without a word, then leaves me alone for my call.

Patrick's voice sounds concerned when I call and I am quick to reassure him that I'm okay. I thank him for caring enough about me to make sure I was safe while Shay was away. I thank him for calling Shay. He starts to apologize for telling on me, but I interrupt to tell him it was the right thing to do. I add in a rush that I have been punished and that it will never happen again. We hang up with a mended relationship and I find myself wishing he were here so I could hug him.

Shay comes back in the room a bit later and helps me on with a long T-shirt. Even though it's the middle of the afternoon, I don't protest when he settles me in bed on my belly. He sits with me a while, caressing my back, legs and feet, and telling me about his trip. I fall asleep to the warm sound of his voice and the reassuring touch of his love.

Taking Charge

I am on the Internet when Shay comes home from work. I hear him come in downstairs and greet our two cats, then he comes upstairs and into the computer room.

"Hey, Jessie," he says, kissing my cheek and looking over my shoulder.

"Find anything good?"

A bit shyly, I show him the story I had just posted and he takes a seat next to me on the little foot stool (one of these days we need to get a second desk chair for times like this) and reads it while I watch his face. He is grinning when he finishes.

"I like that," he says. Uh oh -- his voice has changed from when he walked in. I know what he's thinking.

Nervously, I power the computer down and shut everything off. I turn the chair and am about to get up when Shay grabs the sides of the chair and pulls it towards him, the wheels beneath it rolling easily on the carpet. Since he is still sitting on the little foot stool, I am on a higher level than he is and once he has me where he wants me, my legs are straddling his thighs. He pulls me into a hug. I can feel his arousal through his jeans.

Hmmm. It's nice. He's wearing the after shave I gave him for Christmas and (for once) his cheeks are shaved and smooth. His hands wander up and down my back in soothing motions and I close my eyes for a brief moment.

Then I start to sit back and push him away. I don't know what makes me do it, but it's not the first time. Most of the time when Shay makes the first move, I pull away. He lets me, and although I feel guilty knowing he is aroused, we walk away to do other things than have sex. It's a problem I can't seem to solve; I've tried following his lead, but

every time my heart isn't in it and the result is less than satisfactory for both of us.

I'm not a control freak, especially in our relationship. But something in my head makes me draw back from sex unless I am the one to make the first move. In my own defense, Shay is very easily aroused. That's not conceit talking, it's just the truth -- he's a hot blooded American male at his sexual prime.

When I pull back, I see the disappointment in my lover's eyes. He pulls me back to him. Our position makes it easy for him to pull me over his shoulder just slightly, and after he does, he gives my skirted bottom a spank. It feels good, especially in this strange position. He spansks my other cheek. Then gives it good to both sides again.

"Honey..." I say. It's like I can't help myself. I like what he's doing, but... I don't know. "Honey, I have to start dinner. Not right now, okay?"

"Dinner can wait a little bit, don't you think?" he whispers in my ear, giving me another spank. "That story you wrote really made me hot..."

I pull away from him sharply. "Hon, not right now. Later, okay? I'm just not in the mood." And before he has a chance to react, I wheel back the chair, rise and leave the room.

Downstairs, I start making preparations for dinner, wondering at my reactions the entire time. Why am I like this? Why can't I just let him take charge once in a while? Why would anyone push a handsome guy like that away?

I have just put the casserole into the oven and started on salads when Shay joins me in the kitchen. He is silent and I can tell that he's pissed. He leans against the counter watching me while our one cat rubs himself repeatedly against his legs. When I sneak a peek at him out of the corner of my eye, his arms are crossed over his chest.

I start making nervous chit chat about our going out this weekend to pick out paint for redecorating

the living room. Shay never says a word, just watches me. I turn my attention to the cat, teasing him and reaching down to stroke the belly he offers when he flops over on his back.

"You know," Shay finally says, "We're not finished, Jessica Lynn. I'm getting damn tired of you pushing me away all the time. We can't ever have sex anymore unless you're the one who starts things."

"Well, it's not my fault you want it twenty-four hours a day."

His blue eyes darken. "I don't know what the problem is anyway," I continue. The words are falling out of my mouth without any thought. I'm defensive but I really don't have any defense to offer for myself, because he's right. And I've been feeling guilty about it for a while now. I just don't know what to do to change things. "It is my body Shay. If I don't want you to touch it, you should respect that."

Now his hands are on his hips. "You know what I think, little girl?" he asks me. Oh boy, I'm really in for it now.

"I think you need someone to take you in hand before this gets any worse."

That said, he grabs a handful of my skirt and propels me into the living room. Before I know it, he has flopped down onto the sofa and upended me over his lap. It's summertime, and the windows are open. People are walking dogs and playing Frisbee and catch outside our first story, front room living room.

And my fiancé flips up my skirt and tugs down my panties like we're the only two people in the world.

"Shay! People are going to hear! Shay, don't..."

My answer is a loud, hard spank that makes me gasp. Did he pick up the paddle somewhere on the way into the living room without my seeing? I

glance over my shoulder and see his hand descending down to my backside from shoulder level.

No, it's just his damn hand. Oouuch!

"I don't care who sees or hears," Shay says. His voice is even and quiet but I hear him loud and clear over the rhythmic clapping of the spanking.

"You've been asking for this for a long time, Jesse. I won't let you get away with your teasing shit anymore."

Well, that was unfair. I don't tease him -- or if that's the end result, I certainly don't do it on purpose. But I didn't tell him that now.

The spanking is the hardest, fastest one he has ever given me. I am sure that everyone in our neighborhood is looking in our windows or listening in the bushes. The smacks sound like firecrackers going off and I can't keep my cries and squeals quiet. I am kicking and struggling and trying to dodge his relentless hand, but he quickly restrains me by capturing my legs between his own. When I try to block his spansks with my hands, he grabs both and pins them to my back with one hand, while he keeps firing away with the other.

"Let me go! Damn it! I hate you! You have no right...."

He gives me an especially hard slap for the 'I hate you' comment. "I will spank you, brat, when and where and how I want to. Do you hear me?"

Well, I am finally crying. First time I ever cried from a spanking he gave me. "I'm sorry!" I wail. "I don't know why I pull away! I don't even really want to!"

Finally he stops spanking. His hand massages my bottom. As the heat becomes more obvious now that the stinging slaps have stopped, I realize how wet I am. Amazing.

Shay turns me over and he has a big grin when he touches me there. "That's what I thought," he says with every bit of cockiness he has. He levels a

hard look at me. "You know, I ought to give you a taste of your own medicine and walk away from you right now."

I nod. I can't even look at him.

"But, I can't do that. Besides it's partly my fault for letting you get away with it for so long."

He pulls me up into his arms and climbs the stairs. I'm glad to finally be away from prying eyes.

As he removes his shirt and jeans, he warns me, "You just remember the next time that I'm not going to put up with your withdrawal anymore. The next time, you'll get paddled good and hard again before I reward you."

I nod, looking properly chastised. In my head, I am already imagining next time.

Baby Fat

Scott drew in a contented sigh as he snuggled Amy closer. One hand snaked down to touch her still warm bottom cheeks.

"Now, aren't you glad I didn't forget my promise?" he scolded gently. Amy nodded in silence and he chuckled at the pretty blush that spread over her face. "I sure did miss spanking you, baby," he admitted, patting her bottom.

It had been over nine months since Scott had been able to warm his wife's tail. Her pregnancy had been a cherished event one that had taken them a long time, and a lot of fun practice, to achieve; her last few months had been difficult, spent mostly in bed and on very limited activity. He hadn't given her so much as a swat in all that time, though he'd certainly itched to several times. He'd even considered keeping a list of her misbehavior so that after the baby was born he could catch her up in her punishments. But he hadn't really wanted to welcome her home after a difficult pregnancy and a long, painful labor with the promise of a bunch of overdue paddlings.

The birthday spankings, however, were a completely different story. Every year since they'd started dating, Amy got two birthday spankings - her own, plus Scott's. And she enjoyed them. Scott's birthday spankings were very different from his punishment spankings and Amy was always hot and wet by the end of them. He promised her that the birthday spankings she'd missed during the pregnancy would not be forgotten. He'd just "remembered" them tonight, on the anniversary of her third week home from the hospital. They'd capped the spankings off with their first session of lovemaking since well before the baby was born. Scott was surprised that the little girl in the crib down the hall had slept through the entire,

somewhat noisy, event.

Amy was drawing lazy circles with her fingertip around one of Scott's bare nipples. She looked up at him and pouted. "Why can't you spank me that way, all the time?"

He grinned. "'Cause spankings are supposed to hurt, Amy Louise. If I spanked you like that the times you're naughty, I'd only be rewarding you." He couldn't hold back a chuckle at the continued frown on his wife's pretty face. "But if you liked that so much, we can have lots of them, too."

She shrugged, playing ambivalent, and rolled away from him onto her side. The sheet slipped past her hip, exposing her still pink bottom for his hand. The temptation was simply too great, especially after going so long without being able to swat her - SMACK!

"You're asking for it, you know," he growled as he got to his feet. He gave her a loud kiss on the forehead. "I'll go check on Bethany. Would you like anything? Bowl of ice cream, maybe?"

Her eyes lit up for a moment at his suggestion; during her pregnancy she'd had a bowl of ice cream nearly every night. Then suddenly, she frowned and shook her head no.

"If I want to lose all this baby fat, I guess I better lay off the ice cream for a while," she said sadly.

Scott gave his wife an incredulous look. His eyes ran the length of her small body, which was only slightly more curvaceous now than before her pregnancy.

"You, my love, do not need to lose any weight."

They'd had bits and pieces of this conversation before in the weeks since the baby had been born. Amy had always been a tiny little thing, and she was having trouble accepting the new softness around her belly and the swell of her hips. She was far from fat, in complete truth; her husband wasn't just saying that. But to her critical eye, she looked

heavy. Scott knew she'd been being extra careful about what she ate, and though he thought she was going overboard, he was also glad to see that she was giving up the junk food that had always been the major staple of her daily food intake. That didn't mean he thought a bowl of ice cream from time to time was out of the question, though.

Amy ducked her head away from Scott's scrutinizing gaze. He sighed, not wanting to start an argument with her now, and knowing if he pressed the issue, she would get defensive and angry. "Are you sure you don't want anything?" he asked.

She nodded, still not looking up at him. In fact, she pulled the sheet up at her chin and snuggled down into the mattress. Scott bent over to kiss her forehead again and swept back the curtain of silvery blond hair that had fallen over her face. He tipped her chin up and looked into her eyes. He wouldn't press the issue too much, but he couldn't leave her laying there like that without saying this. "You are beautiful. Don't ever doubt that. Okay?"

Even in the dim lighting he could see the rosy blush that bloomed again in her face. "Okay, Scottie." she agreed softly. He tweaked her nose and was rewarded with a smile before he turned to go out to check on his daughter and get his snack. Maybe she'd share his bowl of ice cream if he was persuasive enough....

A week later, Scott came home early from work, planning to surprise Amy with another of the erotic spankings she liked and then a nice lazy lovemaking session. He knew it was about time for little Bethany's nap, so they should have some time to themselves.

He found his wife in the nursery, rocking Bethany in the old rocking chair that had belonged to his grandmother. She hadn't heard him come

home or mount the stairs, and he took advantage of that for a few minutes by standing silently in the doorway and watching her.

Her long blond hair was pulled back into a haphazard ponytail and she wore an old sweat suit in pale blue. Her feet were bare, her pink toes painted a bright red. She cradled their child in her arms, humming softly and looking down at her. Scott suspected that Bethany was already asleep, and maybe had been for a little while; Amy was simply still rocking her because she enjoyed holding her.

A lump formed in his throat as he stood watching them. The tense months during her pregnancy replayed in his mind: The frustration and boredom and stress Amy had battled when she'd been put on bed rest, and the worry they had shared over ensuring her safety as well as that of their unborn child. It had been hard on them both, but more so for Amy, of course. The love Scott felt for her filled his heart and his respect for her had grown greatly.

As he struggled to regain control of his emotions, Amy stood up from the chair and carried Bethany to her crib. She laid the baby gently in her bed and covered her with the tiny baby blanket. Scott's eyes wandered over his wife's womanly figure as his manhood swelled. His little wife had always been very slim, skinny really. But since the pregnancy, she had a little more meat on her bones and it was all in the right places. He no longer felt her ribs when he touched her waist, and her hips were more curvy and feminine. Scott thought she was crazy to think she needed to lose any of the weight that had softened her previously angular lines.

Amy had paused next to the crib, looking down one last time at their child. Then, suddenly, she swayed slightly on her feet, and braced herself on the neighboring nightstand. Scott's eyebrows

furrowed and he started into the room, asking her if she was all right.

Amy's head turned at his voice, but before she could answer, her eyes fluttered closed and her knees buckled. Scott flew to her side just in time to catch her by the shoulders as she fainted right in front of him.

Scott made quick, quiet work of carrying Amy from the nursery to their bedroom. He laid her carefully on their bed and went into the master bath to retrieve a bottle of ammonia and a glass of water.

He hoped the strong scent of the ammonia would bring Amy around, but it proved unnecessary as she was just coming awake when he came back into the room.

"Scott?" She looked up at him, confused. "What're you doing home? What happened?"

He handed her the water and sat beside her on the bed. "I came home early. You just fainted, Amy. Do you feel okay, baby?"

"I fainted?" She was obviously surprised. "I've never fainted before."

Scott nodded, holding her hand. "Calm down, sugar. Do you feel okay? Do you want to see the doctor?"

Still looking stunned, she slowly shook her head. "No, I don't think so. I feel fine, Scott...." She was interrupted by her stomach announcing a very long, loud growl of hunger. Scott's eyes glanced down at her stomach, then back up to her eyes. There was no mistaking the guilty look on her pale face. His gaze narrowed.

"What have you eaten today, Amy Louise?"

"Um," Her eyes flitted away from his and she took several swallows of water, delaying her answer. Scott's face hardened.

"Have you had anything to eat?" he demanded.

"I wasn't hungry..." Amy answered meekly, still not looking at her husband.

He sighed, studying her bent head and wondering what he was going to do with her. Well, actually he knew what to do with her, but he had hoped he wouldn't have to discipline her so soon after her return home. "Well, Amy, you sound like you're hungry now. And I'd say you need to eat something - otherwise, you're likely to pass out on me again." She was still not looking at him and his anger grew. "Look at me when I talk to you, please."

When she looked up at him, her eyes were wet. Her lower lip trembled and Scott felt a tug at his heart. He forced his voice to be steady and calm.

"When was the last time you ate, young lady?"

Her eyes closed tightly for a moment and she drew in a deep breath as if to bolster her courage. Her voice was hardly audible when she answered, "Saturday morning."

"That was two days ago!" Scott yelled. "God, Amy, are you trying to make yourself sick?"

She shook her head miserably, not able to look at him. Scott sighed and tried to reign in his temper. After a few moments he was able to speak in a normal voice again. "I'll go downstairs and fix you something to eat and afterwards you and I are going to have a long talk about taking care of yourself." His implication was clear to Amy and she swallowed hard. "Stay put, little girl."

Scott used the time downstairs while fixing Amy's meal to calm down a bit. He knew better than to punish his wife when he was angry. He took deep breaths, counted to 200, and reminded himself that both she and the baby were all right.

When he rejoined her, he placed a full tray over her lap; there was a bowl of tomato soup, a grilled cheese sandwich, a small cup of yogurt and a glass of juice. She made a face as she looked down at all that food.

"Eat up, Amy," he told her.

"Scott, I don't think I can eat all this...."

"Oh, yes, you can. You'd better."

With a sigh, Amy started in on her meal. She tried to get away with only eating the soup, but her husband was resolute. He told her she would be confined to their bed until she'd eaten every last bite. And, if need be, he'd give her twenty licks with his belt every ten minutes until she resumed eating.

Finally, the tray hosted only empty dishes. Amy's coloring had returned and Scott thought she looked better than she had in days. He took the tray and set it outside their door for later, then returned to her and took hold of both her hands.

"Look at me, sweetheart." She obeyed reluctantly. "How long have you been doing this?"

Tears ran down her cheeks then and she just shook her head at him. He held her while she cried, rocking her in his arms.

"You know, Ame, I just don't understand why you're not eating. Honey, you are not fat. Far from it. You always were skinny before the baby and you've just filled in a little now. I think you're beautiful."

"You'd say that no matter what I weighed!!" she accused.

Scott chuckled at her outrage and kissed her forehead. He cupped her face in his hands and used his thumbs to wipe at her tears. "Probably. But even so, you do not need to lose any weight. If you're worried about gaining more, then you need to talk to Dr. Waters and just be conscious of eating right. But I will not allow you to starve yourself just so you can be a skinny little waif again!" He shook her gently by the shoulders. "Do you hear me, young lady? I won't allow you to do that!"

He let her sit and cry for a few moments, then look her chin in one hand. He held her face still even when she tried to pull away. "Amy, imagine what would have happened today if you passed out and fell while you were holding the baby. Or what if

it happened while you were driving or walking down the stairs?" He shook his head angrily, imagining those scenarios himself. "God, Amy, after everything you went through with the pregnancy, you can't risk your health like this now, all over a couple extra pounds!"

She sniffled and wiped at her red eyes. "I'm sorry, Scott. You're right. I just... oh, I don't know, I just..." She couldn't finish her sentence, just shook her head, and drew in a shaky breath.

"I'm glad you agree with me now. But I want to be sure you remember what happened, and what could have happened, just as easily. Stand up, Amy."

She closed her eyes briefly, knowing what he meant by helping her remember. She stood slowly before him and waited.

"Do you still feel okay?" he asked looking her up and down with a careful eye. "Do you feel shaky or weak, sick?"

She shook her head no and admitted softly, "I feel better since I ate."

"Good, then I won't have to postpone this." Scott squeezed her hands. "Go fetch the big paddle please, Amy."

She hesitated a moment, looking pleadingly at him. He met her gaze squarely and waited.

"Scott..." she started.

He held up one hand to stop her. "I know what you're going to say. That you're sorry and it won't happen again. But you are too important to me and Bethany for me to just take your word on that and go on like nothing's happened today. I'm going to give you a good paddling to help you remember to take better care of yourself in the future. And I'm going to set up an appointment with Dr. Waters so he can discuss proper nutrition with you, and so he can assure you that your current weight is acceptable for a woman of your height and proportions. Because I don't ever want to have this

happen again. Understand me?"

Amy nodded glumly.

"Good. Now go and get your paddle."

When Amy came back from the closet with the paddle, Scott closed the closet door after her. He took the paddle and set it aside on the bed. She looked at him questioningly when he turned her back to him so that she faced the full length mirror on the closet door.

"I want you to look in the mirror, Amy, while I undress you. Don't look away. Understand?"

She nodded.

"Good girl." Scott undressed his wife slowly, being sure that she watched his movements. When she stood naked before him, he said, "Now, tell me, what do you see?"

She shrugged.

"Come on, Ame. What do you see?"

"I don't know what you want me to say, Scott," she sighed, looking warily at her image in the mirror.

"I'll tell you what I see, then." Scott ran his hands over her arms, across her belly and brushed her nipples. "I see a beautiful, sexy woman. My woman. These hips..." He caressed her soft hips and ran his hands lovingly over her stomach. "This belly, they carried my child. They sheltered her and she grew in them. And these breasts..." He lightly brushed her breasts, knowing how sensitive she was from nursing. "They nourish my child. These thighs..." He ran his hands slowly up and down each of her legs. "They wrap around me when we make love and hold me snugly inside her. This face..." He caressed her cheek and gave her a little smile in the mirror. "This face has greeted me every morning for six years now, and it still makes my heart beat faster each time I look at it."

Scott pulled Amy into his arms from behind and rested his chin against her head. In the mirror he met her eyes and held her gaze. "This person is my

wife. She's smart and funny and sexy as hell. She went through a lot to bring our child into the world and she doesn't even begin to have a clue how special she is or how much she is loved. It's really important that she take care of herself because I need her. Our baby needs her." He kissed her cheek and gave her a squeeze. "Now, tell me, baby, what do you see?"

She blushed under his unwavering gaze in the mirror, and shook her head. He was proud of her, though, because she hadn't looked away, yet.

"Still don't know?" he chided. "I'll bet you see these here..." He traced the tiny stretch marks on her hips. "And this little bitty belly..." He tickled the small pouch she still sported from the baby. "And I'll bet that's all your critical eye sees. Am I right?"

Amy's eyes were bright with tears. She nodded jerkily, looking away now and down at the carpet.

"No, no, sweetheart, don't look away." Scott used one hand to raise her chin again. "You're missing a lot in that mirror. These marks and your little belly, they're just evidence of our love. Of your love for the baby you carried. Of what we created together and what you took such careful measures to bring into the world, safe and sound. That's all they are. Our love is beautiful, don't you think?" Amy nodded, dashing tears away with one hand. "That's right, it is... So, you see, honey, there is nothing ugly about these marks, or this little belly. They are just as pretty as the rest of you."

Scott turned his wife around and held her a while. When her tears had subsided he gave her a slow, lingering kiss.

"Oh, Scottie, I'm so sorry..."

"Shh. It's okay. I love you."

"I love you, too."

Scott retrieved the paddle from where he had set it aside on the bed. "Are you ready?" he

whispered.

Amy nodded.

"That's my girl. Just hold on around my neck here. I'm going to spank you here so I can show you your bottom in the mirror when we're through."

Amy looped her hands around her husband's neck and rested her face on his shoulder. Scott held her up against the full length of him with one arm around her waist. He began paddling her bottom, swinging the long wooden paddle hard and fast with his other arm. The room was filled with Amy's gasps and squeals and the pops of the hard wood across her naked cheeks.

"You *SMACK will *SWAT take *SPANK care *SMACK of yourself, Amy Louise, *SWAT SWAT if I have to spank you *WAP every day *WAP to remind you. *SMACK SMACK SMACK I love you *WAP and Bethany and I need you. *SPANK SPANK Do you understand? *SMACK SMACK SMACK!"

"Yes! Oww! Oww! Oh, God, Scott, it hurts!!"

"Good! *SMACK! It's supposed to hurt. *SPLAT! WAP!! I hope it hurts tomorrow *SPANK! and the next day *SPANK! and that you remember it *SPANK! long after that. *SMACK! SMACK! SMACK!! I wouldn't spank you *WAP! if I didn't love you. *WAP! So the next time you doubt yourself, *SMACK you remember that!*SMACK SMACK"

"Yes, sir! Owwwwwww! Oh, I will."

Scott clamped his arm tighter around his wife's waist, holding her in place for the rest of her spanking. She was really wiggling and jerking at his hold, trying to escape the reining swats as her bottom grew redder and hotter with each one. He was almost finished, but he intended to really drive home his point.

"You are beautiful. *WHACK! SMACK! And if you don't start taking better care of yourself *SMACK SMACK! SMACK!!! I will spank you every day *SPANK! until you are permanently sore and red. *SMACK! SMACK! Do you understand me?*SWAT

SWAT SWAT!"

"Yes!"

"Good! *SMACK! I hope *SMACK! this helps you *SWAT! remember that! SMACK! SMACK!"

Scott tossed the paddle onto the bed and held his sobbing, limp wife. He gently stroked her scarlet backside and soothed her with reassurances of his love and forgiveness.

When she'd finally calmed, he had her look one last time into the mirror. She looked over her shoulder at her very red, hot paddled bottom as he asked again, "Tell me what you see, Amy Louise."

She smiled a little at the image in the mirror, turned back to Scott and burrowed her head against his chest. Blushing nearly as red as her bottom, she whispered, "I see that you love me. And I think it's beautiful."

Asking For What You Want

"Just you wait till I get you home...."

Suzannah's husband's voice was a low growl right next to her ear. He led her in the slow dance, smiling at his co-workers as they passed on the dance floor as if nothing were happening.

The quiet threat made Suzannah's heart hammer and her stomach quiver with excitement. For some couples that kind of threat might have meant a night of steamy sex was ahead, but for Suzannah and Trey, it promised something more: Suzannah was in for a good spanking from her husband when they got home. Her bottom tingled in anticipation.

"You've been pushing it all night long, Suzy," Trey growled, for her hearing alone. When she dared draw back enough to look at his handsome face, his warm brown eyes were dancing - he was enjoying this. "And believe me, darlin', when I get you home, you're going to get it. In spades."

A delicious shiver shook Suzannah's shoulders as the slow song came to an end. Trey chuckled and gave her bottom a little preliminary pat that made her blush and glance around nervously to see if anyone had noticed. No one was paying any attention to them, of course, but Suzannah's face was still hot as Trey led her back to their table and held her chair for her. He scooted her under the table with a little more force than was necessary and gave the end of her french braid a tug before returning to his own seat across the table from her.

Up on the dance floor, the big wigs had claimed the crowd's attention. They were making the end of the year speech, the culmination of every company Christmas party. Employees and their spouses at every table around the room gave their attention up front. Every couple except Suzannah and Trey.

After fixing his wife with a long, heated glare

that got her fidgeting like a nervous little girl, Trey eventually turned his attention to the dance floor where it belonged. Suzannah followed his gaze, but didn't hear a word that was being said.

She was "going to get it" when they got home. Just the words echoing in her mind made her wet. "It" was what she'd been working for all night. From the moment she donned the slightly too short, too tight dress at home, through the meal service when she openly flirted with their teenage waiter, to the moment she'd slipped off one spiked heel and reached her foot under the table to land in her husband's crouch. She dared to join in a friendly political debate at the table, siding against Trey's immediate supervisor, and had offered the somewhat veiled insult of "my, Helen, that dress does wonders for your figure!" to the man's heavy set wife.

Suzannah wasn't a nasty person; in fact, throughout her life she'd always been a real goody-two-shoes. But when she was out to get her bottom warmed she became a different person entirely. It was kind of fun, really. She liked being naughty and bitchy - especially when the rest of the time she was always so nice and good. The list of ways to land herself over Trey's lap at the end of the evening was always growing.

Of course, Trey was always trying to get his wife to stop her embarrassing stunts. "If you want a spanking, darlin'," he would say, "then just ask me. I'm happy to give it to you."

Well, that would take all the fun out of it! Her naughty behavior, his scolding, and her half-hearted attempts to fight her punishment were all part of the thrill for Suzannah. Plus, even though Trey liked to paddle her backside as much as she liked to receive him, there was a part of Suzannah that just couldn't make herself ASK for it. It was easier for her to pull her bratty act to get what she wanted than to actually speak the words.

Trey made Suzannah sit through the whole boring speech before helping her from her chair and leading her through their good-byes. He helped her on with her coat, then led her out to the parking lot.

The butterflies in Suzannah's stomach were crashing together now. Trey settled her in the passenger seat, always the proper gentleman (he said it was the southern upbringing in him) then joined her in the car. He pulled out onto the highway and headed towards home without a single word.

Suzannah fiddled with the car stereo for a few static filled minutes, then finally gave up and snapped the thing off. She crossed her arms over her chest and looked up at the stars in the sky. Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight; I wish I may I wish I might, I wish this wish tonight:....

"Suzannah," Trey's soft voice interrupted Suzannah's wish and she jumped even though he had spoken so quietly. He chuckled and she felt a wave of warmth run through her blood at the sound. He cleared his throat and started again. "When we get home, Suzy, you are to go upstairs to our bedroom and get undressed. I'm going to take you over my knee and spank your bare bottom till it glows. THEN, I'm going to paddle it till you can't sit for a week." He spoke his intentions calmly, as if he were describing a work plan to an assistant at the office. Suzannah's sex twitched and ached with each new thing he said.

"And then, maybe, if you're a good girl that is, I'll lay you out on your hot little butt and I'll come inside you." He shifted his gaze from the road to his wife's face and grinned at the effects of his words. "IF you're good," he repeated for emphasis. "Because you've been quite a naughty girl tonight for sure."

They reached home in what seemed to Suzannah to be a record long time. Trey pulled into the garage and turned off the headlights, then the

car. Suzannah didn't wait for him to come around and open the door for her as he always did; she sprang out on her own and swept past him into the house.

"Someone's in a hurry," Trey commented dryly as he flicked the lights on in the kitchen. Suzannah ignored him and poured herself a glass of water, which she proceeded to drink very slowly. With one hand, she let her hair down from its braid, and ran her fingers through the dark waves.

Trey allowed her a few minutes. He loosened his tie, took his suit coat off, and rolled up the sleeves of his white dress shirt. Although Suzannah did her best to pretend disinterest, he knew she was watching him out of the corner of her eye.

"All right, Suzannah, that's enough water," Trey finally said. She completely ignored him and continued her stalling, taking the daintiest little sips he'd ever seen. "Get your butt upstairs."

She flashed him a challenging look that screamed "make me!" as easily as if she'd actually voiced the words. She took another sip of water.

"I'm not playing with you, darlin'," Trey drawled. He came over and took the glass from her hand. He put two fingers under her chin, pulling her face around to look at him. "Upstairs. Now."

She starred him down defiantly for a few minutes, then turned and stomped towards the stairs. Trey watched her sexy little body, his member growing tight and hard with anticipation.

Upstairs, Suzannah stomped into their bedroom, slammed the door behind her, turned the lock, and grinned.

A few minutes later, Trey's voice called through the wood, accompanied by a hard, impatient knock. "Suzannah! Open this door. You're in enough trouble as it is, lady."

"You said 'upstairs'!" she called back sweetly. "Well, I'm upstairs, Trey. You didn't mention anything else."

It was quiet on the other side of the door and Suzannah wondered at that for a second before murmuring "Shit!" and running for the door to the adjoining master bath. Before she reached it, however, Trey stalked through.

"Now," he said ominously. "Now, you're really in for it."

Suzannah crossed her arms over her chest and tried to not to look intimidated. The truth was that even though this was a game, and it aroused her greatly, her husband was still a big, strong guy -- and she was in trouble.

"Take your clothes off," Trey commanded.

She weighed her options: do what he said, and get spanked - or, try and run past him and prolong the fight....

"Suzannah, I said take your clothes off. Or I'll rip them off."

A tremor went through her and she ran for the door. She made it to the landing at the top of the stairs before Trey caught up and grabbed her around the waist. He hefted her up against his side and carried her, kicking and screaming, back to their room. He dumped her with a bounce on the bed, then sat next to her. Before she had a chance to run again, he grabbed a wrist and pulled her face down over his lap.

The tight skirt of her dress was yanked to her waist and Suzannah's slim legs encased in black hose were exposed. Her pert little behind, framed by her garter belt, was encased in lacy black panties. Despite the token struggle she was putting up even now, Trey noted that his little wife had worn her panties over her garter belt tonight, making it easier for him to pull the lacy underpants down, which he now did. The little vixen had planned this all along.

Suzannah's bottom was creamy white, a sharp contrast to the black garter belt and hose. Trey was rock hard beneath her, aroused as always by this

beautiful puzzle of a woman and all the games she liked to play.

After admiring her backside a few moments, Trey let his hand glide over her smooth skin, circling first one cheek, then the other. Suzannah jumped at first, obviously expecting a smack, not a caress. Trey traced the line of one leg, rolling her hose down and off her dainty foot, then came back up to repeat the process with the other. He returned to cup her bottom, massaging it with a tender touch and eliciting a groan from his wife. He continued the stroking a while, just long enough to give her a false sense of security, then:

SSSMAAACKK!

Suzannah's bottom jumped and danced under his hand. Trey quickly set a brisk pace, slapping her bottom with hard, loud claps. His wife kicked and struggled despite the little moans that betrayed her. He snuggled her body up close to his chest, locked one arm around her waist, and zeroed in on his target.

SMACK! SMACK! CRACK!

"You are NEVER to wear this slutty dress to a business function again, Suzannah," he ordered, punctuating his words with his hand on her behind. "And if you ever flirt like that in public again, I swear you'll get my belt." WAP! WAP! WAP! "You're not to put your foot in my groin during a company dinner -" SMACK - SMACK - CRACK! "-and I never want to hear you argue with my boss or insult his wife again -" SSMMACKK! "-EVER!"

Suzannah's bottom had turned from its natural creamy white to pink, and was now magenta. Her protests were now beginning to seem more real. She didn't use their safe word, though. She just wiggled and cried out more than before. Trey redoubled his efforts and bared down on her sweet little behind with great intensity. The swats sang out into the otherwise quiet room, like loud claps of thunder.

SMACK! Now Suzannah let out a lusty yowl of protest. "Oh, please, Trey!"

"Please (*SMACK*) Trey (*SMACK*) what (*SMACK*WAP*)??"

"Please! I'm sorry. I'll be good! Please make love to me, Trey!"

Trey considered this for a moment, continuing to clap down on her bottom in silence, his expression thoughtful. Then suddenly he stopped and surprised her by setting her back on her feet.

"In a minute, love," he said in answer to her request. "First I want to give you a lesson. Something to help you remember that the next time you want my attention, you should ask for it instead of pulling your little stunts, like tonight. Bring me your paddle, Suzannah."

Her lower lip trembled. Suzannah hated that paddle. Trey only used it to punish her, which was a new aspect of their relationship as it was. He'd only paddled her three times so far, and it had been terrible each time. She liked being spanked over his knee with his hand, but the paddle had too much sting in it for her, plus the added humiliation of the knowledge that it was for her punishment, not her pleasure.

"Please, Trey, don't paddle me...."

Trey interrupted her by plunging three fingers inside of her. She gasped at the suddenness of his action, but her sex clenched around his fingers in typical betrayal. She was slick, nearly dripping. He drew his hand back and gestured towards the closet.

"Bring me your paddle, darlin', so we can get it over with. Then I'll reward you for taking your punishment like a good girl."

Pouting, Suzannah flounced towards the closet, kicking off her panties and removing the garter belt as she went. She stamped back a few moments later holding the hated implement as if it might suddenly catch fire in her hands.

When she stood before him in all her naked splendor, he said, "Now, ASK me."

Her brows knit together and her eyes narrowed. He could see she was on the verge of telling him to go to hell.

"I've told you before that when you want your bottom warmed, you are to ask me for it instead of acting up like a three year old. But you never listen to me. So, I think you need some practice. I know you don't want to be paddled, but maybe learning to ask for something you don't want will help you remember the next time you only want a spanking." That said, he leveled his sternest gaze on her. "Now, ask me to paddle you, Suzannah. And ask me NICELY."

It was comical to watch this proud woman biting back what she really wanted to say. Finally, she managed to choke out, "Would you paddle me, Trey?"

He grinned evilly. "What's the magic word?"

"Please?" she huffed.

"Please what, Suzy?" he pressed.

"Please spank me with the paddle," she ground out.

He nodded. "Sure thing, darlin'." He crossed his arms over his chest. "Tell me why first."

"Trey!" she whined.

"Don't whine, sweetheart, it's not becoming of a lady. Now, tell me why you need your bottom paddled."

She stomped one bare foot, but answered him. "Because I acted like a child tonight so you'd spank me when I should have just asked you to."

Trey nodded. "You'll learn yet, I think." He held out his hand. "Okay, give me the paddle now."

Suzannah made a face and handed him the hated thing. He rather liked the paddle. He'd bought it on line, especially for when Suzannah's actions required actual punishment instead of the playful hand spanking that aroused her. It was a

long, thin leather paddle, with the shape of a heart cut out of one end. It was very flexible and left a good sting. Afterwards, Suzannah would have imprints of hearts on her rear end.

He snapped the paddle against his palm and Suzannah jumped involuntarily.

"Okay, honey, back over my knee."

She sighed dramatically, but obeyed him.

Trey arranged his wife over only knee this time, so he could hold her legs between his own. He knew she'd really be kicking up a storm during this paddling.

SSSNAAPPP!!!

The paddle made its first landing, leaving a clear heart on Suzannah's left cheek. Trey fired down again and left a twin heart on her right.

SNAP! SNAP! SNAP!

"Trey! Please no more! Ow!! Please! Ow!!! I'm sorry!!!"

SNAP! SNAP! SNAP! SNAP! SNNNAPPP!!

Trey stopped at ten, admiring his paddlework, the hearts interlocking on her fire red behind.

"All done, darlin'." He helped her off his lap and onto the bed, rubbing her warm cheeks. She moaned and raised her punished bottom up to his hand.

"Trey... Trey... please..."

Trey chuckled, turning his wife over onto her back. She gasped as the silk bed covers touched her hot backside. "I'm getting there, Suz," he said, shedding his clothes. "I think someone needs a lesson in patience tonight."

And that was what he gave her, by easing inside her by agonizingly slow degrees, despite his rock hard, throbbing state. He teased her by withdrawing, then inch by inch returning into her core. She clawed at his back, thrashed wildly on the bed, and made helpless little sounds of desperation. Trey's arms trembled with the exertion of holding back, but he managed it still

somehow.

"Tell me what you want, Suz," he whispered, trailing hot kisses along her neck. "Ask me for what you want."

And Suzannah did, in colorful detail and a rush of words that made Trey chuckle as he finally gave in and plunged deep inside her.

Bull Riding: The Promise

"The answer is no, Angela Karen, and that is final."

Angie frowned across the table at Kyle.

"Why, because I'm a woman?"

"Hell, yes, because you're a woman!"

"That's... that's sexual discrimination!" Angie pounded one small fist on the red checked restaurant tablecloth. "I should file a charge against you!"

Kyle, who was Angie's boss as well as her fiancé and a long time family friend, rolled his blue eyes. "You go right ahead, darlin'," he drawled, finishing the last of his coffee. "The answer is still no."

"But Kyle, lots of other rodeo shows feature female bull riders. And it draws crowds! You could put me on a little one -- they can't tell the difference much from the stands anyway, and..."

Kyle studied his pretty little fiancée as she continued to plead her case. He'd known Angie since she was five years old, and she never changed. He'd been best friends with her older brothers, and she had always chased after them, trying to do the same things they did, or better. He supposed it was a natural consequence of being the little sister to five Texas boys -- but he couldn't believe this latest idea of hers.

"Angie, just what the hell are you trying to prove, anyway?" he interrupted her tirade. His accent was growing thicker as he grew more agitated with her, "You're a grown woman. Why are you still chasing after your brothers and trying to show you can do the same as them?"

Angie's green eyes flashed at Kyle. "I'm not trying to prove anything! It's a challenge, that's all. And I want to do it. I don't care what my brothers think."

Kyle raised a golden eyebrow skeptically. Two of Angie's brothers were in bull riding currently,

though they didn't work for his show. Her oldest brother, Cal, was retired from the sport, but had a ranch in Austin where he ran yearly classes teaching proper riding technique and offering help to novice riders.

"Your brothers would skin me alive if I let you do this...."

"They don't have to know!"

"...and I couldn't live with myself if you got hurt. Bull riding's a very dangerous sport, honey. You could get killed even."

"Oh, I'm not going to get killed!" Angie protested, clearly exasperated. "Barrel racing can be dangerous too, and for that matter so can driving a car, but you let me do those things!"

Kyle spared a brief smile for the waitress who brought them their check. After she had walked away, he glared at his pouting fiancée. "It's not the same thing and you know it. Now, I'm not going to say this again, Angela. You are not going up on a bucking bull. No way." He narrowed his sapphire gaze at her. "Do you understand me?"

Arms crossed, Angie scowled at him. Under the table, she stamped one cowboy boot. "Anything you say," she answered flippantly.

Kyle leaned across the table and lowered his voice. A chill crept up Angie's spine. "If you try this behind my back, you'll be in for it. I mean it. I'll blister your butt. And that's a promise. Do you hear me? And I don't mean the usual slap and tickle stuff you like."

Angie was surprised by the heated resolve in his voice. But she didn't take his threat seriously. Kyle had saved her from many a spanking from her brothers as she'd been growing up. Sometimes, they enjoyed some foreplay "slap and tickle" games, as he referred to them, but she knew he would never actually hurt her.

Regardless, she figured she should give in to him. What he didn't know wouldn't hurt him, same

as her brothers. Surely somebody from the show would be willing to help her learn to ride in his place. And then when she knew what she was doing and could keep her seat the eight seconds required, she'd surprise him with it. By that time, it'd be too late for him to change anything. And she was sure he'd realize she'd been right all along. He'd include her bull riding in the act for sure, then.

But for now, she sighed as in defeat and said, "Yes, I hear you. You win, okay?"

Kyle still looked suspicious, but he stood up from the table, settled his black Stetson on his golden head and took her hand. As they walked to the cashier, she pulled her hand free of his in a pointed show of her unhappiness, a firm pout on her face.

To her surprise, Kyle gave the seat of her jeans a loud crack with his open palm. Angie was sure every diner in the restaurant turned to stare at them. Her face flushed hotly and she looked down at the floor.

"I don't want to look at that pout all afternoon," Kyle said.

She met his gaze and nodded, a bit nervously. She forced her mouth into a neutral line. "I'm sorry," she whispered.

He nodded once, paid their bill, and then ushered her outside and into his battered pickup truck.

The ride back to their trailer was awkwardly silent at first. Angie was still thinking about the spank in the diner. Kyle had never done anything like that before. He was always playful and gentle, his swats more like extensions of his caresses. And he had never spanked her, not even one smack, in a public place.

Finally, he cleared his throat and motioned to her with his right hand. "Come here." Angie slid across the bench seat and cuddled against him, his arm circling her shoulders. He smelled pleasantly of horses and sunshine. He pressed a kiss onto her

forehead.

"I don't want anything to happen to you, sweetheart," he said. His voice was gruff. "You're very important to me. Okay?"

She nodded. "Sure. Don't worry. Nothing's going to happen."

"Promise me you won't try to do this on your own."

"Kyle..."

"I know you, Ang," he broke in. "You only agreed in the restaurant to get me to stop arguing with you. I want you to promise me."

Angie sighed. She closed her eyes and leaned her cheek against the soft, worn flannel covering Kyle's shoulder. She didn't want to make a promise she planned to break. Especially to this man.

She was glad they were in the truck and that Kyle was driving, so she didn't have to look him in the eye.

"I promise."

Bull Riding: Lesson Two

Angie repeated the tips Lloyd had given her in her head as the mechanical bull turned and bucked beneath her: Hand up, loose ride, keep your seat, eight seconds.

It was Wednesday afternoon, two days since the confrontation she'd had with Kyle. He was still back at the arena, busy setting up for the performance tomorrow and seeing to the last minute details. Ignoring her feelings of guilt over breaking her promise, Angie had sought out Lloyd Wallar, one of the bull riders who performed for the rodeo show. It worked to her advantage that young Lloyd had been sweet on her since the day she'd started working for Kyle. Her relationship with the rodeo owner was common knowledge, but Lloyd had expressed his crush on occasion. He was too sweet and gentle a man to try to steal her from Kyle, and Kyle had never tried to warn Lloyd or anything. But Lloyd's affections had certainly been helpful to Angie today when she told him her plan to learn to ride a bull.

At first Lloyd had been as full of objections as Kyle, but she'd been able to convince him to help her. This training on the mechanical bull was lesson one; Lloyd said she would benefit from the simulated motion, sudden change in direction, and speed. She had fallen right off of the big black "bull" a couple times at the first increases of speed, but she was getting better.

As this ride came to a stop, Lloyd gave her a big grin and a thumbs up from his position by the controls.

A piercing whistle cut across the length of the dusty, sparsely populated bar room, shrill over the blare of the ancient jukebox in the corner. Before she even turned to look, Angie knew Kyle had found her.

He was standing by the bar, a fizzing cola sitting

next to his Stetson, his hands on his jean-clad hips, and his face a stony mask. When their eyes met, her heart leaped nervously.

To her embarrassment, as if being whistled to come like a dog wasn't enough, Kyle pointed one long, tan finger directly at her, then jabbed it angrily at the floor in front of him.

The message was clear.

With a sigh, Angie slid down from the bull, glancing apologetically towards Lloyd. She shuffled hesitantly over to her fiancé, only too aware of all the looks she was receiving from the patrons of the bar.

"Hi," she squeaked when she stopped in front of Kyle.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" he demanded immediately.

Her own anger flared suddenly. She was not a child, contrary to what everyone seemed to think! "Oh, for pity's sake, Kyle, it's only a mechanical bull!"

His blue gaze narrowed at his. "This is no place for a young lady to be by herself."

Angie glanced around the room at the old men who had gathered for their afternoon drink and tried not to laugh. "I can take care of myself," she declared. "Besides that, I'm not alone anyway. Lloyd came with me."

Kyle rolled his eyes when he looked past her and saw Lloyd back by the controls of the bull, talking to a pretty waitress. "Lloyd Wallar couldn't protect himself in a fight, let alone you too. And you better be careful how nice you are to that kid cause he just might start to take it the wrong way."

"Fine! I'll just be a bitch to him then! Would that make you happy?" At this point, Angie was yelling to be heard over George Strait's voice on the jukebox, and was standing toe to toe, nearly nose to nose with her future husband. "What other orders do you have for me, sir?" She was on a roll

now, and her anger made her blind to the growing blaze in Kyle eyes, the tightening of his jaw line, and the clenching of his fists. "Should I start wearing a bag over my head and a tag on my shirt that reads: 'property of Kyle Billings'..."

She was mid-sentence when Kyle suddenly grabbed her at the back of the knees and swung her up over one wide shoulder. One muscled arm locked her in place and he paused to grab his hat with the other. There was a general babble of amusement and encouragement from the bar patrons as her fiancé turned and strode towards the door.

"Kyle! Put me down! Damn you!" Angie screamed, struggling and kicking and pounding on his back. She received a stinging swat to the seat of her jeans for her trouble and a low warning to be quiet.

Kyle deposited his seething bride-to-be in the passenger side of the truck, then walked around to the other side and climbed in beside her. She sat with her arms crossed, one toe tapping impatiently, starring straight out the window. He studied her, his jaw clenching visibly. Twice he opened his mouth to say something, then changed his mind. He finally started the truck, slammed it into gear and pulled out onto the highway, tires squealing.

When they reached the little motor home, Angie hopped out of the truck and started walking towards the nearby arena.

"Now where are you going?" Kyle asked wearily.

"For a walk."

"Wait a second." One hand caught her elbow and she turned to glare up at him. "I just want to show you something first, okay?"

The anger seemed to have left him, or at least lessened, and Angie found that she couldn't tell him no. She followed him up the steps into their home.

She gasped out loud with delight at what she saw. The place was neat as a pin, and the bed was

made up with a richly colored coverlet that was obviously new. Curtains were on the windows to match. And, as she looked closely, she saw the entire bed had been sprinkled with live daisies.

Kyle was smiling crookedly as he choose one flower and tucked it into the hair at Angie's left ear. He kissed her earlobe, then her cheek and whispered, "Happy anniversary."

Angie was confused -- it wasn't their anniversary. Kyle chuckled at the lost expression on her face. Then he reminded her of the date they had set for the wedding -- in two years, this day would be their first wedding anniversary.

Angie was surprised by his actions, and delighted. She had been wanting to fix up their home for some time now, and Kyle had been aware of that.

"I can't believe you did all this..."

"I had help," he admitted with a brief shrug. "I got some of the girls to help me pick out the curtains and bedspread. And I gave the kids a penny for each daisy they brought me from the field."

Angie grinned at the images of her big strong boyfriend asking the women in the show for decorating advice, and collecting daisies from the children to spread out on the bed. Everyone in the show must know what he had done and she thought for a moment how embarrassed she would be to see them all again.

Kyle took her hands and smiled at her. "I wanted to give you something special. I... know how upset you are about the whole bull riding thing."

She shrugged, feeling the guilt gnaw at her heart. She pushed aside the feeling.

Kyle had returned his attention to her earlobe, and he nuzzled her neck as he clasped her bottom in both hands, lifting her against his arousal. He squeezed and patted her behind, kissing her neck

and jaw line, then her eyelids and mouth. Their tongues touched and parted, then touched again.

Angie's clothes seemed to disappear and Kyle led her to the bed of daisies. There, he sat on the edge and pulled her over his lap. The worn denim of his jeans was soft beneath her. She sighed, feeling his hands as they cupped and squeezed her backside. His fingers trailed lightly down the inside thigh of one leg, then up the inner thigh of the other. He skimmed his hand teasingly over her bottom, then let his fingers dally over her back, scratching, rubbing, and grazing the skin lightly, tickling her sides until she giggled. When his fingers began to descend again, Angie let out a sigh and wiggled her backside just a bit in anticipation. Kyle chuckled as he stroked her legs, still teasing.

"Well, you're certainly excited about something," he joked, as he continued to stroke her. He picked up one foot and massaged the arch and she moaned. He repeated the attention to her other foot, tickling her toes just slightly afterwards. He tried to sound ponderous, but there was a definitely thread of laughter in his voice. "I wonder what you're so anxious for, hmmm?" This time, he ran his fingers up the crack of her bottom and then dipped lower to where she was already slick and ready. "I bet I know," And with that, Kyle gave her bottom a sudden smart little smack. Angie moaned loudly, laying her cheek on the bedspread and smelling the fresh daisies as Kyle focused his attention on lightly spanking her naked bottom. She glowed in the feeling, his light spans an extension of his caresses, alternating one after the other. Repeatedly, he placed several fingers inside her, rubbing her little wet pearl, and at the same time slapping her pinkie behind. She was begging for him within minutes, and after prolonging the anticipation a little while longer, Kyle freed himself from his jeans, laid her out on the bed of daisies and plunged deep inside of her.

Angie never felt more full or complete than when Kyle was inside her. They were both at a fevered pitch now and their mating was nearly violent as they thrust against one another. Their climaxes were simultaneous and two coarse shouts echoed off the walls of their little domain.

Afterwards, as they lay together cuddling, Kyle said, "I'm sorry I overreacted at the bar. You're right -- it's only a mechanical bull. You can't get hurt on that. I just thought..."

Angie knew exactly what he had thought, and he had been right. But she didn't want to think about that now. "Shh...it's okay." She interrupted him with a kiss.

Though so recently sated, their appetites for one another quickly grew again, and this time Kyle led Angie into the bathroom and they repeated the whole spanking, this time under the hot water in the shower. Angie climaxed once from the simple pleasure of his hand on her wet bottom. Then Kyle took her, her back against the tile wall, her legs wrapped around his waist, his hands holding her well spanked, well loved bottom. She climaxed again, then was filled with her fiancé's release.

After the shower, they dried off and dressed. Although they were pressed for time, Kyle insisted on combing and braiding Angie's hair himself. It was a ritual they had begun a long time ago, and it always made Angie smile. She imagined how surprised the other cowboys and cowgirls would be if they saw their strict boss man gently tugging the tangles from her hair and twisting the long tresses into a neat braid. Though, after the help he had enlisted to create the wonderful surprise today, maybe they wouldn't be so surprised after all.

By the time he had completed the tender ritual, they were already late for rehearsal, but Angie was trembling with need of him again. Kyle chuckled and gave her braid a playful tug. "You're insatiable," he teased. "I love you."

Bull Riding: What Eight Seconds Will Get You

Angie watched the rider spinning around the arena on the back of Cyclone and tried to learn from his ride. So far, she had been up on Junior, the smallest bull in the rodeo show, three unsuccessful times. She'd been bucked off within nanoseconds each time and had landed rather unceremoniously in the dust while Jack, the catch rider and Dan, the rodeo clown, chased the bull back to the exit chute. She was determined, despite the growing aches and pains her body was suffering, to make one eight second ride before the day was out.

She had to make the best of today, because who knew when her next chance would be? Kyle had taken a ride out to the county line to visit with some friends he had in the area that he hadn't seen in some time. He's tried to talk Angie into coming with him, but she had told him she had a headache and wasn't feeling well.

As the next rider took his turn, Angie tried to make herself concentrate on him, and not on the guilt she felt thinking of the concern on Kyle's face when she'd said she felt sick. "I hope you feel better, baby. Stay in bed and rest, maybe that'll help. I'll bring you back a surprise."

Finally, it was her turn to ride again. The "little" bull was anxious to be out of the confines of the chute, banging against it and stomping his hooves. A couple of the guys helped her get her seat on the animal's back, and then watched her secure her hand to the rope the way they had shown her before. They gave her a nod when she looked up for approval.

Angie took a few more moments to make sure she was secure, then jerked her head in a brief nod and the gate swung open.

Junior launched out of the chute like his tail was

on fire, his slobber flying everywhere, his body spinning and churning sickly beneath Angie. Her hat flew off her head and got stamped on by the crazed bull. She focused on keeping her one hand in the air, and tried to keep her balance and her seat center. The pounding her backside was taking from repeatedly crashing down on the bull's back all afternoon was getting to be too much for her by then and she promised herself as tears stung her eyes that this would be her last run. At least for today.

To her amazement, the sound of the eight second buzzer rang in her ears. She'd done it! She leapt from the bull's back, and ran to the side gate, looking back to make sure one of the animal's horns wasn't aiming for her backside. She climbed up one, two rungs of the side rail and breathed a sigh of relief when the catch riders once again guided Junior towards the exit gate.

Before she even had a moment to grin at her success, a hard hand grabbed her elbow and pulled. Angie was hauled over the top rung of the side rail where she caught sight of Kyle's angry face seconds before losing her balance and falling on top of him, crushing the flowers he had brought back for her in the process.

"Kyle!" she was surprised to see him. "What..."

"Not one word!" he barked at her. He was standing up and pulling her with him. He grabbed his Stetson off the ground and gave it an angry whack against his knee. Angie became painfully aware that everyone had stopped what they'd been doing to turn and stare at the boss and his fiancée. Kyle's hands were shaking when he let go of her arms. "I want you to go to the trailer and wait for me..."

"But..."

Kyle's blue eyes were as hard as steel and enough to silence her without the words he spoke. "That's right, I'll tend to that." Angie blushed

furiously; everyone had heard his threat. "Go and wait for me. Don't make me have to come find you."

Afraid he might actually take her over his knee there in front of everyone, Angie turned and scurried away. In private, she stood a good chance at changing his mind. She'd cuddle up to him and beg his forgiveness; she'd cry if she had to. She was sure she could get out of this.

Kyle was fuming. He turned from the crowd of onlookers and took several deep breaths, tried to stop his shaking. When he'd come into the arena and looked up to see his fiancée tossing wildly around on that bull, he thought his heart had exploded. God, if anything happened to her....

After a few minutes, his emotions more under control, but still upset, Kyle turned to the on-looking crowd, some of whom were starting hesitantly to return to work. It didn't take much more than a few words to get everyone's attention.

"Listen up! I don't blame any of you for what's happened here, but you should all know right now that if I catch any of you helping a lady to ride a bronc or bull you'll be immediately fired. Any woman I catch riding a bronc or bull will be fired. I don't care if any of you think that's appropriate or not, this is my show and I won't have women on bull's backs. Am I making myself clear?"

There were immediate choruses of affirmative answers.

"Good." Kyle made a vague gesture with one hand. "Please, go back to whatever you were doing."

Many pairs of eyes followed him as he turned and walked in the general direction of the motor home he shared with Angie.

The moment Kyle walked in the door, Angie jumped to her feet and went to him.

"Kyle, I can explain..."

"You don't have to explain. I'm not stupid, I

have eyes. You deliberately disobeyed me. Hell, you broke your promise to me."

"Kyle Billings, I am a grown woman. I don't have to OBEY anybody!" Angie knew her outburst would only make things worse, but it was out of her mouth before she could help herself, followed by: "What's the big deal anyway? I made the buzzer, Kyle. Eight seconds!" She grinned, wishing his frown would lift even a little bit with pride at her accomplishment. "And I'm fine, no harm done. So what's the big deal?!"

Kyle took a visibly long, deep breath. "The big deal, Angela Karen, is that you could have been hurt or even killed. You promised me you wouldn't do this. Do you remember that promise?"

"Yes, but..."

"Well, then it seems to me you shouldn't have to ask me what the big deal is. But I guess you don't take your promises as seriously as I take mine. I believe I made you a promise, about what would happen if you did this damn fool thing." To Angie's shock, Kyle had unbuttoned the sleeves of his flannel shirt and was rolling them up as he spoke. "So, darlin', let me prove to you that I, at least, keep my promises."

"Kyle! Don't do this! Please!"

But he was coming towards her and there was no doubt that he would do exactly what he had told her he would. This man who had been her friend and lover, who had saved her from being spanked many times when she was little, who was going to be her husband and the father of her children, was about to take her over his knee and spank her like she was a little girl.

Just as Kyle reached Angie, and had a hold of her wrist, a loud knock sounded on their door. It was followed by the whiny voice of Jim Crowsers, a young calf roper from Alabama. "Mr. Billings? Sir, I'm sorry to interrupt but Mr. Hastings sent me for you. He... uh, he saw Angie on the bull, sir, and

he's a bit upset about it..."

Kyle's gaze had never left Angie's face and now it seared her so hotly she had to look away. Her fiancé's voice was surprisingly calm when he called out to Jim. "I'll be right there."

"Kyle..."

"Not a word. Do you hear me? Not one." Kyle walked Angie over to the corner by the bed and turned her into it. "I want you to wait, right here, for me, and I want you to think about what you did. Maybe you can figure out why it's such a big deal." His hands rested on his jean-clad hips as he studied her silently for a minute. Finally, he sighed and said, "If you know what's good for you, you'll be here, in this corner, when I come back. Then I'll show you what your eight seconds has earned you."

Angie jumped when the door slammed shut behind him.

Bull Riding: Angie's Punishment

Despite his threats and her love for him, Angie came very close to running out of the little motor home she shared with Kyle. She was afraid, not so much of him or what he was planning to do, but more of what he must think of her now, and of how the punishment was sure to affect their relationship. She'd never had a punishment spanking from Kyle before, and she feared it would damper her taste for the erotic spankings she enjoyed.

But when Kyle returned over an hour later, Angie was where he had left her, her nose in the corner. She was crying so softly he didn't even hear her at first. He was actually sort of glad for the interruption because the time away had given him a chance to cool off a bit. He knew better than to have spanked Angie when he was angry, but he hadn't been thinking. He was calm now.

"Angela," he said, sitting wearily on the edge of the bed where they had made such sweet love just the previous night. "Come over here please."

His fiancée turned from the corner and came to stand in front of him. She looked like the little girl he remembered from the first day he had met her, hair all tousled and eyes red rimmed and watery. She'd always been in trouble with her brothers. He'd covered for her and stuck up for her with them more times than he could count. Now, he wondered for the first time if maybe he hadn't been doing her a disservice by that. Maybe if she hadn't gotten away with so much, with his help no less, she wouldn't still be trying crazy things like the stunt from that afternoon.

She wouldn't look at him, so he lifted her chin with his fingers and made her meet his eyes that way. Before he had a chance to say a word, she burst out: "Please don't spank me like this, Kyle!

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

Kyle leaned back and rested his hands on his jeans legs. "You promised me once that you wouldn't do this at all..."

"I know... I'm sorry I broke my promise. But...."

He leaned his head to one side to meet her eyes, which she had once again averted. "'But' what, baby?"

She hesitated and her cheeks flooded with color. He realized she was embarrassed and he was shocked. He'd never seen her embarrassed as long as he'd known her. Not even the time her oldest brother had spanked her bare bottom right in front of him.

"This is so different from the other... times. I don't want it to change things. Please..."

Kyle sighed and interrupted her worries by framing her tear streaked face with his hands. "Nothing's changing, darlin'. I love you and that's never gonna change. It's not like after tonight I'm gonna start whooping your butt all the time." He paused and kissed her forehead. "You're right, though. This time is different. And its going to hurt -- I mean for it to. Maybe the next time you think of doing something this crazy you'll remember this spanking and you won't do it. That's what I hope will happen. I love you too much to just look the other way when you do things like this." He wiped a few fresh tears away with his thumbs, still holding her face in his hands. "We're going to do this, and that will wipe the slate clean. Okay?"

Angie didn't say anything.

"Angela, if you're not okay with this you have to tell me. If that's the case, I'll call one of your brothers to come and get you." Her eyes shot up in shock at these words. "But if you stay with me honey, you'll have to accept this. I'm going to keep my promise. And any time in the future when you need it, I'll do the same thing. Understand?"

She nodded. "I don't want you to call any of my brothers. I don't want to go home with them."

He had figured as much, but felt he had to give her the opportunity anyway.

"I'm glad," he said, smiling. "Let's do this then."

His hands dropped from her face to the button on her jeans and began to work it open.

"Bare?" Her voice was hardly a whisper.

"Yes, sweetheart. You wouldn't feel very much through these jeans, would you?"

Actually Angie was already plenty sore on her backside from her jostling rounds on the bulls, but she didn't argue. She had a feeling he wouldn't give her much mercy on that basis anyway.

As if in a dream, Angie watched her handsome fiancé unzip her jeans and push them down her hips. She stepped out of them. He guided her across his lap as gently as he had any other time and she had a weird sense of *deja vu*.

Then the first spank landed and any misconceptions she had about the spanking were gone that fast. There had been no caresses, no teasing words, or gentle tickling, just one hard smack that made her cry out. He paid no attention to that, and without hardly any pause, raised his hand and spanked her again. And again. And again.

There was hardly the space of a heartbeat between slaps and Angie, who was already crying, soon lay over his lap sobbing her heart out. She blubbered inarticulate apologies and promises to be a good girl. Kyle just spanked away without saying a word.

Finally, he paused and rubbed the tender flesh, showing pink through the material of her panties. He said: "I hope you know I am doing this because I love you, Angela Karen. When I saw you today on that bull I thought I might lose you. I know you had a good ride, but I didn't see that. I saw all the possible bad rides that could have happened, and I

saw myself next to your hospital bed or beside your grave. You're too important to me and I couldn't take it if I lost you."

The gently spoken words sank into Angie's already guilty conscience. She cried harder now than she had during the spanking. She made a silent promise then and there to herself and to Kyle. She would never make him feel those things again.

Her fiancé used his thumb and forefinger to rub his own watery eyes for a moment, then took a deep breath. "Okay, baby. That was your spanking for going up on Junior. You have two more coming to you, one for lying to me, and the other for breaking your promise."

Angie was surprised by this bit of news, having thought that he might just decide to take it easy on her. It felt like he must have given her a dozen for every second she'd been on that damn bull; her bottom already felt like it was on fire. She didn't try to argue with him though. In a way, she did need this. She would be punished for everything, and then the slate would be clean, as Kyle had said. She almost welcomed it.

Kyle reached into the waistband of Angie's white lace panties and then tugged them down to her knees. Her perky heart shaped bottom, pinkened and pretty, looked up at him. He smoothed one hand over it, then began again.

Kyle spanked her slowly, thirty swats. Angie couldn't help herself at this point, and she gave a little squeal with each slap. When he reached thirty, he told her that all she had left was the spanking for breaking her promise. Then he scissored her protesting, kicking legs between his own, elevating her bottom higher over his right knee and began again.

Angie gritted her teeth and cried out as the last spanking was administered, staring through her tears at his boots. He held nothing back, spanking

her as rapidly as he had the first time, his hand having obviously not grown tired. He spanked harder than any of her brothers ever had. In fact, this was the worse spanking of her life. She was exhausted from struggling, though and as he was finishing up, she was limp and sobbing over his knee. After he stopped, she lay there a few moments. He lifted her up and she settled tenderly on his lap.

Kyle cuddled Angie to his chest and rocked her tears away. He soothed her with gentle caresses and told her how much he loved her and wanted to build a wonderful life with her. She clung to his shoulder telling him over and over how sorry she was.

"Shh. It's over now, baby. All is forgiven. Shh."

When her tears were finally all gone, and her breathing had calmed, Kyle helped her to lay down on the bed, her hot bottom up to the cool air in the room. He kissed her temple as she closed her eyes.

Angie heard Kyle saying something about going out to get dinner, then she fell asleep. She dreamed of a big farmhouse with scores of horses and calves in the pasture. Little girls and boys with bright blue eyes and heads of wheat gold hair ran around her kitchen and an apple pie cooled on the counter. From the barn, her handsome cowboy strode towards the house, all muscles and sweat, his Stetson dusty and his hair curling at his nape. His cowboy boots sounded on the linoleum of the kitchen floor and the children ran to him. He grinned as he hugged and tickled them, being sure to give all the girls a good dose of dust and a swat to the bottom to chase them away. He winked at his pretty wife and crossed the distance between them with a definite purpose in his eye....

Erin's Secret

Will walked into the room and crossed the distance to where his girlfriend, Erin, sat on her bed. He smiled at her forlorn expression and swept her loud chestnut hair back over one shoulder. When she looked down from his gaze, he used one finger to lift her chin back up, then bent to kiss her pouting pink lips.

It was enough of a pleasant diversion that when the kiss finally ended, Erin's eyes were glassy and her pouting mouth was smiling.

"Much better," Will praised, running his thumb over her full lips as he took a seat beside her on the edge of the bed.

"Will, I...." Erin's voice wavered and drifted off, as did her gaze again.

"You... what?" Will repressed the smile that played at the corners of his mouth. She was damn cute when she was squirming, and she wasn't even over his knee, yet.

She blushed to the roots of her hair as she answered him. "Oh, God. I know I agreed to this whole discipline thing, but Will... please don't spank me.... I...."

Will took her hand and squeezed it, held onto it. "Look at me, baby." He waited until she met his eyes. "Are you afraid of me, Erin?"

She shook her head immediately, as he had expected. He had a feeling that he already knew what was bothering her about being spanked again, but he wanted her to tell him herself.

"Good. Because you should know, Erin, that I would never hurt you." He grinned. "Well, obviously the spanking hurts some, but that's not what I'm talking about..."

"I know..." she agreed, giving him a shaky smile. "I know you wouldn't hurt me, Will."

"You trust me, then?"

She nodded.

"Okay, that's good. Then why don't you let me know what's upsetting you so much about getting a spanking." Once again, Erin's gaze was everywhere in the room except where it should be. Will gave her hand a squeeze and made his voice stern when he said, "Erin Kathleen, if you can't look at me when we're talking, then we're going to have this conversation with you over my lap."

Well, that got him her gaze, immediately, in fact.

"Now, tell me what you're thinking."

"Well, it's just..." She fidgeted nervously beside him, looking damn cute, and, to her credit, she really tried to maintain eye contact with him. But in truth, she still failed miserably. He let her squirm a bit more, trying to explain herself, yet not really saying anything at all.

After a few minutes, Will gave her his stern look and put one finger to her lips, silencing her instantly, gaining her wandering eyes finally, and causing her pretty face to redden.

"We're not getting anywhere here, Erin," he said, stating the obvious. With an easy tug, Will pulled his reluctant girlfriend over his lap.

"Will!! Please, don't spank me! Will!"

He hadn't even given her a single swat yet and she was already twisting and thrashing about over his knees as if he was killing her. He took a deep breath, reminded himself to be patient, and linked his arms together, with Erin's pert little bottom, still covered by her floral skirt, neatly tucked inside them.

"Erin, calm down," he instructed quietly.

Eventually, she seemed to realize how she was overreacting, and she stopped squirming and begging to lay quietly for a moment over his lap. Will used one hand to massage her long, bare legs from high up on her thighs down to her slim ankles. He felt her body go limp and he smiled.

That's it, sweetheart, he thought. Relax. Trust me.

"W-w-will?" she asked tentatively after a few minutes of his silent massage. "Are you... still going to spank me?"

Will's hand chose that moment to flip up her skirt and expose her pretty bottom, encased in white lace panties, and she immediately sat about squirming again.

"Erin." Once again, Will folded his arms together around her bottom and waited. He counted to ten. "Erin Kathleen..."

She recognized the warning tone in his voice and settled herself. She glanced over one shoulder, her hair falling in her face. Will swept the heavy curtain back and cupped her chin lovingly.

"I am going to spank you, sweetheart," he told her honestly. When she started to protest, he silenced her again with one long finger at her lips. "We agreed to a discipline plan for you. Didn't we, Erin?"

"Yes, but..."

"In fact, as I recall, it was YOUR idea, was it not?"

Erin groaned and kicked one leg with a THUMP against the mattress. "Yes, Will, but..."

"And I had YOU make up the list of behaviors and corresponding punishments, based on the things you wanted to improve on. Isn't that correct, young lady?"

She was leaning on her arms now and frowning openly. When she didn't answer, Will gave her pantied bottom a moderate spank that made her jump.

"I asked you a question, Erin."

"Yes," she hissed. "Yes, I made up the list and it was my idea in the first place. But, Will..."

Once again, her protest ended in a whine that didn't say anything. Will sighed. This was going to drive him crazy, especially since he already knew what her problem was.

He decided to get on with the spanking and work on getting her to talk afterwards, when she was all hot and bothered - literally.

"Okay, young lady. So, tell me, please, why you're getting a spanking today."

There was no answer at first. Only her little body wiggling and swaying over his lap. Will suppressed a groan at the delicious agony she created and wondered if she had any clue what she did to him.

Finally, her voice rose in a quiet, shamed answer. "I waited till the last minute... to start my report. And... I had to work on it night and day to meet the deadline... and I was bitchy to you because I was tired... and stressed..."

Will overlooked the curse word she'd used and her own rule about being punished for her bad language. He felt a little sorry for her. He remembered how hard it had been for her when she'd first come to him and told him about her idea for a punishment plan. She'd spoken so quietly he'd hardly heard her and her face had been as red as an apple. He knew it hadn't been easy for her. And he knew that what was bothering her now would be even harder for her to share. But he intended to see that she did share it with him. He wanted to reassure her that what she felt was okay - that he shared the same feelings and was glad she had them, too.

He said, "That's right. And was procrastination on your projects at work one of the things on your list to work on?"

She sighed. "Yes. And so was being grouchy to you ... when you didn't deserve it..."

Will chuckled at that last part and patted her bottom softly. It didn't escape him how she ground herself against his leg and lifted her hips for the last little spank.

"Okay, so what was the punishment for those things, Erin?"

Her answer was muffled by her arms and the curtain of hair that had fallen around her again. Will made a mental note to put her hair back in a ponytail the next time she was in this position. After he'd swept it away from her face again, he pinched her backside and said, "I didn't hear that, young lady. Speak up, please."

"I said," she answered, looking back at him with flashing eyes. "It's twenty spanks with your hand for procrastinating, and ten more for being grumpy to you."

"Hmph," he said, now caressing her bottom in preparation. "I think I'm being jilted!"

When she shot him another heated look over her shoulder, he laughed. While he had her attention elsewhere, he quickly lowered her panties to her knees.

She squirmed anew at this development and he shushed her whimpers. He caressed her bare skin for a while, watching how she eventually relaxed again and listening with growing pleasure as her uncertain whimpers changed to contented purrs.

He placed a kiss on each of her bottom cheeks, then leaned up and gave her a noisy one on her neck. In her ear, knowing his breath tickled her, he whispered, "I love you, Erin Kathleen."

He continued to stroke and tease her, pressing more soft kisses on the insides of her knees, along the line of her spine, on each shoulder. When she was as boneless as putty over his legs, he said, "Well, thirty spanks it is, then. Coming right up..."

And before she could react, he set about delivering the spanking with a speed and accuracy that had Erin gasping from the first stinging SMACK! Will's hand was hard and his aim infallible. Despite her attempts to dodge his swats, he landed all thirty of them, fifteen to each cheek, with a loud CLAP! that left an interlocking lacework of fingers and handprints on Erin's previously white backside. She kicked and wriggled, squealing and pleading

from the onset, as if she was being murdered.

The way Will spanked, those thirty swats were over and down with in a hurry. He caressed her pinkened cheeks and smiled at the way her cries changed to moans and her hips rose to meet his touch. He resisted the urge to delve a finger or two into her sex - he wanted to hear her admission first.

"Thirty spanks, baby," he said lightly. "Signed, sealed, and delivered - with a kiss!" And he leaned over again to kiss her seared backside.

Erin made a move as if to get up, then, but quickly found that Will still held her locked in place over his lap.

"Will, let me up..."

"Oh, no. We're not done yet, honey."

"WILL!" Her voice rose in a whine. "You gave me my thirty spanks, we're DONE!" Her backside swayed as she ground again against his leg and he grinned, knowing what she wanted now. He wanted the same thing, but he wanted her to face it first.

"No, sweetheart, that's where you're wrong," Will told her gently. "It is YOU over MY knee, let's not forget that. And so, you see, it is ME that decides when we are finished, not YOU. Make sense?"

"Humph!" was his only answer. Erin folded her arms jarringly on the bed and plunked her head down on them. "What do you want?"

"I want you to tell me why you were trying so hard to get out of your spanking."

Silence.

He pressed on. "As we already said, it was your idea to set up our weekly discipline sessions, you set the punishments yourself, you even choose what night it would be..."

Still no response.

"Are you regretting your idea?"

"N-no," she obviously grudged the answer.

Will let his hand trail over her bottom, down her legs, and up again, over and over. "What is it then,

baby?" he asked gently.

Her face disappeared into her arms and her voice was muffled, but he heard her say, "It's just embarrassing. I... I didn't think... I didn't know.... It's so embarrassing..."

"Why?" He pressed another feather soft kiss on her upturned bottom.

"B-because it's like... uh... like being a naughty little kid.. and..."

Will smiled and stroked her silky soft hair. He let her keep hiding, though he wished she would face him.

"And.... what, baby?"

"And..." she made a frustrated sound and kicked one leg, just like the little kid she said she felt like.

Will sighed. Okay, patience was one thing, but this was torment, for both of them.

He patted her bottom. "Sit up, Erin." She hesitated, still hiding her face and he swatted her again, a bit harder. "Come on. Sit up."

She obeyed him, straddling his waist with her loud legs and plucking away her panties with a self conscious giggle. He swept her long tresses away from her blushing face and kissed her slowly. His hands laced themselves beneath her still warm bottom.

When he pulled back from the kiss, he met her gaze. "Is it embarrassing because you feel like a naughty little girl... or is it because you've discovered that you enjoy it?"

The second the words were out, her head ducked into his shoulder and he chuckled at the obvious answer.

He patted her bottom and loved the way she hugged him closer, cinching her legs tighter around his middle.

"That's it, isn't it, honey?" he whispered. "Don't be embarrassed, Erin. Your secret's safe with me. Besides, I like it, too."

She giggled and looked up at him. She pressed

herself against the erection that strained his jeans and said, "Yeah, I kind of figured that out already."

He grinned and kissed her cheek. "Well, then, why should you be embarrassed? I'm not."

She laid her head on his shoulder. He wished she'd stop hiding against him - it hurt his neck to crook it so in order to see her face. But he was willing to let her if it meant getting her to admit to this.

"It's different for a guy."

"Why?"

She shrugged. "It doesn't take much for a man to get aroused... you probably start to get hard as soon as you see my bottom in my panties..."

She was right, damn her, but that didn't mean she had to be so smug about it. He gave her a stinging SMACK! That made her arch against him in obvious pleasure.

"You're full of yourself," he scolded.

She shrugged. "But I'm right, aren't I?"

"Yes, you are. But so am I. Admit it. You get hot and wet just when I threaten to turn you over my knee. And once you're there it's all you can do to grind yourself shamelessly against me. You like the way my hand warms your tush. You like the sting of it..."

She made an unhappy little noise against his shoulder and he made a responding impatient one. He removed his hands from her bottom in order to frame her face with them and hold her still where he could see her and she had no where to hide.

"Look at me!" he ordered. "There is nothing to be embarrassed about, honey. I love you, you love me, and we've just discovered a wonderful thing that makes us both horny as hell. There's nothing wrong with what you feel. I'm glad you feel it."

She blinked, and looked at him with such innocent longing it made his heart ache. "You really think it's okay?" she asked shakily, hopefully.

"I KNOW so." He grinned. "You're so very

pretty and cute when you're over my lap, Erin. Your bottom gets all pink and it's so smooth and round. You wiggle yourself all over me and your skin gets so toasty warm, and..." Now he did dare to touch her secret place between her legs, and it was wet and slick, as he'd known it would be. She gasped at his sudden boldness. He kissed her lips when she blushed at his discovery. "You can't deny it, now."

"No, I guess not."

"So, let me hear you say it. Just once. Tell me what you like about it."

Her face still flushed as red as her bottom, Erin shyly told her boyfriend how she liked him to take her over his lap, how she loved the warm bottom he gave her despite her protests, how she liked him to scold her, and even how the sounds of the spanking turned her on. She liked the anticipation of being over his knee and waiting for him to fold up her skirt and lower her panties. She even admitted to being naughty in the past and doing things on their list just to earn a trip over his knee. In fact, her curiosity about being spanked and her yearning for it had been the real reason behind her idea of a punishment plan in the first place.

He kissed her once, twice, and resettled his hands under her bottom as a reward for trusting him with her secret.

"Thank you for telling me," he said. "And, now, you won't have to be naughty on purpose, since I know what you like. You won't need any more reason to be spanked than that - because you like it."

She grinned at him and snuggled closer, her hands roaming his muscled shoulders and back. "Wellll, I might still be naughty, every once in a while," she admitted playfully. "It's kind of fun, sometimes."

Will laughed as he let her topple him onto his back on the bed. When she straddled him, he

swatted at the bottom she pointed in the air.
"Good, 'cause I wouldn't want you any other way!"

Good Morning

She rolled over and snuggled deeper into the warm covers with a sleepy sigh. Saturday morning, and she could sleep as late as she wanted. What bliss....

A moment later, one blue eye peeked open; she'd had a strange feeling while trying to get back to sleep, and as she opened the other eye, she discovered why. He was beside her in bed, on his side, facing her - watching her. He didn't look very happy, though there was a certain spark in his eye that got her attention despite the early hour and her half asleep state.

"I must say, I'm very disappointed in you, little girl," he said in that stern voice that made shivers run down her spine. She swallowed, looking at the curly hair that matted his bare chest. 'Little girl' - the phrase made her toes curl.

"Why? What'd I do?" she whispered.

"Well, for starters, you're wearing a nightgown."

Her brow furrowed. "So?"

He sighed dramatically and then continued as if he was explaining himself to a slow child. "SO, I wanted to roll over and see you bare beside me. Instead you're in a nightgown - THAT nightgown, which by the way, I can't stand. It looks like something my grandmother would wear. I think later today once the fire's going, we'll burn it." His hazel eyes suddenly were dancing as a new idea struck him. "Actually, I think that we'll burn ALL your nightgowns. And from now on, you'll sleep in my bed as God made you."

Her stomach did a funny flip flop at his commanding words. She met his eyes and tried not to balk at his intense gaze.

"Secondly, sweetheart, I had hoped to roll over and see that beautiful chestnut hair of yours spilled

out across your pillow." He sighed dramatically again, grabbing the end of her sleep-sloppy braid and tugging it once. "Instead you have it all twisted about into this braid."

"But, I always braid my hair before bed."

He flipped the braid back over her shoulder and leveled her a hard glare. "Are you arguing with me?"

"No, no sir."

"Good. Because you're in enough trouble already, miss." Again her stomach somersaulted at his words and she felt an ache start between her legs. "Sit up."

She obeyed him without question, waiting for more instructions as he sat up beside her. He studied her a minute more then said, "Take your hair down."

Her fingers made quick progress of undoing the braid. She shook her head when finished and the chestnut red curtain fell to curl around her shoulders. He plunged both hands into the silken tresses and tousled them with his fingers until they were jumbled to his liking. When he took his hands from her hair he surprised her by flicking each straining nipple through the worn cotton of her nightdress. She gasped at his sudden action and he chuckled.

"Take off this ugly gown," he ordered. "We'll see to its burning later."

She knelt on the bed and pulled the old nightgown over her head. It landed in a pile on the floor, forgotten.

"Tsk, ts, tsk." He was shaking his head at her, looking her body up and down.

"What NOW?"

He gave her a warning look. "Watch your tone, little girl." He took one long, tan finger and snapped the elastic waistband on her panties, the only item of clothing that she still wore. "WHAT is the rule about panties, young lady?"

She looked down at her hands and fidgeted. Well, how was she supposed to have known he was going to wake up in this playful mood and find a couple reasons to warm her up? She couldn't have known, so she'd ensured the trip over his lap herself last night by slipping on the forbidden panties before climbing under the covers.

He tilted her chin up with one finger. "I'm waiting for an answer."

"The rule, sir, is no panties in bed."

"That's right." He was still holding her face up and he now removed his hand to take hold of one of her smaller ones. "You know, if I didn't know better, I'd think you were TRYING to get yourself a spankin'. I mean, no panties - that's a golden rule, one which you obviously know since you just recited it to me. And taunting me further with that ugly nightdress and your beautiful hair all twisted and pulled back." He shook his head sadly, solemnly. She didn't know how he kept a straight face because every time she looked she saw the laughter in his warm eyes. "I just don't think there's any other alternative, except to give you that spanking."

"Oh... no, please?" she begged, knowing she sounded less than half hearted in the effort, but playing along anyway. "I'll be a good girl. I promise!"

He was turning away to reach into the bottom drawer of the nightstand beside the bed, the drawer where all the toys were kept. He took something out that she couldn't see in the filmy, early morning light, and set it aside.

"Now, now, take your punishment like a big girl," he chided as he settled against the headboard and guided her over his legs. He yanked the offending panties down her legs and hurled them out into the center of the room. "Maybe I need to burn your panty supply, too, so you'll be sure not to make the same mistake twice."

For a few moments, he admired the naked

beauty over his lap, stroking gently over the lines of her body, from her fine shoulders down her back, past her full hips and bottom to her long legs and dainty toes.

"You see, THIS is what I wanted to roll over and be greeted with this morning." He continued to touch her, his fingers lingering near her backside and dipping down between her legs where she was slick and warm. She lay over his knees, her favorite place in the world, and enjoyed his exploration, sounding occasional moans.

The first spank caught her off guard. It was loud and quite hard and she gasped as he followed it with a second. He continued from there with a rapid pace, not giving her hardly enough time to react to one smack before another landed. His hand was broad and hard, backed by muscle and a love for the job he was doing, and it was not long before her bottom grew very warm under his attentions.

When she began to grind herself against the erection she could feel beneath her, he stopped suddenly and ordered her off his lap. He piled two pillows in the center of the bed and told her to lay over them, 'bottoms up' of course. Trembling with excitement as he scolded her for her wanton naughtiness, she obeyed, offering her warm, pink backside up to him like some obscene gift.

She felt the bed shift as he reached past her for the implement he'd chosen earlier from the drawer. Next she felt his weight as he settled down on top of her legs, sitting just where the backs of her knees lay. Then, she knew what he'd chosen from the toy drawer. He only pinned her legs when he was going to use his long black leather belt.

She looked back over one bare shoulder and her sex clenched at the sight of him holding the thick belt, long enough that one end hung loosely over the back of his hand. He grinned at her and winked as he snapped the belt against her bottom, swishing

it back and forth between her twin cheeks. He chuckled when she moaned under the raining licks, clutching the bed sheets in both hands.

"Like that, do you?" he asked. "You really are a very bad girl, aren't you?" He applied the length of leather low on her bottom, striking the same area repeatedly until she gave a little shout of mingled pain and pleasure. He settled his weight on the backs of her legs and applied his belt until her bottom was a deep, deep scarlet red. He only stopped when his arms grew too tired to keep up the merciless pace.

He collapsed in exaggerated fatigue beside her, running one hand over her hot behind and growing harder as her body quaked with shivers at his touch. She arched her back to meet his touch and moaned with abandon, then turned to face him, smiling.

"You exhaust me, woman," he scolded, frowning.

She giggled, coming to cuddle against his side. She ran one hand up his rib, knowing it tickled and loving how he captured it and held on. He pulled her tighter to him, cupping her well whipped bottom with his other hand as he took a few moments to catch his breath.

After a bit, he tilted her chin up with one finger and kissed her little nose. "So, was that how you imagined it?"

She nodded shyly, blushing, and attempted to duck her head against his body again, though he wouldn't let her. He squeezed her burning backside, and gave her a long, sweet kiss. "Good. I'm always glad to be of service."

She traced one masculine nipple with a fingertip, then gently grazed it with her teeth. He groaned and thrust one hand through her hair. "Maybe I can service you now," she whispered in his ear. Her lips drew his ear lobe into her mouth and she tormented him a while with her soft suckling, knowing just how

to undo him.

"Is your energy returning?" she teased, turning to the opposite earlobe and tickling through his chest hair with her fingers.

"I think it's... uh... on the rise," he quipped and they both laughed at the double meaning as she playfully tugged off his sweatpants and boxers, then slipped on top of his hard shaft. He gripped her red bottom in both hands while she had her way with him, staring up at his prize with wonder and love.

It was only afterward as they lay in a sleepy knot of legs and arms, slowly coming awake into the new day, that he nuzzled her neck and whispered, "Good morning, love."

Honeymoon

Lynn and Aaron's honeymoon was almost over and what a pity that was. It had been a modest honeymoon spent at a Caesar's resort in the Poconos instead of the more extravagant Hawaiian getaway they had originally planned. But the newlyweds had certainly made the best of it.

Not only had they consummated their marriage union in every place possible, but Lynn had also been spanked each and every day -- sometimes even more than once a day. Aaron had spanked her while in the hot tub, bent over the side of the heart shaped pool in their room, in the shower, over his knee first thing in the morning and last thing at night, on the massage table, in the sauna room, on the couch beside the fireplace, and so on. Lynn didn't think she would ever tire of having her husband inside of her -- or of having his hand cracking down on her bottom.

It was the last full day of their honeymoon, and Lynn and Aaron were returning from an afternoon horseback ride. Aside from making love, spanking, sleeping and eating, horseback riding was the only other thing the couple had done daily. Lynn loved riding and having the stables readily available at the resort was too good a thing to pass up, in her opinion. Plus, she rather liked the feel of her well spanked bum jostling about in the saddle.

Lynn and Aaron showered together, though Aaron stepped out of the bathroom ahead of his wife. When she came out with fresh makeup and newly curled hair, he was already dressed for their last dinner on vacation.

"I picked something out for you to wear," Aaron said, gesturing to the bed. Her slinky spaghetti strap black mini dress was laid out along with her 4" black heels. "And Lynn, I didn't forget your panties, bra, or pantyhose. I only want you to wear what I

put out for you."

A shiver ran through Lynn at her husband's sexy words. "Okay, honey." She kissed his cheek. "Just give me a few minutes to finish getting ready."

Aaron nodded and took himself off to watch the news in the little living area of the four level suite. Lynn pulled on the dress Aaron had laid out, then hobbled into the heels. At the last minute, she pulled out a pair of black French lace panties and pulled them on beneath her skirt. Just to defy him. She grinned at herself in the mirror, then joined her husband.

Dinner was delicious as it had been all week. Aaron escorted his wife from the dining room to the night club where they secured a table and enjoyed the live band. Lynn was starting to tire when the band came back from a break and announced a special request.

"This song is from Aaron Labe for his new bride, Lynn." Lynn's face flushed hot and red as her husband stood and offered his hand. She followed him onto the dance floor as the band started 'How sweet it is to be loved by you'. The audience, mostly young couples themselves, applauded and cheered the newlyweds.

Lynn was embarrassed, but touched. She usually had to guilt-trip her husband into dancing with her; she knew that it took a lot for him to lead her up on that dance floor, where they were the center of attention.

"I love you, Aaron Labe," she whispered in his ear.

He hugged her tighter. "And I love you, Lynn Labe."

The song was nearing its close all too soon for Lynn. As it ended, Aaron swung her off her feet and twirled her in a circle, then plopped her back on the floor, giving her bottom a playful swat. The audience laughed and applauded.

Lynn knew the reason why Aaron's eyes

suddenly narrowed after that swat.

"You're wearing panties, wife," he accused as if it were a crime. Lynn didn't say anything, suppressing a smile. "Oh, are you gonna get it," Aaron warned.

Aaron led his wife back to their suite and unlocked the door. He pulled her into his arms for a lingering kiss, then pulled back and smiled down at her.

"So, do you want your spanking before or after your last hot tub?" he queried.

She gave him a saucy grin as she made her way to said hot tub and flipped it on.

"Both."

"Oh, both, huh? You greedy little so-and-so..."

Giggling, Lynn tried to outrun her husband but he caught her quickly and had her over his knee, skirt shoved above her waist and panties at her ankles, before she could even give out one good squeal.

His skilled hand smacked down on her upturned cheeks and she moaned and wiggled and lifted her backside up for his attentions. He scolded her teasingly about how he'd teach her to be an obedient wife, if he had to spank her bare bottom every day and night. Her response to that was, "Oh, please?" and a new volley of stinging swats reigned down on her pink behind.

Aaron stopped the spanking much sooner than Lynn would have liked. "All right, Mrs. Labe. Get your fanny in that tub." He stood her up, pulled her dress up and over her head, turned her about and gave her one good swat to get her moving.

Lynn settled into the warm water with a happy sigh, enjoying the heated water on her heated backside. She watched hungrily as her husband removed his clothing, then joined her.

He framed her face between his large hands and kissed her slowly. When she teased his hard member with her hands, he grasped them at her

wrists to hold them aside. He tormented her breasts with his tongue and mouth, sucking on the hard buds and flicking them gently till she was moaning and struggling to free her hands. He grinned at her and nuzzled his warm lips to her neck.

Aaron finally released Lynn's wrists in favor of placing his hands under her wet bottom. He lifted her up to sit on the side of the tub, then leaned her back. He took each foot, kissed the instep, and then laid her legs over his shoulders. His dark head bent and all but disappeared between her legs.

Lynn was lost in the sensations of his tongue and mouth as he tasted her core. She writhed and moaned and bucked, calling his name and plunging her fingers into his thick hair. She felt, more than heard, his chuckle from his place inside her.

Finally, when she was so close to climax she could have screamed, he pulled back from her. Grinning wickedly, he pulled her back into the water and sheathed himself inside of her.

She gasped with the feeling of being filled with him, and allowed him to guide her hips in movement. Once again he brought her to the brink of an earth-shattering orgasm, then abruptly pulled her off of him.

"AARON!" she protested, giving him a good splash.

He laughed, stepping from the hot tub and pulled her along after him. "I almost forgot about your spanking after the hot tub."

She grumbled after him, wrapping a towel around her breasts and tucking it securely together under her arm. Aaron eyed this arrangement, then tugged the towel right off.

He took her hand, and led her to the bed. He sat down and flipped her over his lap.

"HMMMMM..." Lynn glanced over her shoulder to see her husband contemplating her backside, then glancing around the room. His hand snatched the resort guidebook from the nightstand, which he

rolled and then used to whack away at Lynn's bottom.

She couldn't help it -- he looked so darn cute searching the room for a spanking implement and then settling on the brochure. She laughed.

"You think I'm funny?" he roared, feigning outrage.

"No! hahahahahahaha Oww! No, sir! Oh!" she giggled.

"I'll teach you to laugh at your husband!" Aaron fired the rolled brochure against Lynn's bottom, but she was still laughing. "Oh, hell," he said, flinging it away. He started in with his hand instead and she immediately moaned. "Like that better, huh?"

"Yes! Owww! Oh! I mean --- ooh! NO!"

"Too late!" Aaron's hand kept spanking Lynn's bottom, turning it a dark pink. He smacked the same spot a couple times in succession, then moved to a new spot and slapped that a few times too. "I've got your number, lady!"

Lynn was one big horny nerve. She felt like she was never going to have this orgasm she was still so near to. She started begging him incoherently. "Oh, please, Aaron. Ow! Aaron..... plllleasssse!"

Aaron laughed arrogantly. He gave her red fanny a dozen or so more spanks before flipping her over and plunging himself to the hilt. Their climax was rapid and simultaneous and the neighbors most likely heard their shouts of release.

Lynn trembled afterwards and sought the security of her husband's strong arms. He gathered her close to him, cradling one breast in one hand and her warm bottom in the other.

"Sleep, Mrs. Labe," he whispered, pressing a kiss on her forehead. "Tomorrow we return to reality."

Hmmmm, Lynn thought, what a pity....

Inspiration

Gina glared at the computer screen as if it was her mortal enemy. It looked pretty wimpy for an enemy so hated, the page before her half blank and what she had typed not up to even her lowest standards. She sighed and squeezed her eyes tightly shut, trying to visualize the next scene in her mind. She saw nothing, just like she'd been seeing for the past few days.

The sound of the front door closing carried up the stairs and she heard her husband, Eric, calling out his arrival home. A few moments later, he came up behind her, his warm hands settling softly on her shoulders as his lips pressed against her neck in hello.

"Hi, sweetheart," he murmured against her skin. "How was your day?"

Her eyes fluttered closed more gently this time and, for a few moments, she forgot her writer's block and moaned. Eric chuckled and straightened to glance at the computer screen, his hands rubbing small soothing circles on Gina's shoulders.

"That's all you've written today?" he asked.

"Yes," she snapped. Her husband had only sounded surprised, knowing from past experience that she could knock out chapters in a day when she got on a roll. But in her present mood, she chose to take his remark the wrong way. "If you must know, I'm stuck. I have been for the past couple days. I can't seem to find the right way to end this novel no matter how hard I try."

"Well, maybe you're trying too hard," her helpful husband suggested. "Maybe you need to relax and it will come to you."

It was all Gina could do to keep from laughing. She'd tried that for the last week and it hadn't worked. It was only the last two days that she'd been pushing. She had a deadline, after all. She

told Eric this in what she thought was a calm manner, but he frowned at her and gave her his warning look, though he didn't say anything.

Then he took the mouse and scrolled up the page and read over what she'd written so far. Even after being married to this man for seven years, she still wanted to throw up her hands to cover the screen. Eric had never understood how very personal writing was for her. It sometimes nearly drove her crazy to have him read her work in progress. She felt much better having him settle down with an almost finished project, when all her gut wrenching work was finished and only the easy editing stuff needed to be done. But somewhere along the line Eric had decided that not even her writing would be off limits to him and he now kept up with her writing as she worked on it. And, to his credit, he had helped her out in the past.

Not that that knowledge made it any easier for her to sit there while he read the rotten excuse for fiction she had written today.

When he looked up at her, he shrugged. "Well, it's not your best work, but maybe if you keep going with it you'll at least get all the ideas down and then you can go back for rewrites."

Gina gritted her teeth. "It sucks!" she shouted. "It's the worst thing I've ever written. I have no idea how else to end the damn thing and I have to have it in by the end of the month!"

"Gina, calm down."

His tone of voice should have been a warning, but she was really fuming. "Just leave me alone, Eric. I need time to think."

"I have an idea for how you could end it."

"Eric, please. This is my story, okay? You can't write it for me. Now can you please leave me alone for a while?"

He sighed as he nodded. To her surprise he gave her a gentle kiss on the top of her head. "I love you, Gina Maria. I'll go start dinner."

Gina set her head in her hands after he walked out of the room. Now she felt guilty. He was only trying to help after all. As usual. Why did men always think they could fix everything?

Well, she'd apologize to him after she figured out her ending.

An hour later, Eric came back into the room to find his wife with her head in her hands, cursing quietly under her breath. He smiled and resumed the gentle massage he had started when he'd first come home.

"I'll pretend I didn't hear those words," he teased her.

She responded with a muffled sound that wasn't even a word.

"Come on, baby. It's time for a break. Dinner's ready. I made you a big bowl of spaghetti and garlic bread just the way you like it."

Gina glanced up at Eric and frowned. "I'm not getting up from this desk until I figure out my ending," she said stubbornly.

Eric snorted. "Honey, be reasonable. You have to eat. Now come on. I'm trying to be patient and understanding here, but you're really pushing it now." Gina pounded one small fist on the computer table. "I am not leaving here until I have the ending for my book! Now leave me the hell alone!!!"

"All right, that's it." Eric snagged her wrist and pulled her to her feet, taking her place in the computer chair in one swift motion. Gina was face down over his knees in a heartbeat, her dress hitched up to her waist and her panties down to her knees in the next.

Eric's hand cracked down on her upturned bottom with enough force to make her squeal and kick from the first spank.

"I've had all the attitude from you I'm going to take today, Gina Marie. You can't treat me any way you like just because you're having a bad day. All

I've tried to do since I walked in the door tonight is help you and all you've done is snap at me about it."

"Oww! Please stop! Eric!!"

Eric watched his wife's creamy bottom change from pink to red under his hard hand. He used sharp, crisp swats to punctuate his words as he continued scolding her.

"We're supposed to be a team, you and I. You have a problem, you're supposed to come to me. Maybe I could help you if you gave me the chance. Did you ever think of that? It wouldn't be the first time, you know."

"Ohhhh! Eric! Please! I'm sooooooryyyy!"

Eric paused and rubbed the reddened tush over his knee. Her skin was hot to the touch and she gasped when he gave her a little pinch.

"Are you ready to listen to the ending I had to suggest for your book?" he asked softly.

"Eric, you can't...."

Six hard, fast spanks bounced off her cheeks, making her gasp and putting a stop to what she'd been about to say.

"Your heroine has been a thorn in the side of the hero throughout the whole novel," he said, spanking her occasionally as he spoke, just so she wouldn't think he'd forgotten why he's put her there over his knees in the first place. "And a lot of the trouble she's caused for him, she's done on purpose, for the sheer pleasure of getting a rise out of him. Poor guy, he fell in love with her anyway. But, if I were him - and if I were you, writing for him - I'd have him give her the spanking of her life as the way to end your book."

"WHAT?" Gina looked out her shoulder at her husband, her expression incredulous. Did the man think a spanking was the answer to everything? Actually, judging from past experience and the current state of her sore bottom, he probably did. "You're crazy! I'd be lucky if they'd even publish

my book if I had the hero spank the heroine at the end."

Eric's fingers had strayed to between Gina's legs where he currently stroked her moist curls there with a pointed look on his face. He said, "If you write it right, it'd be a best seller. And you know it."

A moment later, he had gently deposited her off his lap and stood up. Gina rubbed her bottom briefly before hesitantly pulling up her panties and letting her skirt fall down. She looked up to see her husband holding out his hand to help her up from the floor, and she shyly took it, grimacing a bit as she stood and her bottom bumped against the computer desk.

Eric saved her file and shut down the computer while she stood beside him and thought about his suggestion, alternately rejecting it and embracing it in her mind. Every few minutes she told her racing hormones to calm down since dinner was already cooling downstairs and there'd be time later for making love to her husband the way she yearned to right then.

After a hurried dinner during which Gina squirmed in her seat and let her mind run wild with ways she could use Eric's suggestion in the ending of her book, she helped him clean up the kitchen and gave him a kiss and hug.

"I'm sorry I was such a brat," she said.

"It's okay." He playfully snapped the dishtowel off her backside. "Go on with you now. I know you're dying to get up there and write. I'll be waiting for you in bed when you're done."

She paused long enough to give her husband the long, slow kiss he definitely deserved. "I love you," she whispered.

An hour later, Gina looked up from the computer screen, flexing her fingers, and saw her husband standing slouched against the doorway, watching her.

"How long you been standing there?"

He shrugged. "Long enough. Do you have your ending?"

She nodded, beaming like she hadn't in days. "Yup. Thanks to you. It'll need some rewriting but it's all there for now."

"Good. How about you come with me and give me a proper thank you?"

"You don't have to sound so smug," she teased, shutting down the computer. She slid into his arms with a satisfied sigh and snuggled close. "Even if you've got a right to...."

Learning the Hard Way

Annie let herself into Josh's hotel room, still marveling over how easy it had been to wheedle a key from the desk manager. All she'd had to do was bat her eyelashes at him, smile sweetly and say how she was here to surprise her husband who was staying at the hotel while on business, and could he please, please give her a key so she could wait for him in his room? Her story was true, too, though she was sure it would not be a pleasant surprise for Josh.

She settled into an overstuffed arm chair by the window and sat there in the dark, waiting for her husband of eight years to return. It was already nearly midnight - she wondered how much longer he'd be.

Joshua Bradshaw was as roguishly handsome now as he'd been ten years ago when Anne had first met him. She still didn't know what he'd seen in her to make him stop to look twice, let alone ask her out and later marry her. Her husband could have any woman he wanted. In addition to his movie star looks, he was a very successful self-made businessman with charm that overflowed and an old-fashioned sense of gentlemanship about him. Why he'd chosen to marry her, she would never understand. Though Annie was pretty and smart, and Josh could probably list hundreds of reasons why he'd chosen her for his wife, she had a pretty low opinion of herself; he'd told her once that it was the one and only thing he would change about her, were he able to.

Annie was certain that Josh was having an affair with his business partner, Jennifer Shelton, a knockout predatory blonde with legs that went on forever, a flawless face and a model's body. She'd seen how Jennifer rubbed up against Josh at every opportunity, always finding a way to touch his

shoulder, his arm, his knee. She laughed riotously at any simple joke he told and always agreed with him about business matters. When she thought no one was watching, Jennifer would look Annie's husband over from head to toe, all but licking her full lips and drooling.

Of course, Josh said that Annie was being ridiculous, seeing things that Jennifer did in the wrong light. And, he argued, even if his partner did have a thing for him, it didn't make any difference because he was married to Annie, and he loved her. Annie wasn't convinced.

And this time when he'd gone to New York for some business meetings with Jennifer in tow, Annie had made up her mind to end this once and for all. She planned to wait for him here, and catch him in the act when he came back to his room with Jennifer on his arm.

As luck would have it, she didn't have long to wait. She sat bolt upright when she heard the key in the lock and watched in the darkness as her husband came into the room, banging his knee on the dresser corner. She winced for him, then blinked as he suddenly flipped on the light. She barely had time to adjust her eyes to the sudden brightness before Josh turned around and saw her sitting there by the window.

"Annie!" he said, obviously surprised. "What're you doing here?"

But Annie didn't hear the happy surprise in his voice or notice the grin on his weary face. "Where's Jennifer?" she snarled.

He shrugged. "I left her at the door to her room," he said. "We just finished up a late dinner with a client...."

"Yes, a VERY late dinner."

Josh's blue eyes narrowed as it began to dawn on him why his wife was here. She hadn't come to surprise him and help make another boring business trip more bearable, oh no. She'd come to check up

on him, probably thinking to catch him and Jennifer fooling around, because no matter what he'd told her in the past, she just never seemed to believe that nothing was going on between him and Jennifer Shelton.

He crossed his muscular arms over his chest and frowned at his bristly little wife. "You know, Annie Marie Bradshaw, I've just about lost all patience with you on this issue."

"WHAT issue, Josh?" she challenged triumphantly, as if his reference to it was confirmation that it was true. Hell, to her it probably was.

Josh sighed. He paused for a minute to step out of his loafers, take off his neck tie and unbutton the first few buttons on his dress shirt. He hung his suit coat over the back of a chair and stood before her in dress slacks, suspenders and socks with his soft, dark chest hair peeking out of his shirt. He ran a hand through his thick hair as he studied her. What was he going to do with this woman??

He sat on the bed and closed his eyes briefly. Lord, it had been a long day. He wished Annie was here as a sweet surprise so he could cuddle her womanly curves against his hard plains and fall asleep with her in his arms. Instead he was going to have to try, again, to convince her of his fidelity.

"Annie," he finally said, noting that she practically had steam coming out her ears since he'd taken so long to respond to her. "I've told you over and over, I am not having an affair with Jennifer. Or anyone else. What do I have to say to get that through your head?"

She glared at him. "You seem awful tired, Josh," she remarked acidly. "Maybe I've been waiting in the wrong hotel room...."

"It's after midnight, Annie!" he roared. "That's why I'm tired, damn it!"

"Humph! And you expect me to believe you were at a business dinner this late in the evening?"

He was getting close to totally losing it. His voice was hard when he said, "I expect you to believe whatever I tell you, Mrs. Bradshaw. Because I am your husband and I took a vow to be faithful to you. A vow I take very seriously and that you should know I would never break." He paused and watched her. Damn her, she wasn't even looking at him! What did it take to get through her thick skull? He'd tried everything he could think of. Well, except....

"Annie." That tone got her attention. The pretty green eyes that turned to him were wary. "Come here."

Annie found herself responding to that tone and didn't understand it or herself. Before she knew it, she was at Josh's side. He took her hand and looked up at her with gentle, hurt eyes. But his voice was the same hard steel when he spoke again.

"Annie, I have tried everything I can think of to get it through your head that I am not cheating on you, that I never would. It hurts me that you'd even think I would do that. But you don't hear me - I don't think you even listen to me anymore." He let go of her hand and began to roll his shirtsleeves up as he continued. "I have one more idea to try and convince you, and I hope it works, because I love you and I'm tired of this always coming between us. Once and for all, you have to learn to trust me and if you need to learn it the hard way, then so be it."

Annie was so caught up in what he was saying - and in that strange tone she'd never heard from him before - that she didn't understand at first when Josh took her wrist and guided her face down over his lap. He flipped her skirt up onto her back and tugged her lacy panties down to her knees. Oh my God, she thought, he's going to....

*SMACK! As if to punctuate her thought, Josh's hard, flat palm connected with Annie's unprotected

bottom for the first time.

"OW!" she protested, looking back over her shoulder in time to see her husband's hand falling down from shoulder level to spank her again. *SMACK! "Oh! Josh! Let me go!" Josh banded his free arm around Annie's waist and locked her wiggling body against his chest. He zeroed in on his target then, putting all of his remaining strength into the task of warming her backside.

"Hear me, Annie *SMACK Marie *SMACK Bradshaw *SMACK. I have never *SMACK cheated on you *SMACK. I have never *SMACK slept with Jennifer *SMACK SMACK. Or anyone else *SMACK. I'm sick *SMACK and tired *SMACK of always defending myself *SMACK *SMACK *SMACK for something I have never done. I am your husband *SMACK and you are supposed to trust me *SMACK *SMACK. I've never given you *SMACK any *SMACK reason not to trust me*SMACK. I *SMACK love *SMACK you, dammit! Do you hear me, Annie?"

"Yes!" Annie cried, sniffing and trying very hard not to give over to the tears welled in her eyes. Josh's hand kept firing away at her backside even after her agreement and she felt the first tears as they started down her face.

"Good! *SMACK I'm only going to say this *SMACK one more time, Annie, *SMACK so listen up*SMACK and remember this the next time *SMACK you think to doubt me *SMACK. You are the only *SMACK woman I want *SMACK *SMACK or need *SMACK *SMACK *SMACK. I have never cheated on you *SMACK *SMACK and I never will *SMACK *SMACK. And I don't ever *SMACK *SMACK want to have to *SMACK *SMACK tell you that again *SMACK *SMACK *SMACK."

He stood her up abruptly and Annie's hands immediately flew to her reddened bottom to try to rub some of the sting away. She was staring at him through her tears and he smiled crookedly.

She let him frame her face in his large hands and he wiped her cheeks with his thumbs.

"Now then, Annie. Did I get through to you that time? 'Cause if not, I can give a repeat performance every night for as long as it takes to convince you."

Annie shook her head vigorously and Josh bit back a laugh. "Oh, no, you won't have to do that!" she blurted. Though she did have the strangest warm, tingly feelings in her sex, much like arousal - wasn't that strange?, she thought.

Josh leveled a stern look at his wife and said, "I want to hear you say it."

She only hesitated a moment. Her voice was quiet as she said, "You wouldn't cheat on me. You love me."

"Damn right," he agreed. Now he did grin at her. "Say it once more, honey, so I'm sure you got the message. Good and loud, like you mean it Annie, or I'll think all that spanking was for nothing and I'll have to start all over again."

"You love me!" she all but shouted in his handsome face. "You'd never cheat on me!"

Josh's grin broadened and he pulled his wife into his arms. "Much better." he sat her gingerly on one knee and rested his forehead against hers. "Much, much better."

They sat in silence for a few minutes and then Annie's stomach sounded a loud growl that made them both laugh.

"Hungry, sweetheart?" he asked. She nodded. Even though he was exhausted, Josh pulled himself to his feet and watched Annie pull up her panties and arrange her skirt. "I think there's a deli down the block that's open late."

At the door, Annie caught her husband's hand and looked up at him. "Josh, I'm sorry. I know you better than that. I just worry sometimes about losing you. I mean, you could have any woman you wanted...."

He put one long finger up to her lips. "Shh. I only want you. Remember that for me, okay? In fact, I'll write it down for you. Because I don't want you to keep on doubting yourself, or my love for you. In fact, I'd advise you to stop that right now, unless you'd like another trip over my knee." She blushed quiet prettily at his last words. He took her hand and led her to the elevators.

The following morning, Josh let Annie sleep in when he got up and went off for his meeting. He left her a note on his pillow so she'd know about when to expect him back. And beneath that he'd written: "I love and want ONLY you, Annie Marie Bradshaw. Remember that always." And below that, he listed "just a few" of the reasons he'd chosen her all those years ago.

Annie cuddled into the covers on his side of the bed and read the note over and over once again. She smiled when she rolled a certain way and felt the lingering affects of Josh's hand on her bottom. Yes, she knew now how much he really did love her.

Wedding Night

The entire ride home, toilet paper and streamers flying off the car and tin cans rattling along behind them, a delicious anticipation fluttered in her stomach. She glanced at her new husband and caught his eye; he gave her a slow smile and a wink that made her heartbeat accelerate.

As they'd danced the last dance at their wedding reception, surrounded by friends and family blowing bubbles that floated and popped around them, he'd pulled her close in his arms and whispered in her ear, "Boy, are you ever gonna get it when I get you alone tonight."

She'd blushed bright and hot, looking around at all the guests as if he'd shouted the threat. Of course, no one had heard him over the music, laughter, and talk. He'd looked down at her flushed face and chuckled.

"W-w-what'd I do?" she'd stammered quietly into his ear once she'd convinced herself that no one had heard him. She'd looked innocently up at him from beneath lowered lids.

He'd chuckled again, a warm sound that she felt more than heard with all the surrounding noise. "You KNOW what you've done," he'd whispered back, his sweet breath tickling her neck and ear. "I suggest you think about ALL you've done between now and then."

The song had been coming to an end and as his last words rang in her head he'd suddenly swung her up off the floor and around in a circle. He'd plunked her back onto her dainty heeled feet with a smacking kiss on the lips and a playful swat to her lace covered fanny.

Cheers and applause had enveloped them as she blushed again to the roots of her hair and smiled shyly back at their well-wishers. He'd taken her hand then and tugged her away with him, waving to

their friends and family. She'd been so wrapped up in what he'd whispered to her she'd hardly even reacted to the toilet papered, tin-canned car that he'd settled her in, and then drove away, laughing at his buddies' handiwork.

Now, as they pulled into their driveway, the butterflies in her stomach that had lain dormant since the last time she'd been in this situation suddenly woke and set about a made, crashing flight. Her husband came around to her side of the car, opened her door for her and helped her out. He grinned knowingly as he pulled her along behind him up the steps to their front door.

After unlocking the door, he surprised her by sweeping her off her feet and carrying her over the threshold. She giggled nervously as he kicked the door shut behind them and set her on the arm of the sofa. He framed her face and gave her a long, slow kiss that, momentarily at least, took her mind off of what was to come.

When he pulled back, he grinned and tweaked her nose before tugging her back to her feet. "Upstairs with you, little wife!" he ordered playfully, pointing to the staircase in one corner of the room.

The butterflies resumed their crazed flight as she held her lacy wedding gown up so that she could climb the stairs to their bedroom. Inside that room, she sat and fidgeted on the bed, wondering how long he'd make her wait. Should she undress, maybe put on the lacy little nightgown she had planned for their wedding night? Although they'd been together nearly seven years and she often knew his thoughts almost before he did in any other situation, she never knew what to expect from him when he was like this.

The anticipation was turning rapidly into excitement the longer she sat there on their bed, shifting her seat subconsciously and twisting the new wedding band around and around on her finger. She was just about the slip off the pinching

high heels when he suddenly appeared in the doorway, his tux jacket gone as well as his tie.

"No, no," he scolded, actually shaking a finger at her as if she were a naughty child inside of his mate. "Don't take a thing off, not even your shoes."

Silently, she slipped her feet back into the heels and sat watching him as he came the rest of the way into the room. The top two buttons of his dress shirt were undone and a couple dark chest curls peeked through the gap. The backless black vest accentuated his slim waist and broad shoulders. His blue gaze was warm as he watched her squirm. His long tan fingers deftly unsnapped his cuff links and made short work of folding the sleeves of the shirt up to reveal his strong forearms. It was then that she had to look away. By the time he'd finished his preparation, he stood directly in front of her, and she could feel the heat of his eyes on her. With one finger, he tipped her chin up so she had to look at him.

"So," he said casually, a smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. "Have you figured out why you're in trouble yet?"

She nodded, biting her bottom lip.

"Good girl." He sat beside her and pulled her easily onto his lap. The lacy white material of her dress pooled over his legs, puddling onto his booted feet. "How 'bout you tell me then..."

She swallowed and met his gaze, finding an ache between her legs at the look in his eye. "Well," she started shyly, "there was... you know.... I creamed you with the cake..."

He laughed at the way she put it. "Yes, you certainly did! That was quite naughty, don't you think?"

She blushed as she always did when he scolded her. But she nodded her agreement.

"That's a good start, sweetheart. What else, now?"

"I... I danced with every man at the reception..."

"That's right, you did. You little flirt. I think you were trying to make me jealous!"

"No, I just wanted everyone to have a good time!"

He chuckled. "Well, I think you succeeded. YOU certainly had a good time leading the conga line through the reception hall with your dress hitched up to your waist..."

"It wasn't up that high!" she protested. "I had to hold the skirt up or else I would have tripped over it!!"

"I know," he placated. "But admit it, you were pushing me for this all day long. You should be glad I didn't put your over my knee right there in the middle of the dance floor! And then you and your sisters gyrating on the dance floor and you turning to Bobby and dirty dancing with him..."

"Well, at least he wanted to dance with me!" she huffed. At his raised eyebrow, she pouted. "It was only a dance. You're the one I married, in case you didn't notice."

"Oh, I noticed all right, little girl. I noticed ALL of it. And that's why you're going over my knee, right now."

And that fast she was bottoms up over his lap, her full skirt flung over her head to expose her stockinged legs, lacy garter belt and sheer white panties. In truth, she didn't fight him at all. And, he noticed with a grin, that his little bride had worn her panties OVER her garter belt, making it all the easier for him to pull them down, which he promptly did. Yup, it was exactly the way he'd thought. The little brat had planned this all along.

She wriggled a bit over his lap, moaning quietly as he tugged her panties down to her knees and took a moment to caress her bared bottom. His hand wandered down the length of each silk encased leg, then caught her off guard by dipping

briefly into the junction of her thighs. She blushed, for what had to be the hundredth time that day, knowing how very wet she already was there.

"Tsk, tsk, tsk," she heard above her through yards of lace and silk. "What a naughty little brat I've married myself to..."

His wide palm made first contact with her bottom with a loud, satisfying CRACK! Her sex clenched in response to the immediate warmth and sting as her husband gave her a second SMACK!, followed by a third, and a fourth....

"Naughty, naughty little thing," he scolded as he spanked her, picking up his pace and getting into the task. She gasped and arched against him as he rained his hand down on her naked flesh over and over again. She lifted her hips up to receive his hand more fully and little moans of pleasure fell from her lips between the gasps and little "ow"'s and "ouch"'s.

"I - can - see - that - I'm - going - to - have - my - hands - full - with - taming - you! You - are - really - a - very - bad - girl - aren't - you?" Each word was punctuated with a hard, stinging clap of his hand to her quickly reddening behind.

Her response to his question was a little squeal at the particularly hard swat that ended it. Her husband paused to run his hand over her hot skin and she ground her sex against his leg.

"Answer me, wife," he demanded quietly. "You are a very bad girl, aren't you?"

"Mmm-hmmm. Ow! Yes, sir. I'm.... bad girl..."

"Yes, that's right. SMACK! Maybe a good spanking SPLAT! like SPANK! this one CLAP! every day CRACK! CRACK! will help you remember SPANK! to be a good girl SMACK! for your husband. Even if only once in a while. SMACK! CLAP! CRACK! What do you think?"

"Yes sir! Whatever - ow! - whatever you think is best for me! Ouch!!"

"Good answer. I like that. Now, I think," he

rubbed her sore bottom absently as he spoke, "I think that ten more good, hard, stinging spanks ought to finish this hot, red bottom of yours up good and proper. What do you say to that, sweetheart?"

"Ohhhh, yes sir, if you think that's best..."

"Hmm, you're learning already. Ten more it is, then...." WHACK! CRACK! WAP! SMACK! CRACK! CRACK! WAP! WAP! WAP! SMACK! SMACK!

"Hey, that was eleven!"

SPANK! "Are you arguing with your new husband already?" he growled.

She stifled a giggle. "No, sir. Sorry."

"Humph! Well, I'll give you the benefit of the doubt this time lady, but next time you're in this position - and I think we both know you'll find yourself here more often than not - I suggest you keep comments like that to yourself. Unless you think your bottom isn't warm enough already." His hand soothed over her skin as if testing the heat himself. "Hmm, actually it is cooling down quite a bit back here, and we can't have that after you've been such a naughty little girl today. I better freshen you up some."

"No!"

The husband chuckled at the mock protest and set about re-warming his wife's behind. He kept her over his lap for a while, until her backside was hot again to the touch and dark crimson in color. She was grinding shamelessly against him and had been quietly pleading with him to take her for a while by then. He helped her stand and took his sweet time taking the wedding gown from her body. Then he had her face the corner and display her beautiful, red bottom, framed by white lace and silk while he undressed. Next, he lay back on the bed, while she stepped from her heels and took off her undergarments.

Finally, he pulled her to him and sat her gently onto his throbbing sex, loving the changes in her

half-drugged eyes as he guided her into a slow rhythm. His hands eventually slide from grasping her hips to cupping her bottom cheeks, occasionally reaching up to toy with her nipples, though he mostly let his mouth dally with those. As they both grew closer to the peak, his hands resumed spanking her bottom, both reaching back at the same time and clapping her backside loud and hard. She screamed his name and went wild over him; they slammed together frantically until they both fell over the edge.

A while afterwards, they lay together, him still inside of her, her head resting on his chest and his arms holding her tight. When it had been quiet for a bit, and their breathing had slowed, he gave her fanny a soft pat and whispered, "We still need to discuss all the champagne you drank, sweetheart."

He felt the way she clenched around him as she glanced up innocently with dancing eyes and chirped, "What champagne, dear?"

A New Woman

Karen Jacoby, formerly Karen Smith, sat by the window of the fancy honeymoon suite, writing her new married name in various ways on the hotel stationary. Like a teenager with a crush, she scrawled "Karen Jacoby," "Mrs. Michael Jacoby," "Mrs. Karen Jacoby," over and over, grinning wider and wider as a wonderful thought came to her.

Sweet, innocent, responsible Karen Smith, little Miss Goodie Two-Shoes, no longer existed! The name on her social security card, her Visa and American Express, her future paychecks, her driver's license, and even her library card was now Karen Jacoby. She giggled as she completed the new name once again with a fond flourish. It was sort of like she had a completely new identity, a totally new life, which she could make into whatever she wanted. And she definitely had some ideas!

It wasn't that Karen didn't like the person she had always been. Karen Smith had a wonderful job and was respected and well liked by her co-workers. She had a handsome, easy-going fiancé who understood her spanking desires and often indulged her with erotic spanking foreplay, and even a little "bad girl" role play on occasion. But sometimes, being good old Karen Smith got really boring. There were times she wanted to let go and really let somebody have it, instead of always turning the other cheek and being understanding of others. Sometimes she just wanted to break out of her life-long "nice girl" role and truly be the mischievous, naughty thing she sometimes fantasized about. And she longed to have Michael take her in hand for being that naughty thing - for real, not just in play. She literally had ached for it before.

But sweet, nice Karen Smith would NEVER - COULD never - break out of her good girl role. She

just couldn't bring herself to do it. But Karen Jacoby - well, she was a whole, brand-new woman, wasn't she?

Still grinning, Karen set aside the stationary and pen, and padded over to where Michael still slept in their love-tousled bed. She ruefully peeled the long, modest, white lace and cotton nightgown from her body and gleefully tossed it away, as if it alone was that boring old Karen Smith persona. She sat, naked, on the edge of the bed next to her sleeping husband.

She trailed light fingertips over his bare chest and arms, up his neck and along the line of his cheeks. But except for a ghost of a smile playing at his mouth, Michael slept on.

Karen knew that Mike was exhausted. His buddies had taken him out the night before last for a bachelor party at the local bar. Even though her new husband didn't drink, he'd gone along and stayed out fairly late with his friends. Then, yesterday had been their wedding day, an emotionally tiring day indeed, followed by a long, wonderful night of love-making. Karen Smith would have let her sweetheart sleep in, probably curling up beside him to watch him sleep, or maybe to quietly read a book until he woke on his own.

But Karen Jacoby had other ideas!

When her gentle touch failed to rouse him, Karen trailed her fingers along Michael's ribcage, knowing how ticklish he was. He jumped a bit in his sleep and one big hand swatted reflexively at her smaller one. She kept at it a few minutes, quietly calling his name, but he slept on, basically undisturbed.

HUMPH!

Next she tried bouncing on the bed. She was sitting right next to him and she gave the mattress a couple really good jars, jostling the sleeping man mercilessly. He made a sleepy sound of protest and rolled away from her onto his side.

Well, now she was determined to wake him up! Maybe Karen Smith would have given up when her husband turned his back to her, but Karen Jacoby saw it as a challenge - one that she was going to win! She bounded around to the other side of the bed, leaned down on her elbows, practically nose to nose with Michael - and pinched his nose closed.

That did the trick! Michael woke with a sputter, the first thing he saw being his sweet angel of a wife, right smack in his face, holding his nose closed with vise-like fingers. He pulled back and she let go, suddenly grinning ear to ear as he blinked at her in confusion.

"Good morning, sleepyhead!" she sang cheerfully.

Michael's brows drew together over his red rimmed green eyes and he glanced at the nightstand where the red numbers on the alarm clock read 6:55 a.m. He scowled at his wife.

"Couldn't we have slept in a bit?" he grumbled.

She pouted at him. Rather prettily, but Michael couldn't remember ever seeing Karen pout before in all the time he had known her.

"If you want to sleep, fine," she complained, toying with his chest hair. "But I want to have sex and then go for a horseback ride."

His brows shot up - she wanted "to have sex"? Karen always called it "making love." He'd never heard her call it "sex" before.

She bent over him and laved at one bare nipple. Then she glanced up at him and whispered, "Come on, baby. Fuck your wife."

WHAT!?!

Michael sat up and held Karen at arm's length from him. What had gotten into her?

"Watch your language, Karen," he warned in a low growl.

"What?" She feigned innocence, looking at him with doe eyes, knowing all the while how much Michael hated foul language, especially from a

woman, and most especially from her. "All I said was fu..."

"That's enough!" Michael interrupted. He studied her through narrowed eyes. "You know I hate bad language - especially from a lady like you!"

She frowned at him; poor Michael, he just didn't understand it yet. His 'lady' was no more...

She moved the sheet from where it had bunched around his waist and her fingers immediately grasped his manhood, making him gasp with sudden pleasure.

"I'm tired of being a lady, Michael." Karen purred, sliding her hand up and down the silky hardness of him. "I want you to fuck me."

This time when she said it, he saw the sparkle in her eyes and the way her little bow of a mouth tilted up at the corners. And he understood what she was up to - or at least he thought he did.

"Oh, my, someone's going to get herself a good spanking for talking that way," he growled huskily. When she looked up into his eyes, he winked.

She frowned.

Hmmm... he couldn't imagine what else she'd be after with this out of character behavior. But, even as he tugged her over his lap, Karen was still frowning.

Karen Jacoby lay over her husband's knees as he playfully spanked her bare bottom. It felt good - like always - warm and a bit stingy. But his swats were light - as usual - and his scolding was playful, almost silly. He figured she was out for a role-play session. He still didn't get it yet. His sweet, sugary Karen Smith was gone - and sassy, bratty Karen Jacoby was the one he had to deal with now.

She sighed and gave herself over to the spanking foreplay. Later, she'd get the message across. For now, she let her husband spank her with his light, stinging smacks until she was wet and writhing over his lap, rubbing shamelessly over his

arousal through the sheet. He told her what a naughty little minx she was and threatened her a good spanking every day of the rest of their lives together, joking that he should have included that in his marriage vows to her yesterday. When he finally turned her onto her pinkened backside after dallying a long while with his fingers inside her slick sex, she nearly came immediately as he plunged deep inside her.

Michael glanced at his wife as she tugged his hand, skipping beside him, on their way to the stables. He didn't know what was up with her, but she was like a different woman. And he was beginning to really dislike the change.

The sweet, kind Karen that Michael had fallen in love with would never have flirted so openly with their waiter at breakfast. Nor would she have stuck her little foot into the aisle and tried to trip her husband on his way back from the mens' room. From the moment he'd woken up this morning, courtesy of his little wife pinching his nose closed so he couldn't breathe - then boldly grabbing hold of his erection and announcing that she wanted him to fuck her - it was like she was someone else.

Where was the cute, nice little lady he'd fallen so hard for and married - just yesterday?

At the stables, Karen argued with the groom, who wanted to put her on a gentle old mare. She spotted an antsy black stallion pacing in one of the stalls and demanded him. When Michael began to agree with the groom that the black was too spirited for her, she angrily told him to mind his own business - she knew how to ride and could take care of herself.

Michael stared at her in open surprise and confusion. His first instinct was to forbid her from getting on that horse - actually, what he thought to do first was turn her right around and march her back to their room for an honest to goodness licking, then some time in the corner to reflect on

her behavior. He'd never punished her for real, only in play, though; and while the idea popped right into his mind, he just as quickly rejected it. This was the year 2000, and he wasn't a caveman. If he did that, whether she deserved it or not, Karen would probably divorce him on the spot.

He hoped the groom wouldn't give in to her, but before long he was seated beside her on the docile mare she'd rejected, while she was sitting astride the prancing black. He didn't have nearly as much riding experience as she did and was content with the pretty little paint. He let his wife take the lead and his horse followed contentedly behind.

The riding path was clearly marked and only about a mile long. Karen had sharply refused the groom's offer to guide them along the trail and Michael hoped his unusually disagreeable wife was as capable of handling that horse as she thought she was.

It wasn't long before Karen kicked her mount into a trot, then a canter. Michael's mare was slow to follow, but he managed to catch up to her after a few minutes.

"Karen, slow down," he suggested as he came abreast of her. The black stallion was restless and impatient as he ate up the ground. It looked to Michael like Karen was having a hard time keeping the horse in line.

She tossed her blond braid over her shoulder and laughed. "What's wrong, husband?" she taunted. "Can't you keep up with your little wife?"

He scowled at her, his hand itching to spank some of her attitude away. "No, I'm just worried about that horse you're riding. He seems half wild and if you give him too much head..."

To his amazement, Karen suddenly shot off ahead of him, yelling out, "Bet you can't catch me!"

Michael's old mare held back naturally as he openly stared after his wife. She rode up and over a rise in the path, disappearing from sight.

That does it, Mike thought, urging the little mare to speed up. Being bratty and trying to goad him into spanking her was one thing. But something more was going on her - and racing off wildly on that stallion was damn dangerous. When he got a hold of her, he was going to....

The thought died uncompleted as Michael rode over the rise and reined in when he saw Karen on the ground, her horse prancing away from her.

He dismounted, running, and reached her in seconds.

"God, Karen! Are you okay?"

She was moving slowly into a sitting position. "Yeah, Mike, I think so." She sounded shaky. All of the previous attitude was gone from her voice.

Mike helped her stand and held onto her arm as she took a couple hesitant steps. She gave him a crooked smile and said in a watery voice, "I'm okay. I'll just be a little sore tomorrow, that's all."

Relief that she was unharmed quickly was overcome by anger. Michael grabbed hold of her arm when she started back towards the horse as if to remount and ride off again.

"That's where you're wrong, Mrs. Jacoby," he growled, pulling her with him towards a large rock. He planted one booted foot on that rock and turned his surprised wife right over his raised knee. "When I'm through with you, woman, you'll be very, SWAT! very SMACK! Sore!"

And there, to the side of the horse trail, in the middle of the Pocono Mountains, Michael Jacoby proceeded to spank the daylights out of his new wife.

Even through her jeans, Michael's hard SMACKS made Karen yelp. He'd never spanked her so hard! And as he smacked her bottom, he railed at her for her behavior, emphasizing each word with another spank. "I - don't - know - what's - gotten - into - you - Karen Elaine - but - you'd - better - get - over - it - right quick. You - could - have - broken -

your - crazy - neck - on - that - horse. You're - damn - lucky - you're - not - hurt - worse!"

"Oww! Ahh! Michael! Stop! OW!" Karen kicked and struggled over his knee, trying to get away from his punishing hand. There was no escape for her, though. And the spanking went on... and on....

"You scared me to death! SMACK! SWAT! What is going on with you? WHACK! CRACK! All morning SPANK! you've been like SMACK! a different person SMACK! and I SPANK! want CRACK! my WAP! Karen SWAT! Back!"

"Owww! Mike! Please, you're hurting me!"

"Too bad!"

"Mike, stop! Please, I'm sorry!" She was actually crying - large, fat tears that dropped from her chin onto the rock below. She couldn't believe a spanking through her jeans and panties was making her cry!

After another dozen hard smacks, Michael set his tearful wife on her feet. She wiped at her face and looked down at the ground, away from his stern gaze.

Michael grabbed her chin with his hand and forced her face up. "Look at me, Karen." He waited till she met his eyes. Lord, he looked like he could kill her with his bare hands. Her bottom stung awfully with the reminder of exactly what those hands could do. "I don't know what's going on with you, but you've got a lot of explaining to do for your behavior today. We're going back to our room, and we'll finish your spanking there...."

"FINISH....!"

"That's right. I'm not done with your butt by a long shot, little girl." He tugged her by the hand back to the horses and ordered her up on the mare. She was too surprised to do anything but obey him. She watched in silence as Michael collected the black and turned resolutely back towards the stables, walking in front of the horses

with angry, purposeful strides.

Karen swallowed nervously. What had she gotten herself into?

Back at their suite, Michael led Karen in by the hand and placed her right in the corner of the sitting room. She looked back over her shoulder at him, obviously confused. He was putting the 'do not disturb' sign on the outside of the door. When he looked up at her, he pointed to the corner.

"Put your nose in that corner, Karen Elaine."

Sighing, she obeyed, feeling like a little child.

A few minutes later, Michael was at her side. He unsnapped her jeans and pushed them down over her hips till they puddled at her feet. He instructed her to step out of her sneakers and the jeans, which he then took away. He returned to make her humiliation complete by peeling down her panties in the back, baring her bottom to the empty room. Karen flushed bright red at this, even though this man was her husband and had seen her naked before this.

Michael looked at Karen's pretty behind, still pink from the spanking he'd given her over her jeans earlier.

"Does your bottom hurt, sweetheart?" he asked softly, laying one hand against her warm skin.

"A-a little," she admitted.

Michael patted her firmly. "Good. When I'm finished it will be good and sore and ought to remind you to behave yourself and be the good girl I married. Now, you stay right here in this corner for a bit and think about everything that happened today. Because when I call you out of the corner, I'm going to expect an explanation. Understand me?"

She nodded glumly. Michael gave her a kiss on the forehead, another little pat, and then left her there to wait.

It seemed interminable to Karen, but Michael really only kept her in that corner for ten minutes.

He closed all the blinds and curtains in the room and sat on the sofa, watching how she impatiently shifted her weight from foot to foot, sighing. She must be feeling pretty sorry for herself by now, he figured. He steeled himself for her tears, determined to be stern with her. He wouldn't have his wife putting herself in danger the way she did today. Not ever again. He planned to get that point burned into her mind - by way of her bottom.

"Okay, Karen. You may turn around and pull up your panties. Come on over to me."

Karen's steps were hesitant as she approached her husband. He settled her on one knee and tilted her chin up with his hand.

"Now then, what do you have to say for yourself, Karen Elaine?"

Her eyes were watery and her chin trembled. "I don't know... I can't explain it..."

Michael shook his head. "That's not an acceptable answer, young lady. You CAN explain it to me - and you will. Or else I'll start spanking you now until you start talking. Then, AFTER you explain yourself, I'll give you the spanking I have planned for you now. Do you want a double punishment like that?"

"Nooo." Karen hid her face in Michael's neck and, slowly, through her tears, told him how she'd had the thought that morning that Karen Jacoby was a totally new person. And how she'd decided to have fun, for once, and leave the old, boring Karen Smith behind. When she finished, she glanced up at him tentatively and gasped at the anger burning in his eyes.

"Let me tell you something," he growled. "I fell in love with that 'boring' Karen Smith and I married her. YOU - ARE - HER. You are not the bratty, foul mouthed little witch you've strived for all morning. And I expect to have MY Karen back. Do you understand me?"

She nodded. She felt so ashamed now. She'd

treated her sweet husband horribly for no reason at all. And, in truth, she hadn't had any fun goading him at all. She'd felt mean and unfair the entire time.

"And, furthermore, you should know right here and now that if I ever hear you speak like that about yourself again - if I even suspect you're thinking that way about yourself again - I will paddle you so long and hard you won't sit for a month. You are the kindest, gentlest, funniest, BEST woman that I have ever known. You are NOT boring. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, but..." Karen swallowed and looked away from the hard glare she received. "I think your opinion's probably pretty biased, Mike."

Mike laughed at that, surprising her. It was so good to hear his laugh again. He'd been so serious since he'd found her thrown from her horse. He said, "So what if I am biased? If I am, it's only because I love you, you little ditz. And I wouldn't love you if there wasn't a lot of great things about you to cause that love." His smile vanished suddenly as his eyes narrowed. He tipped her chin up and added, "You wouldn't be doubting my taste, would you?"

"No, Michael."

"Good." He gave her a quick peck on her frowning mouth. "Because we've enough to address with this spanking without adding that to the list."

"Please don't spank me, Mike. I'm sorry I acted the way I did. I won't do it again I promise. Please?"

Karen's husband shook his head, looking almost sad. "No, baby. I have to make sure I get the point across to you that your behavior today was unacceptable. Most especially the danger you put yourself in while on that horse. And also I want to emphasize how disappointed I am that you would try to be anyone other than the great girl I married. I don't want to be married to the defiant

little brat I saw today."

Tears welled in Karen's eyes and she blinked hurriedly, trying to clear them. Michael looked into her face and asked, "Are you ready to be my girl again?"

She nodded jerkily. "I'm not very good at being bad," she admitted. "It took me forever to wake you up this morning and I felt so mean the way I spoke to that groom. And then I fell off that blasted horse..."

Michael nodded, agreeing silently as she spoke. "Well, baby, you're not good at it 'cause that's not you. So, let's deal with it all, put it behind us, and enjoy the rest of our honeymoon."

That said, Karen allowed her husband to guide her over his lap. She closed her eyes as he lowered her panties, tugging them to her knees. From the first hard swat, it was obvious that this first punishment spanking would be extremely different from the light, playful warmings Karen was used to, and liked. There was nothing she liked about this. Why had she ever yearned for it in the past?

Her husband's hand was hard and each spank hurt just as much as the one before it. He peppered her bottom thoroughly, five times over, then worked on her yet untouched thighs. Karen squealed and wriggled as he turned her from pink to red, but Michael was determined to make his point known. He kept up the painful, rapid tattoo, never once missing his wiggling target and turning a deaf ear to her pleading.

He scolded her as he labored, telling her she was not to flirt with waiters, or be rude to grooms, or say words like "fuck," after forcing him away by cutting off his air supply. She was promising to be good and never do any of those things again when, some ten minutes later, he set in for the last two dozen smacks with renewed strength.

"And so help me, Karen, if you EVER pull a stunt like you did today with that horse, I'll take my belt

to you. Do you hear me?"

"Yesss! Owwww! Please, Michael, stop!!"

He finally did stop then and ran his hand over her hot, blistered skin. "Okay, little girl, back into the corner for you."

Sniffling and wiping at her tears, Karen stood in the corner again, her chastised bottom on display. She somehow managed to resist the urge to rub at the throbbing sting.

When Michael called her back to him a while later, he sat her gingerly on his lap again and wiped away her lingering tears. "Well, baby, what did you think of your first bad girl spanking?"

"I hated it!" she exclaimed. Michael chuckled and hugged her to him.

"Good! That was the idea. I hope that means you'll remember to behave yourself from now on so I won't have to repeat it. Because I'd like very much to have the sweet, nice lady back that I married. I missed her today."

She rested her head on his shoulder and sighed. "I'd give anything to be your good girl again, Michael," she whispered sadly.

Mike raised her chin up and gave her a kiss on the lips. "That's what's great about a spanking, baby. Afterwards the slate's clean and you ARE my good girl again. Besides, I don't think she went anywhere - she just tried to make herself into something else. Right?"

Karen nodded shyly, still feeling silly about the whole thing. Michael kissed her again and gave her one of his playful stern looks, so different from the hard mask of anger he's worn not so long ago, and patted her warm bottom. "Now what do you say we take a little nap so I can rest some from all this spanking? Not to mention the early wake up I received."

Karen's eyelids had already been drooping and the idea sounded wonderful to her. Michael carried his bride up the stairs to their bed and cuddled her

to him beneath the covers. "Sweet dreams," he whispered. He savored the feel of his little wife pressed against him, the sweet smell of her hair and the soft weight of her small hand over his heart. Her warm backside fit just perfectly into his hand as he wrapped her in his arms and closed his eyes with a sigh.

The Stranger

It was an ordinary day, just like any other. Or at least it started out that way.

The alarm went off at 7 am, and Clair rolled over in bed to look into the slate blue eyes of her husband, the same slate blue eyes she'd been greeted with every day of the last fifteen years of her life. She waited till she saw them smile, the tan skin around them crinkling, before getting up to start the day. On her way in to wake the kids, she shared a kiss with Gabe as he made his way to the shower. By 8:15, the kids were on the bus to school, and Gabe was out the door to work, his customary peck left behind on Clair's cheek.

Clair buzzed through the house in the morning, following her usual routine of making beds, tidying up, and starting wash. She made a batch of brownies for the evening dessert and mailed off a couple bills; it was then that she saw the advertisement, in among some coupons that had come in the mail. She groaned, wishing she'd thrown the ad away the first time she'd seen it; it had been nearly a week before she'd been able to stop thinking about it then, who could guess how long it would take this time?

With a sigh, she paused in her chores and read over the ad one more time:

ADULT WORLD

Videos, magazines, books, toys, HUGE SELECTION!

All preferences

Romantic accessories

Large Specialty Sections, including spanking, bondage, BDSM, and more!

Video Trading Program

Many titles especially for women and couples.

Come and see what a mature adult superstore can bring to your relationship. We promise you a comfortable

shopping experience no matter what your sex, preference,
or interest!

It was the mention of spanking that had gotten Clair's attention. The word had fairly leapt off the page when she'd first glanced at it, otherwise she never would have given it a second look. She wasn't exactly the type of person who frequented adult stores. In fact, she'd never been in an adult store in her life. Online was a different story, though; she and Gabe *had* purchased some spanking videos and toys online, but that was the extent of her experience with erotic merchandise.

Now, she found herself wondering about this store. Did they really have a large selection of spanking stuff? Was it really a comfortable atmosphere for a woman, for a couple?

Gnawing at the bottom of her lip, she read the ad over again, this time glancing at the address; it was only a mile or two from their home, and the day was nice and sunny out. Maybe...

No, better not. Be a good little housewife and stay home where you belong.

Of course, her chores were done for the morning. Well, except for the clean clothes sitting in the hamper by her feet. But really, the kids should put their own clothes away, and the few things of Gabe's that needed to be put away she could do quickly tonight before bed. She could afford a couple of hours out of the house till the kids came home on the bus and she had to start making supper. And, she reasoned, she really could use some fresh air and exercise... Like a bike ride.

If she happened to ride by the new store, and it didn't look too scary from the outside, maybe she'd stop in. Maybe....

Clair rode past the store twice before she finally pulled to a halt and leaned the bike on its kickstand

outside. The parking lot was dotted with normal, every day cars; a VW beetle, a minivan, a late model Buick, even a dark blue SUV like Gabe's. She took one final look at the quiet front of the building, adorned with only one sign with the words "Adult World" printed in bold lettering across a bright globe. Then, with a deep breath, as if she were about to plunge headfirst into the deep end of a swimming pool, Clair ducked her head and pushed open the door.

The inside was brightly lit, clean, and orderly. A few nervous glances around showed a handful of perfectly normal looking customers in different areas of the large interior, each going about their own business. There were two college age girls in one corner, giggling quietly over the store's supply of gag gifts. In one of the center aisles, a middle aged man in a business suit was reading the back of a video cassette box. Two aisles over a young man crouched down to reach a magazine on one of the lower shelves. So far, so good. No creepy-crawly types, no trench coat crowd, none of the stereotypes that had been running through her mind on the ride over. In fact, if it weren't for some of the more explicit covers on some of the videos she was passing, Clair might have been able to pretend that she was at Blockbuster instead of Adult World.

A woman with a kind face stood behind the counter by the front door, and she smiled at Clair in greeting when she looked up from arranging a supply of condoms in front of the register. Clair offered a shaky, self conscious smile of her own in return.

On quivery legs, she walked down the first aisle she came to, anxious to get out of the center of the store. Reluctantly she took the sunglasses off that she had brought along, then tugged the brim of her baseball cap lower over her eyes.

Looking up, she saw the signs right away that

sectioned the contents of the store by preference and interest. Her eyes scanned past half a dozen before falling on the one in the back, labeled in simple black letters as 'spanking.'

By the time she'd weaved her way back to the aisle she wanted, her knees felt so weak she was amazed that they hadn't given out on her yet. She was grateful to discover the aisle was empty.

Then she realized with a start that the spanking section was the entire length of the aisle, on both sides, and a slow smile slid across her face. A glance down, and behind her, showed her hundreds of movies, a large selection of books and magazines, computer items, and implements.

Feeling a bit braver in this more private and familiar atmosphere, Clair turned to the videos and DVD's first, locating one in particular that she had been interested in buying on line. The couple in it was in two others that she and Gabe owned already and they had a great chemistry on the screen that was hard to find in spanking films.

She was so absorbed in reading the back of the DVD box she had selected, that she didn't even notice when someone else entered the aisle from the other side. He was so quiet, in fact, as he slowly made his way towards her, watching her all the while with an intense, silent interest, that she didn't even notice him until he was all but standing on top of her, and clearing his throat. One long, tanned finger tapped the top of the box in her hand, nearly scaring her half out of her skin, and her eyes flew up to clash with a very familiar set of slate blue ones.

The smile that she saw in those eyes, framed by crinkles of tan skin, made her stomach flip flop.

"Oh my God, Ga---"

"That's supposed to be a good one," he interrupted smoothly, tapping the box in her hand again. "My wife and I have a couple others with those two in them that are very good. It's a good

choice."

She stared at him, wondering just what he thought he was doing. He winked at her.

"I'm Simon," he said when she still just stood there gaping at him. He offered her his hand and she pumped it limply, snorting inwardly at his joke; Simon was Gabe's middle name. "I'm here picking up a little something for my wife." He indicated a package in the crook of his left elbow that was wrapped in silver and red paper. "This place is great. They'll even gift wrap your purchase, which is great for us guys. Looks a lot nicer than anything I could attempt to do."

"What'd you get her?" Clair asked, eyeing the package, her mind working.

He grinned and gave her a look. "It's a secret," he told her in a stage whisper. "But between you and me, she probably doesn't deserve it. In fact, I'd bet that right now, she's up to something naughty."

The skin on Clair's bottom crawled at his husky words. Just then she became aware of the sound of rain on the roof above them.

"Oh, no!" she cried. "Is that rain?"

Simon raised his eyes to the ceiling and listened with a serious look on his handsome face. "Sounds that way to me," he confirmed lazily.

Clair stamped one sneakered foot. "No! It can't rain! I rode here on my bike!"

One of Simon's eyebrows rose at this bit of news. "You rode to an adult bookstore on a bicycle?"

Clair crossed her arms over her chest grumpily. "Yes – well, no, not exactly. I went out for a bike ride, and I was in the neighborhood, and I... I..."

"You....?" Simon pressed.

"I was... curious. Okay? So I came in."

"Oh. Didn't curiosity kill something?" Simon asked, for which he was rewarded with a very dirty look. He chuckled under his breath, watching her as she stood there looking forlornly at the ceiling.

"Well, if you like, I'd be happy to give you and your bike a ride home. I realize it's a bit unc customary, me being a complete stranger to you and all, but I swear I'm not an axe murderer or anything."

Clair eyed him as warily as she could. "I don't know... My husband would kill me if I ever accepted a ride from a stranger..."

"I guess I can understand that. Maybe you'd better just give him a call and ask him to stop by on his way home from work to pick you up."

Clair glared at him; he knew damn well she couldn't do that either. "No, I'm sure he's left the office by now, and he doesn't keep the cell phone turned on except for emergencies." She sighed dramatically. "I suppose I have no other choice but to accept your offer. If it's still on the table, that is."

"Of course it is. Don't be silly."

"Okay, thanks."

He gestured to the aisle they were still standing in. "Take your time looking around. I was coming down here to pick out a toy for my wife, so I still have to decide on that and have it gift wrapped."

"O-okay, thanks."

It was hard to concentrate on the items before her, knowing that he was at the end of the aisle. Somehow she managed to keep her eyes trained away from him and whatever selection he was making, though she was aware when he stepped away with his choice and went up to pay for it and have it gift wrapped.

She was just on her own way up to the register, with a new book and two DVD's in her hands when she nearly collided with him as she turned to leave the aisle. His large palms immediately came up to her arms to steady her.

"S-sorry," she stammered like a nervous school girl on her first date.

"No harm done." He indicated the end of the aisle, where the implements were located, with one outstretched hand. "Before we go, come on down

here with me."

As if she had a choice in the matter; within a matter of moments, he had steered her down the length of the aisle until they were right in front of the array of discipline devices. Once again he held out a hand, palm up, and said simply, "Choose one. My treat."

"Oh, no. I can't let you do that," Clair protested. "A ride home is more than I deserve."

He chuckled. "Oh, no, I'm sure you deserve quite a bit more. Please, choose one. I insist. Because, you see, I've decided I'm not giving you a ride home for free. It's going to cost you."

"It is?" Clair frowned. "How much? I'm afraid I don't have a lot of cash on me."

One long finger chuckled her gently under the chin. "No money, little one. What I want is to give you one good spanking. With whatever implement you choose, and my hand of course."

"I don't know..." Clair began, biting her lower lip.

"Yes you do. And you know damn well that you'll enjoy it. Why else would you be in the spanking section of the local adult bookstore?"

Clair stamped her foot again. She glared at him from under lowered lids. Then she finally conceded with, "Even if that is true, it doesn't mean I have to admit to it."

He sighed. "I'm growing impatient. Choose now or lose your ride, baby."

Without even thinking, Clair flung her hand out and grabbed the first thing it landed on. She gasped when she saw what it was: a smooth black leather paddle on one side, it was at least 12 inches long and lined with soft black fur on the other. Before she had a second to react further, Simon had gently taken it from her hand and had turned her towards the front of the store.

"And don't call me baby," she snapped at him as he steered her to the cashier, mostly just because she was at a loss for words.

"Well then, why don't you tell me your name?" he suggested mildly. "That way I'll have something else to call you, other than brat, of course."

She glared at him. "It's Clair," she offered begrudgingly. "Clair Foster."

Simon put their purchases up on the counter and snapped down an American Express card before Clair even had a chance to fish out her wallet. They waited in tense silence for the cashier to ring up the sale, then started towards the exit together.

It was as they were opening the door to the stinging cold rain and hard wind that he turned back to her and said, "Nice meeting you, Clair. Get ready for the spanking of your life."

Just running from the storefront to the dark blue SUV that Simon indicated as his own left Clair drenched. The light taps of rain that she had originally heard on the roof inside the store had turned to buckets of the stuff slamming down from the heavens in heavy blasts. She launched herself and the bags from the store inside the passenger seat and looked back over her shoulder to check on Simon's progress with her bike. She wasn't surprised to see him walking quickly towards the truck with it slung easily up on one shoulder.

She'd tried to help him carry it, only to be shooed impatiently away with a wave of one large hand and an order to get her "tail" in the truck. She'd only obeyed him because her – er, *his wife's* – gifts were getting drenched. Now, she was in debt to him not only for the ride home, but for the help getting her bike.

A few minutes later, her meager means of transportation in the back of his vehicle, Simon joined her in the front and started the engine.

"I can't believe this storm," Clair said quietly, feeling suddenly shy with the stranger now that they were alone, and out of the relatively safe

public setting of the store.

"It's just a summer storm; it'll pass before you know it." He flipped on the windshield wipers and put the truck into gear. "Maybe if we're lucky it'll cool things down for a bit and cut through some of the electricity in the air."

Clair looked out the window, trying to avoid his piercing steel blue eyes and the double meaning in his words.

"So, which way, fair Clair?"

"Left at the light."

The ride passed in a blur for Clair, going by so much faster than the bike ride over had. She rubbed her sweaty palms on the damp thighs of her jeans as they rounded the last turn and her house loomed up ahead.

"Third one on the right up here," she mumbled.

Simon glanced across the seat at her and his lips twitched but he didn't say anything except, "Nice place. Nice neighborhood." He glanced at her again and this time the grin did escape over his handsome face. "I bet your neighbors have no idea what a naughty little thing you are."

Heat suffused over Clair's face and a warm tingling began deep in her belly, but she refused to acknowledge his words.

Once he had parked the vehicle as close to the front door as he could, she gathered the packages and sprinted for the door, leaving the bike up to him again. Despite her best efforts to run between the raindrops, there simply were too many of them and by the time she reached the front door, then stood beneath the small awning to fit the key in the lock, she was fairly well drenched.

The shock of the air conditioning inside the house nearly made her gasp as she stepped inside in her wet clothes. She hurried to lower the blast of cold air and was just stepping out of her muddy sneakers when Simon stepped over her threshold a few moments later, shaking the rain from his hair.

Noticing her abandonment of her shoes, he followed suit before stepping in socked feet onto the cream colored carpet of the living room.

"I like what you've done with the place, Clair," he commented as if he'd been there before. "It's very warm and homey."

"I'm just... going to change," Clair said through chattering teeth, jabbing a thumb in the direction of the back of the house. "Get out of these wet things..."

"No, wait." He had come to a stop in front of the basket of laundry she had aborted earlier and he made a slight 'tsk 'tsk sound in the back of his throat. "Looks like little Clair didn't finish her chores before she went out. Naughty, naughty."

Clair huffed at his tone and crossed her arms over her chest. "Look, I'm cold in these wet things. I'm going to go change..."

His eyes darkened at her tone of challenge and he turned away from the basket and fixed all of his attention on her. "I said no. You won't be in those wet things for long anyway, and you can trust that you also won't be cold much longer either." He glanced around the room a moment, then asked, "Do you have another room a little more private? I don't like all the windows in this one. You might be howling pretty loudly once we get started, and I don't want to chance anyone looking in on us."

Clair rolled her eyes, and with a self-suffering sigh indicated the back of the house again with a wave of her hand. "Yeah, this way. Come on."

He seemed amused by her manner, and was smiling as he plucked the leather paddle from one of the Adult World bags, then followed behind her, tapping the leather side lightly against his thigh.

"What would your husband do if he saw that you'd left your housework like that to go to an adult store?"

"It's only one basket of laundry, for Pete's sake!" Clair exclaimed as they stepped down from

the kitchen into the den. "Most of it is stuff for the kids, and he's always telling me I should have them put their own things away."

"I saw some men's shirts on the top..."

"I'll have time tonight after dinner to put them away."

"Would he spank you?" Simon pressed, not allowing her to escape the question he had originally asked.

"No, of course not. Not for something so trivial. He doesn't spank me for everything, you know."

Simon seemed to consider this for a minute, as he looked around the room. Finally, when his eyes returned to her, he said, "Maybe he should. Then you might not get into so much trouble."

"I don't get into trouble all the time!" Clair exploded. "God, you are so annoying!"

He smirked. "I call them as I see them, Clair. Sorry if it hits too close to home." He crossed the room then and closed the drapes at the two small windows in the room, then he clicked on a single lamp on the table by the couch. It did little to chase away the shadows in the room.

Next he picked up the soft ottoman from in front of the armchair and he carried it over to one arm of the sofa, placing it on the floor beside it. He rested the paddle on the sofa itself, then turned to Clair with an outstretched hand and invited her with a softly spoken, "Shall we?" as if he were asking her for a dance.

It wasn't like she had much of a choice here; she'd agreed to this in exchange for the ride home. And truthfully, he was right about a lot of the things he had said; she was excited by this, she was turned on at the thought of being spanked by this stranger. She felt heavy already between her legs, wet. Her nipples were peaked and there was that tell tale quiver in her belly.

Yet still, she couldn't go easily. "Please," she heard herself say. "Please don't spank me."

"Come now, Clair, you know you deserve this. You need it. And you owe it to me. That was our agreement. Now, come on, be a big girl, and let's get started."

Closing her eyes tight, she hesitantly put her small hand in his large – so large – one. When she opened her eyes again, he was smiling at her as he led her over to the ottoman.

"That's a girl, Clair. Now I want you to kneel on the ottoman, and stretch your belly over the arm of the couch. Very good. Keep your bottom up nice and high for me. Yes, just like that. Stay just like that." She watched as he reached around her and grabbed a hold of the paddle where he had left it. A moment later she felt the long, *long* surface of the leather side as he laid it up against her thrust out behind. With a start, she realized that each and every swat with it would fall easily across both of her nether cheeks. Suppressing a groan, she wished she could change every spontaneous decision she had made today, starting with the trip to the adult store, or at the very least, with grabbing that paddle when there had surely been so many others there that would have been less severe.

Simon circled the business end of the paddle around her backside once, then pulled it back. A moment later, it fell across both her cheeks, making a loud "S-S-SNAPP!" as it made contact with her wet jeans. Even through the denim material, Clair felt the sting of the smack, and suddenly she knew exactly why Simon had wanted her to be in her damp jeans for the spanking. She doubted she would have felt the paddle as much had she been dry.

He laid a second stroke across her backside, and this time she let out a little yelp. Behind her, already pulling the paddle back for her third swat, Simon chuckled.

"Stings, doesn't it, Clair?" S-S-SNAPP! "That's what every naughty little girl I've ever known has

needed." S-S-SNAPP! "A good, smacked bottom," S-S-SNAPP! "nice and stingy." S-S-SNAPP!

"Ow!"

"And this is just through your jeans, sweetheart," S-S-SNAPP! "Imagine how it would feel on your bare bottom." S-S-SNAPP!

"You... you better not even think... Ow! about that! My.... Oh! My husband would kick your ass... Ouch! if you did that!!"

"Yeah, and then when he found out the whole story, he'd spank yours." S-S-SNAPP! "Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you, if you were under the impression that I'm a gentleman," S-S-SNAPP! "but it was my intension all along to paddle your bare rear end. You see," S-S-SNAPP! "a spanking's just not a true spanking to me, unless a least some of it is on the bare." S-S-SNAPP!

Clair groaned as the paddle fell another time. How was she going to take this on her bare backside??

"Your husband doesn't spank you over your clothes, does he?" S-S-SNAPP!

"Agh! No, but you're not my husband..."

"Good, I was beginning to think I was going to have to hang around when we're done here to have a talk with him." S-S-SNAPP! "Although, maybe I will anyway, just so I'll be sure he gets the full extent of your adventures today." S-S-SNAPP! S-S-SNAPP! S-S-SNAPP!

"Owie!" Clair cried, her legs drumming on the ottoman as if she could divert some of the sting away by kicking them with all her might. "Not there again!" S-S-SNAPP S-S-SNAPP! "Eeiiyyyy!"

Suddenly he stopped and pressed the flat of his palm onto the swell of one cheek. "Yes," he said after a moment and a slight rub that made the insides of Clair's thighs quiver. "I think that's going to do nicely for a warm up." He moved his hand then, but only to pat her softly twice in the same spot. "Do you have children, Clair?" he asked as he

helped her up from her position.

Clair's brows furrowed over her hazel eyes. "Yes, two. A boy and a girl." When she made an attempt to rub her bottom, Simon 'tsk'ed her quietly and took hold of her wrist in his hand to pull her arm back around to the front of her body.

"Did you ever play 'Simon Says' with them when they were little?"

"Is that like 'Mother May I'?" she asked, sensing where this was headed and enjoying the comparison between the two games that she was sure he wouldn't like.

Just as she had figured, Simon made a face at the analogy, but reluctantly nodded his head. "Yes, mostly, it's the same game. But I'm not about to be the 'mother,' especially since my name's already Simon."

Clair nodded solemnly. "Okay, so let's play then."

He grinned at that and, with one finger, flicked lightly at the button fly on her wet Levi's. The motion, though over in a second, made her muscles clench between her legs, because he had been so very close to touching her there, but hadn't. Now that the spanking – or at least part of it – was over, the warmth was spreading and as usual, Clair was aroused.

"Simon says, unbutton your fly."

With shaky fingers, Clair did as he instructed, then moved her hands away from the folds of denim, awaiting the next instruction.

"Simon says, take those jeans down, all the way, and step out of them."

It was tough to accomplish that without also taking down the damp panties beneath the pants, but somehow Clair managed to accomplish it. Her facial cheeks flared hot and red when she finally stood before him in a pair of flowered cotton panties, after twisting and wriggling out of the tight, wet jeans.

He was smiling at her now and the warmth of his gaze was nearly a tangible thing. Everywhere he looked, her skin felt energized with heat, as if just anticipating his touch.

"Very good. Simon says, turn around."

Slowly, she pivoted on her heel and then ducked her head, knowing he was inspecting the color on her backside, his handiwork. She heard him make an appreciative sound low in his throat and a moment later, she felt his large, warm hand cupping her bottom, right in the center. Another spasm tightened the muscles between her legs, and she swallowed back a small moan.

His hand made a small circular motion in place and she felt his breath on her neck. "Simon says you have a beautiful bottom," he whispered in her ear. "Just made to be touched, to be spanked..."

"T-thanks," she answered shakily. She glanced over her shoulder and met his eyes.

"You should be glad that I do have something of a gentleman in me, Clair," he admonished her. "A lesser man in my position right now might have taken advantage of you."

She shrugged. "Maybe. But a greater man in your position would have let me keep my clothes on."

His eyes darkened then, and he took a step back. "I said I was something of a gentleman, young lady," he corrected. A moment later, she felt the elastic on her panties go taut as his fingers hooked them at the top, then tugged them down hard until they pooled at her feet. "I never said I was a saint." His hand cracked off of her now bare flesh, making an unmistakable sound and she jumped in place. "Now then, back to the game."

He came around her one side and took a seat on the couch, then motioned her with one hand. "Simon says, come here and lie across my lap."

Clair suppressed a groan. She hated having to place herself over Gabe's lap for a spanking; she

couldn't imagine it being any different when it was someone else's lap. There simply was no way to do the job gracefully and she always felt like she landed like an inelegant sack of potatoes over his knees. She always was secretly glad when Gabe just grabbed her and tugged her over his thighs. At least then, if she went without finesse, it didn't look like her own doing.

Maybe Simon could read minds, or perhaps his wife had the same hatred for the instruction he'd just given her as she did. Either way, he had a cat-who-ate-the-canary look on his face as he sat back, watching and waiting for her to obey him. Slowly, she shuffled over to him, stepping out of the panties as she approached, then awkwardly placed herself over his jean-clad legs as quickly as she could, just to get it over with.

"Yes, that's it," he praised, stroking her bottom again, causing all kinds of havoc inside her. "Just like that."

A second later he started spanking her again, crisp, measured swats that fell all over her backside. He paid careful attention to the crest of her cheeks and the center, where every stinging smack seemed to reverberate between Clair's legs. She stood the first dozen or so stoically, but when he picked up his pace, she could no longer contain the small cries of distress that fell from her lips. Not that he seemed to hear them, for he was too busy attending to her rapidly reddening backside, and to scolding her.

"What were you thinking going off in the middle of the day, chores not even completed, to ride your bike down to that bookstore? What if I hadn't happened along, and offered you a ride home? Then what would you have done? Huh?"

"I – I don't know!" Clair answered in a wail as he started a fresh barrage of spansks.

"Well I hope next time you stop and think before running off to do something like that again; at least

take your car next time." He slowed his pace a bit and chuckled as he became aware of Clair's labored breathing. "Do I spank harder than you're used to from your husband?"

"Not really." She glanced at him over her shoulder, looking up into the too familiar blue eyes, the chiseled features she knew all too well, the cocky smile that made her heart falter. "Actually, you remind me a lot of him. You look like him, you spank like him..."

"Really? He must be a handsome guy then."

"He is."

"Do you get this turned on, when he spanks you?" Simon asked, pinching her reddened flesh lightly.

"Who says I'm turned on?" she challenged, being careful to keep her face forward.

He pinched her bottom cheek again, harder this time. "Your scent, for one thing. Which I like, by the way. For another, the way you keep moaning every now and then; it's not a moan of pain."

"Well, why are you acting surprised?" she grumbled. "You knew from the beginning, considering where we met, that spanking turns me on."

"Right. But you still haven't answered me, miss. Do you get this turned on when you're over *his* knee?"

Her answer was muffled since she was trying to burrow her face as deep as possible into the couch cushion. "Yes. Always. Even when it's a punishment, I still get turned on. It's in my genetic makeup, I guess."

He didn't say anything for a few moments, just set about rearranging her so that she was bent over just one muscular thigh. Finally he said, "I think it's just about the most beautiful, sexy thing about you."

And then he started walloping her again.

It was all Clair could do to hang on, kicking and

squirming though she was. His hand was merciless, falling again and again and again on her bare seat until she was shouting with each smack and panting from the excitement of it all. Yet even as she tried to escape his grasp, as she threw back her hand in a useless attempt to stop the swats, even as she begged him to stop, she felt the betrayal of her body as she lifted her pelvis up towards his descending hand, as she ground herself down against the hard muscles of his thigh, as she panted and finally, begged.

It was the begging that finally slowed his pace, though he still didn't stop completely. Instead he spanked her between long caresses, talking to her quietly all the while.

"Please...."

"No, sweetheart. I know what you're asking, but no. You have to wait for your husband tonight for that."

"Oh please, I hurt..."

He chuckled above her and gave her one last warm spank on the center of her bottom. "In more ways than one, I know." She felt his hand on her head then, stroking her hair and she sighed, soothed a little by the gesture. "Corner time for you," he insisted a few moments later, helping her to her feet. He took her by the hand as if she were a child and walked her over to a corner of the room. He tapped the crack in the middle where the two walls met and said simply, "Nose."

Frowning, Clair pressed her nose as close as she could into the crack, knowing that it made her swollen, fire engine red bottom stick that much more out into the room.

A moment later, she felt the hem of her shirt being swept upwards, then tucked into the neckline above her back, making her humiliation complete.

Outside, maybe at a neighbor's house, a car door slammed.

"Think that's your husband?" Simon asked as he

turned from her to straighten the room a bit.

"Could be. Gabe sometimes comes home early on Fridays," she told the walls.

"Good. I want to have a little talk with the man." He stepped up behind her and ran his hands down first one cheek, then the other. Then he pressed a chaste kiss on her left temple. "I'll leave the paddle for the two of you. He may want to make use of it later. And maybe one day if you're a good girl, he'll use the soft side on you instead of the leather."

Clair didn't know what to say. Nothing seemed right. Finally, she just said, "Thanks for the ride home, I guess."

Simon chuckled. "Thanks for the spanking. I think I'm going to need a three hour long cold shower when I get home." He cupped the side of her face gently, tracing her cheek with the pad of one thumb. "Maybe we'll be lucky enough to meet up again."

"Yeah," Clair agreed. "I think I'd like that."

He smiled and tweaked her nose. "Be good, Miss Clair."

And with that, he turned and was gone.

It was a good fifteen minutes later before Clair heard the tread of footfalls on the floor behind her. She risked a look over her shoulder to see the same man walking towards her who had just left.

His eyes were twinkling with some inner devilish plan and he had shed Simon's flannel shirt. The white t-shirt he wore bore the stain from that morning when one of the twins had spilled orange juice on the sleeve before he'd had a chance to pull it on.

"Hi Gabe," she whispered, a slow smile curling her lips.

He walked up to her and spun her around out of the corner and into his arms. A moment later, he had lifted her up so that she was straddling his

waist, his large spanker's hands laced beneath her well paddled behind.

"You're in a lot of trouble, little one," he growled in her ear as he carried her off towards the back of their house, and their bedroom.

"You're not going to spank me again, *right now*, are you?" she complained.

Ever so slightly, Gabe let her slide down his chest until she felt the tip of his rock hard erection between her splayed thighs. "Not right now, you little brat, no. I've been this hard ever since the moment I turned around in that store and saw you standing there. No, right now, I'm going to take you in that bedroom and wear you out in a completely different way. And tomorrow, we'll drop off the kids with my mom, and then you'll get your spanking from me."

"Why I am in trouble still? I already got spanked," she pouted prettily. "I don't see you getting spanked, and you were there in that adult store, too. You even left work early to go there!"

"Yeah, well I don't get spanked, and you do. And besides that, I didn't leave the store with a complete stranger, and let him in my house so he could take liberties with my body..."

"That's not fair! He wasn't really a stranger, and you know it!"

"Okay, fine. In that case then, you get spanked simply because I'm the husband and I say so."

In their bedroom now, he slowly slid her down the length of his body till she was on her own two feet again.

"So now we're playing 'Gabe says?'"

"Damn straight, missy." He rubbed his hand together and grinned at her wolfishly. "And for starters, Gabe says take that shirt off!"

How Much Is That Doggie?

As the huge airplane gradually descended, lower and lower in the sky, until it finally touched down on the landing strip, the insides of Megan Stephens' stomach turned themselves inside out, then righted again. With each lowering inch of the plane, she was that much closer to her own personal doom.

To some, that might have seemed like an overly dramatic assessment of her future, but not to Megan. She knew her husband; and once he found out what she'd done while he was away on his trip, 'doomed' was exactly what she would be.

Nervously, she spun away from the large window and the vision of the plane as its passengers began to disembark. She allowed herself a few pacing strides as an internal warning went off in her head to think of a way out of this trouble, and fast. Of course, as always, it was too late for that now; her only hope, really, was to tell him on the ride home before they got inside their little townhouse and he discovered her mischief on his own. Either way, she knew she was going to get it, and how, but at least if she fessed up on her own there was a chance that he'd go a little easier on her.

When the first of the passengers came into the terminal, Megan forced her nervous strides to come to a stop and she turned to watch for Cameron, a false smile pasted across her face. It wasn't long before she saw him, walking purposefully towards her, his carry on bag slung over one muscular arm.

"Hey there, Sunshine," he grinned as he caught her around the waist, dropping the carry on carelessly to the floor in his exuberance of seeing her again after a week apart. For a moment, Megan allowed herself to forget about what was inevitably to come that evening as she clung to her husband, her face burrowed in the crook of his tanned neck.

"Miss me, did you?" he teased, noticing the way she was pressed against him. He chuckled and allowed himself a publicly acceptable tap on her blue jeans backside. "Me too, Sunshine. I can't wait to get you home, in fact."

The mention of home brought Megan back to the reality of her situation. She stepped back a fraction in her husband's embrace, covering with a shy smile and a glance around the terminal. Cameron grinned, thinking she was embarrassed by the love tap and the veiled sexual reference. He winked at her, then cupped the side of her face in his right hand and kissed her.

Megan longed to lose herself in that kiss, the way she usually did, the way she should. But she just couldn't. Not with the nagging knowledge that in as short as a half hour, depending on traffic, she was going to be over her husband's knee, getting the stuffing spanked out of her, while he lectured her like a child on the importance of sticking to their plan, of working together, of not going behind his back, blah, blah, blah....

Cameron sensed her reluctance in the kiss and pulled back after a moment. His deep blue eyes studied her quietly as the activity and noise of the terminal buzzed around them. "Something wrong, baby?" he asked softly. There was both concern and suspicion in the tone of the question, the words having at once the same meaning as 'are you okay?' and 'have you been naughty while I was away?' Megan didn't miss the underlying meaning for a second. But she wasn't about to tell him the truth of what had happened *here*. She wouldn't have put it past her sometimes Neanderthal husband to pull her over his lap right here in the middle of the airport. And, if by some means, she did manage to escape that horrific fate, she also wasn't exactly keen on the idea of a stony silent ride home either.

And, so, swallowing hard, Megan made herself

meet Cameron's eyes, and forced herself to say, "No, honey. Everything's just fine," thereby digging herself just a little bit deeper by adding on a lie.

Cameron nodded, but he was still looking at her a little too intensely. And his eyes narrowed, just a bit. "Okay, then," he said. "Let's get going. I've had just about all I can stand of airplane terminals."

Megan smiled and turned slightly to reach down for his discarded carry on bag. When she did, Cameron tapped the seat of her jeans again, noticeably harder this time, making her jump and spin around to him with a surprised gasp.

"Sorry," he said, holding his hands up plaintively. "Too temping of a target. I just couldn't resist." His grin was boyish, but there was something in those eyes that made Megan wonder if there wasn't more to the swat than what he said. He held his hand out to her, palm up, and waited for her to place her own much smaller mitt into his. "Come on. Let's go home."

The car ride passed uneventfully, and all too quickly, as Cam told her about his trip, the business men he'd met with, and the funding he'd been granted for his current project. He was excited about it and it was a good forty minutes later, as they were pulling into the entrance to their development, before he really quieted down. He watched her from the passenger seat as she navigated the car through the streets of the development, bypassing kids on bikes and groups of overweight mothers walking together in the evening breeze. Megan felt his gaze drift from her face, down her neck, over her shoulder, down her arm. It touched her tummy, then skimmed down the curve of her thigh, finally dipping lower still to the arch of her calf. It was nearly a tangible thing, Cam's gaze; she felt it as much so as a caress. But when she looked up and met that dark blue gaze, there was a

question in its depths, and something else that she recognized right away, something she hated to see in his eyes– disappointment.

Cam knew something was up, just as he always did.

Megan parked the car in the driveway and came around to the trunk to take his carry on bag only to find that he already had the suitcase and the carry on in his quite capable hands. She closed the trunk and skipped ahead of him to open the door with her keys.

Inside the little townhouse, Megan switched on the lights, listening almost painfully for her secret to make itself known. But so far there was no sound. Strange, considering all the other times she had come home recently...

Cam had deposited the suitcase and bag on the sofa and now he turned to spear her with what she privately thought of as his 'enough's enough' stare. "Alright, wife," he said, sighing, hands on hips. "Spill your guts. What's going on?"

Megan trembled a little, trying to find the right words to tell him, the ones that would make him the least angry.

"I am waiting, Megan Louise."

"Uummm..."

Before she had a chance to say anything more, a sharp bark split the air.

"Oh my God," Cam groaned, staring at Megan in shock. His eyes flew to the ceiling, the direction from which the sound had come from. "Tell me that is *not* a dog, young lady."

Now it was Megan's turn to groan.

"I don't believe this," her husband complained as another bark, followed by a scratching sound drifted downstairs. Cam's glare was positively murderous. "Stay right there, miss. Don't move," he commanded, then disappeared up the steps, taking them two at a time.

Megan obeyed him for about a millisecond, then

figured she was already in for it anyways, and jogged up after him.

She found him in the spare bedroom, kneeling in front of the little Shiba Inu puppy, who was standing on its hind legs, its front paws on Cam's knees. To her surprise, the puppy was happily licking her angry husband's face.

Megan stood in the doorway, trying not to smile at the scene while Cam tried ineffectively to push the little teddy bear-like puppy away. It wasn't until the dog noticed Megan there, though, that he moved away from Cam, yipping happily over to Megan's side.

She stooped to pick up the soft bundle of fur, murmuring soothing words of hello and comfort. Although the puppy hadn't seemed put off by Cam's dark mood, Megan was nonetheless sure the animal had picked up on his temper all the same. *She* certainly hadn't missed it.

"I told you to stay downstairs," Cam grumbled as he stood. "Don't you ever do what I say anymore?"

Megan tried not to giggle. He sounded downright childish. But there was something strange about the way he didn't seem to want to look at her, too.

"Meg, put the puppy down. We have to talk about this. And I need to talk about it with you away from the dog."

"Okay." Megan set the puppy down gently, distracting it by producing a discarded toy from a pile on the floor. Once the little dog was absorbed in the toy, she stepped back out of the room, securing it with a baby gate after Cam had followed her.

Her husband took her hand and led her into the master bedroom, where he closed the door. She watched him closely, waiting for him to start yelling at her, start lecturing, start questioning her, anything. But nothing came.

Instead he sat on their bed and stared at her for several long minutes.

Finally she said, in a small voice, "Am I still in trouble?"

Cam chuckled. "Aren't you always?" He shook his head. "Yes, young lady, make no mistake, you are most definitely in trouble."

"Oh."

He shook his head again. "I need a minute to get my head around this." He sighed. "Corner for you, Megan Louise. And you may as well take those jeans and panties down." He watched from the bed as his wife reluctantly parked herself facing a corner of the room, and then slowly unbuttoned the fly of her Levis, pushing them down to her knees, along with her flowered cotton underwear. The act, though embarrassing to her, never failed to be a turn on for him, and Cam felt the familiar tug and tightening of his groin as he watched the round, white globes of Megan's bottom come into view.

Standing was a chore, to say the least, but Cam needed a little distance right now to figure out what he was going to do about this mess. He was at the door when Megan's voice reached him from the corner, small and trembling.

"I'll take her back tomorrow, Cam. I know we can't afford her. I'm sorry, I just....I...."

Cam heard the tears in her voice and he knew they weren't about an upcoming spanking. He knew exactly what they were about, and that was the reason he needed some time to think before he acted here.

"We'll talk about that later, love. Be a good girl now and do your corner time. I'll be back soon."

In the spare bedroom, Cam pushed the baby gate back and entered the room again, much to the delight of the little bundle of fur waiting there. The first thing the puppy did was jump up against Cam's legs, and he thought with a groan that they were going to have to put the dog through obedience

school.

While the puppy whined and wiggled around his legs, Cam went to the double bed in the center of the room and sat down, looking around. The room that he and Megan had furnished for their first born child was now strewn with doggie toys, food and water bowls, a dog cage and sheepskin bed, and several books on training and the Shiba Inu breed. He couldn't help but shake his head and chuckle a little as he tried to envision what the room would have looked like instead, had they been successful in their attempts to have the child they both wanted.

He sighed, absently reaching down the ruffle the pup's ears when the fellow took a heavy seat on his left foot. Unfortunately, after trying unsuccessfully for nearly a year to get pregnant, Megan had gone to her doctor and had some testing done that had shown the reason why they hadn't succeeded. Megan would never be able to have children, not of her own, anyway.

Cam knew it had been a terrible blow to his wife, that news. He'd tried to help her as much as he could, had broached the subject of adoption many times, knowing how much she longed to be a mom, but every time he brought the subject up, she closed up inside and the conversation went nowhere. Eventually, he had stopped talking about it, afraid that the topic alone was hurting her more than simply letting things be.

But now, he wondered. Of course, he knew part of the reason she had wanted a puppy, had talked about getting one for so long, was because with his traveling schedule for work she was alone at home quite a bit. He knew she wanted a dog for company and, once it got bigger, for a feeling of protection, as well. It was part of the reason they'd looked into this particular breed, because it was historically a hunting animal who was extremely protective and loyal to its own as a domestic dog. Cam knew those

reasons figured into this, but in his heart he also knew that Meg wanted something to mother – even if it was only a dog. That was why he'd wanted her to stay downstairs earlier; he hadn't wanted to see her with the puppy. It was hard enough telling her no without that mental picture in his head of her with the dog.

Said dog now was stretched out atop both of Cam's feet, breathing contentedly. Cam sighed again, petting the thick, soft, reddish brown fur. In his mind he saw how their now clean and neat house would look in the summer, when this little bugger shed all of this fur. But when the pup looked up at him, he saw just as easily that there was a long future ahead of them, all three of them together, and he knew there would be no way that he would make Megan take the puppy back.

When Cam came back into the master bedroom, he was pleased to find his wife where he'd left her in the corner, still sniffing. At least she was listening to him now, albeit a little too late.

He walked across to the nightstand and opened the top drawer to remove the paddle he kept there. It was smooth oak, about an inch thick, with a business end approximately 9" long and 5" wide. As he sat on the bed and turned to his wife, he noticed the ridged set of her shoulders and knew that she had heard the drawer open and close.

"All right, then, Megan Louise. Come on over to your husband."

Megan turned and for a moment her big brown eyes grew even larger as they immediately found the paddle in his hand, as she had feared. Cam saw her swallow, then her eyes bounced to his face, as though she had had to force them there, and she slowly started over to him.

After the first few shuffling steps, Cam gestured to the jeans and panties that were still hobbled

about her knees and said, "You may as well take those all the way off. You won't be needing them for a good long while anyways."

Megan paused, letting that sink in, then pulled the clothes the rest of the way down and stepped out of them. She picked up the pile and set them on the seat of her vanity, then closed the remaining distance to his side with her head ducked down to her chest.

Cam took her hand when she was next to him and said, "You know better than to look away from me when you're in trouble, young lady." He bit back a smile when Meg huffed a small sigh and guiltily looked up at him again. "Much better. Now, let's have you sit here on my knee, and tell me what happened. Why did you go out, behind my back while I was away, and buy that dog?"

Megan sat bare bottomed and embarrassed on her husband's knee, wishing she could look anywhere else but his sharp, demanding gaze, and knowing if she dared to, that from here on out it would only result in more spanks. It was Cam's #1 rule when she was in trouble and they were talking like this before her spanking began that she always look him in the eye.

"Well, nothing really *happened*," she started slowly, wincing inwardly at the sound of her own voice. It sounded just like a whiny child's, even to her own ears. "And I didn't plan to do it while you were away, I swear it, Cam. It just kind of happened."

"We had agreed, Megan Louise, that we were going to wait to buy a dog until some of the bills were paid off. Isn't that correct?"

"Yes sir."

"In fact, we had promised one another, had we not, that neither of us would make a purchase over \$100 without the other's prior knowledge and consent?"

Megan sighed. "Yes sir."

"So, you have broken both that agreement and that promise, isn't that correct?"

Megan wanted to drop through a hole in the floor. But somehow she managed to keep meeting Cam's eyes and to whisper one more time, "Yes sir, I did. I'm sorry."

"I am too, young lady. I certainly didn't picture having to put you over my knee this soon after coming home, and this was the last thing I would have guessed you to have done while I was gone. I am very disappointed in you."

Megan's eyes hurt from the amount of unshed tears in them at his final words. But she took a deep breath and held them in nonetheless, knowing she would need them in a few moments when he began paddling her. The comfort they would give her would be minimal but she would seek it out anyway.

"Just for my own curiosity, how much was the puppy?"

Megan's eyes closed briefly before she answered. "She was on sale for \$350. But by the time I'd added on the cage, the bed, the toys and books, her food.... It all came to about \$500... give or take...."

Cam's eyebrows raised slightly. Megan hoped he was impressed with the deal she'd gotten on the puppy. When they'd priced them before, the lowest they'd seen was \$650, though they'd only been looking at purebreds. Although the pet shop where she'd bought the dog had advertised the puppy as such, Megan was sure she wasn't, not at that price.

"So, you were at least \$400 over the agreed upon spending limit, plus you broke our agreement to wait..." He thought for a minute, and Megan's stomach fluttered nervously, knowing that his businessman's head for numbers was calculating the fate of her bottom as though it were a math problem in a high school book – if Naughty Wife A spends \$500 on Product X and the size of Strict Husband B's paddle is 5" x 8", then how many

swats to Wife A's naked behind can be expected...?

Finally, after what seemed like forever, Cam patted Megan's bare knee and said, almost jovially, "I'll make you a deal. You want to keep that puppy?"

Megan's eyebrows furrowed over her brown eyes in puzzlement. In all the possible outcomes of this fiasco, she hadn't once thought she'd get to keep the puppy in the end. Cautiously, not trusting where this was headed, she said, "Y-yes...?"

Cam nodded. "Ok, then. You can keep her. But, you'll have to pay her off."

"Uh-huh." Megan stared at her husband, waiting for the other shoe to drop. When he offered her no other information than that, she sighed. "And how do I pay her off?"

Cam was holding back a grin, of that Megan was sure of. "Well, the way I figure it," he started and she held back a groan, "Four hundred dollars, a permanent addition to our family without my consent, breaking our agreement, and fibbing to me when I asked you what was going on after I got off the plane.... It all boils down to a good session over my lap each night for the next week."

Megan's mouth hung open at her husband's pronouncement, for the moment unable to vocalize a response. Cam sat there, unashamedly meeting her gaze and waiting for her to consent to the week of torment he had just so blandly described.

"A – A week?" Meg finally squeaked out.

He nodded.

She swallowed. "What if I say no?"

He shrugged. "If you say no, the pup goes back and I give you one helluva lickin tonight for everything."

"That's it?"

"That would be it, in that case."

She frowned, considering his words. In that case, that would be it... what about in the other case? "If I want to keep her, and agree to your...

your terms, is that it, or is there more involved with that choice?"

"There are two other conditions involved with that choice, now that you mention it." At this, Megan's frown deepened and she folded her arms over her chest poutingly. "First, I get to name the dog – unless you have already christened her...?"

"No," Meg admitted grumpily. "I had thought if you let her stay, then we could choose her name *together*."

"How thoughtful of you," Cam teased. "Well, I will try to consider you when choosing the pup's name, but I get the ultimate say - if you choose the option of keeping her, that is."

"Fine, whatever," Megan snapped, then instantly regretted her flash of temper when Cam's brows rose at her tone. She looked down at the hands in her lap and sighed. "What's the second condition?"

Cam stared hard at her in silence a few moments, and all the while Megan waited for him to scold her to look up at him. When he finally spoke, the words were gentle, a far cry from the stern tone she would have expected at that moment, all things considered.

"The second thing, wife mine, is that you agree to sit down with me and talk – really talk – about adoption."

Megan's head snapped up so fast and hard that it hurt. "I don't want...."

Cam's wide, warm, work roughened hand came to rest with gentle strength over his wife's open mouth. "Shhh," he crooned. "Not one more word. You *do* want a child, you know it as well as I do. That's part of where this whole puppy thing has come from all of a sudden. And I understand that it hurts you to talk about it because what you really want," he took a deep breath at the sight of tears pooling in her brown eyes, "a baby of your own, is not possible for you." He sighed and slowly moved his hand away from Megan's mouth, replacing it

with his lips upon her own. After kissing her briefly, he let his forehead rest against hers and closed his eyes. "But if you agree to my terms for keeping the puppy, then you must agree to talk to me about our other options, so that you can be a mother, and I have a chance to be a father."

Megan sniffled and wiped impatiently at a wayward tear as it shot frantically down her cheek. She glared murderously at her husband, at his deceptively creative way of backing her into this corner and forcing her to agree to do this when she never would have under normal circumstances. He allowed her a few minutes of sitting and stewing and glowered, before he finally swatted her naked backside where it met his jean-clad knee, and said, "Clock's ticking, missy. You don't give me an answer in a minute and I'll make up your stubborn little mind for you."

With a huff, Megan stood up and all but flung herself over her husband's thighs. "Fine, spank me already! I'm not giving up my puppy! Go ahead and do your worst every day for a *whole year* for all I care!"

A chuckle escaped Cam before he could stop it. "Don't tempt me, lady," he threatened as he drew back his arm and aimed in on the fleshly mounds of needy bottom flesh.

The first swat took Megan by surprise, it having been quite a while since she'd been upended over Cam's muscular thighs. She bit back on a yowl, not wanting to give him the satisfaction of crying out on the first spank, and looked back over her shoulder, wondering if he'd picked up the paddle while she hadn't been looking.

But no, it was only his large, heavy hand swinging down again towards her unprotected cheeks. This time she did give voice to a tiny cry as the sting from his swat brought an immediate heat.

"We are a team, Megan Louise Stephens," Cam was lecturing as his meaty palm smacked again

down on her bare bottom. "When we agree to do something together, we do *not* go behind the other person's back and break the agreement." SMACK!!

"Owie!"

"The agreed on spending limit is *how much*, Megan?" SMACK!

"Oh! Uh... a hundred dollars!" SMACK!!

"That's right, young lady. One hundred dollars, and not a penny more without consulting the other person first." SMACK! "What happens, missy, when you break this agreement?" SMACK!!

Duh. Megan stewed a minute, hating when he asked questions like that, knowing he loved making her say it, the 's' word. CRACK!CRACK!CRACK! "Oh, ok! Uncle! You spank me, okay, are you happy now?"

"That's right." SMACK! "When you are naughty, Meg, you give me no other choice but to spank you." SMACK!

"OW! Come on, Cam, have a heart! You've got the entire week to turn my butt into hamburger! Can't you give me a little break tonight?"

SMACK! SMACK! "Just ten with the paddle, and then you'll get your break." Megan couldn't stop the groan from falling from her throat and it earned her a fresh volley to teeth jarring wallops from Cam's never-tiring hand. "I suggest you bite your tongue and accept this paddling, Megan Louise. Else I might get it into my head to start over from scratch, just to be sure you haven't missed any of the key points of my lecture."

"No! No, that won't be necessary! Ow! Ok, I'm sorry. Please, Cam. Oh, Ouch! Please...spank me as you think I will learn best."

From her hindered position face first over his lap, Megan couldn't have been entirely sure, but she thought she heard her husband snicker from above at her words. She sighed and turned a deaf ear to the mocking sound, telling herself she didn't care. All she had to do was lie here and take the rest of this spanking. Then she'd be done – for today at

least – and she could go and play with the puppy.

Of course, that was easy enough to tell herself, until Cam picked up the paddle that had rested on the bedspread beside him up until then. Before beginning the paddling that would end this session over his lap, Cam tapped the wood lightly against his wife's already reddened bottom, then circled the implement once, twice, enjoying the view of her ruddy cheeks as they were jostled by the motion. God, he wanted her. He'd wanted her the minute he'd stepped off the plane and seen her, even though he'd seen in her eyes that she'd been up to something naughty while he'd been away. In a way, the entire lead up to this moment, the suspense of waiting to find out what she'd done, watching her inner struggle to tell him what she'd been up to, had been a long, drawn out game of foreplay for Cam. And though he knew she would never admit to it own her own, he also knew that when her paddling was over, and she'd been cuddled on his lap and reassured that she was loved, Megan would be wet and warm and willing when her husband turned to her in the intimate way he longed to indulge in.

But for right now, there was a paddling to complete, and so Cam purposefully raised the wood high above his head, then drove it down to meet full across the middle of Meg's bare seat. A rectangle shape of angry red showed hot across the middle of her backside, just where it was most round and full before it flared down to her thighs.

"Ah, God, Cam! Not so hard!"

The second swat fell exactly in the same place and brought out the twisting and wriggling that Cam knew was the beginning of the end of Megan's resolve. The third blow had her hand flailing back behind her, trying to block the punished area. In a moment, Cam had her wrists out of the way, though, held in check by one of his hands, up in the middle of her back.

"No more breaking agreements," he ordered her sternly, punctuating the commandment with another punishing wallop.

"Cam, please not there again. Please..."

"No more sneakiness." C-CRACCKK!!

At this, Megan's struggles stopped and the tears began.

CRACK! "When I ask you a question," CRACK! "about what's going on with you, when something is obviously up," CRACK! "I expect an honest answer!" CRACK!

"I'm sorry! I'm really sorry, Cam...Oh please..."

Cam surveyed his wife's well smacked bottom and was sure she was sorry. He passed his hand lightly over the reddened flanks, and was satisfied with the warmth. Still he had promised her ten with the paddle and she still had one left to go. "And later tonight, Megan Louise, we will talk about our options for having a child. And you will not fight me on it when I bring up the subject." CRACK! "Is that clear?"

She sniffled pitifully. "Yessir."

"Good girl." Gently, Cam gathered his wife into his arms and helped her to sit up, cradling her against him with her battered backside hanging down between his slightly parted legs. He rocked her soothingly as she sobbed against his chest, occasionally telling him something in broken words that only he, knowing her as he did, could understand.

It was a good fifteen minutes later, when Megan's tears had subsided and they were just cuddling, enjoying the comfort of one another, and just beginning to explore one another's bodies a bit more intimately, that they heard a crash from the room beside their own and all of a sudden a bundle of fur launched itself onto their laps, whining and wiggling and licking at their faces all at once.

"Did you buy a puppy or a Houdini reincarnation?"

Cam groaned at the interruption, his erection a living, breathing, painful thing now, but Megan giggled and hugged the little nuisance as it danced awkwardly between their bodies. Catching her husband's eye, and his frown, she grinned at him and said, "Oh, come on, how can you resist her? Not even you can be untouched by how adorable this puppy is."

He regarded the dog a moment before shrugging. "Yeah I guess you're right. She is pretty cute."

"So...?" Meg prompted as she rubbed the puppy's belly. "What's her name gonna be?"

Cam grinned wolfishly. Without even a moment's hesitation, he offered, "How about Spanky?"

"Oh no you don't!" Megan protested. "No way!!"

"Why not? Seems perfect to me," her husband insisted, still grinning that annoying grin. He patted her still warm backside for effect. "She'd serve as a reminder to my naughty wife to behave herself..."

"No way and that is final. Think of something else," Meg insisted.

"Oh all right. You're no fun at all." He eyed the fuzzy red-brown pup, his eyes occasionally straying to the red bottom flesh of his bride. "Ok, I've got it... Scarlet."

Meg didn't miss the way his mind had worked for a moment, but she couldn't help the smile that came over her face either. Being a fan of *Gone With The Wind* surely didn't help her case either. She slowly nodded her head, ignoring Cam's arrogant laughter, and conceded to the inevitable, "Ok, Scarlet it is."

Mousy Molly

Molly was out behind her house the day he moved in. A mid-sized U-haul pulled into the parking lot below the condominiums and this tall, broad shouldered man wearing a white tee shirt and tight faded blue jeans hopped out of the cab. He had a couple buddies with him, one in the passenger seat and two more that pulled in behind the U-haul in a pickup loaded with stuff. Molly was intrigued and curious, but her chronic shyness, as always, took over. She quickly grabbed the romance novel she'd been reading in the early morning sunshine and took cover inside.

She listened to the men all day as they worked. They weren't exactly noisy, but her house was cattycornered to this new neighbor's, and in close proximity. She found herself craning her neck out her window to try to get another look at the man.

That evening, after she had gotten ready for bed and turned out the lights, she noticed a light on in the new man's room across from hers. And when she peeked around her curtain, she was surprised to find that she could very clearly see into his bedroom. There he was, lying on the bed, reading a book.

She tried to turn herself away, chiding herself silently that she shouldn't be looking at him when he was unaware. She certainly wouldn't like someone to watch her like that. But her eyes were locked on his darkly haired, bare chest and the strong, muscled forearms that supported the volume in his hands. Even from this distance she could tell that his hands were big, and probably strong and hard. As she continued to study his hands, a shiver ran through her that wasn't exactly due to the chill of the early spring air on her flesh.

She found herself settling cross-legged onto the carpet in front of her window, and it was another

hour before she finally moved from her spying position to get into bed. And that was only because the new neighbor closed his book and clicked off his light and she couldn't see anything else.

She wondered, feeling ashamed of her behavior as well as foolish, if she would have sat there through the night, watching him sleep, if she could have only seen in the dark.

The next morning when Molly woke up she remembered her unusual behavior and blushed hotly. Whatever had gotten into her? She'd never done anything like that before and, she vowed, she never would again.

She went about her day as usual. She went to work, stopped at the grocery store on the way home, and made a healthy meal for herself. After she'd cleaned up, she logged onto the computer and spent some time catching up on the newest spanking stories on her favorite sites and newsgroups. She even worked a little on a story she was writing herself, her very first one. It was purely fantasy, and though spanking was something that she'd fantasized heavily about for as long as she could remember, she was having trouble putting her thoughts into words. She supposed it was her shyness coming out on paper.

When she finally went into her bedroom, smelling fresh from a quick shower and dressed in her favorite nightgown, she was yawning with fatigue. But all thoughts of a good night's sleep fled when she caught a quick glimpse of her new neighbor, reading in bed again. No shirt again, the white sheet riding low on his hips. His handsome face was softened with a smile at whatever he was reading and a few dark locks of hair fell over his forehead in a becoming, boyish manner. Molly was once again drawn to him, and she found herself once again sitting on the floor of her bedroom,

watching him in silence, as still as a stone.

A few minutes had passed when a sudden blur of color beside him surprised Molly; she barely caught herself from exclaiming a loud cry, before she realized that a cat had jumped up next to the man. A silver tiger butted its head against the corner of the book and closed its eyes with obvious delight as the man set aside his reading to stroke and scratch the tabby. She was touched by the way he attended the cat, with full abandon and much exaggeration. She could tell he was speaking to the cat, though of course she couldn't hear what he was saying. Molly was a real animal lover, having learned from past experience that animals were always the most understanding and loyal of friends. Something in her really softened towards this man, this stranger whose name she did not even know, as she watching him lovingly play and pet his cat.

From that night on, Molly's bedtime ritual was to watch her new neighbor until his light went off. Then, and only then, she would put herself to bed. What followed that were highly erotic dreams, starring the man she watched through her window. Dreams of submission, of spanking, of his dominance and loving guidance over her. Dreams of fulfilling her lifelong fantasies with him.

Molly chided herself every morning when she awoke and recalled the vibrant images from her dreams. Who was she kidding anyway? She was Molly Gray, "Mousy Molly" as she'd been called in school. She was plain, drab looking, and dull. The only thing that made her personality even mildly interesting was her spanking kink, and there was no way that she would tell anyone about that! Not that it would help her cause anyway – that would only made him turn tail and run from her even faster.

Another woman might have thrown together a cake or a batch of cookies and walked them over to

his door as a way to introduce herself. "Hi, I'm Molly Gray. Welcome to the neighborhood," she could say. It wouldn't be so hard. Maybe for another woman. But for Molly, memories of past rejections and her painful shyness kept her from even trying.

So instead she tried to content herself with watching him each night before bed. Her guilt grew, but she felt she couldn't help herself. Though she wouldn't have admitted it, even to herself, Molly was already half in love with the stranger living two doors down.

The dreams that haunted Molly at night made her restless and edgy with unsatisfied desire in the mornings. It didn't help that she still read all the spanking stories she loved so much, though it did seem that the dreams and their erotic content were helping her own writing project along.

In an effort to work off some of the tension caused by the dreams, Molly started jogging again. She had been an avid jogger, one of the kind that you always saw out at the same time every day, despite what kind of bad weather might be coming down around her. She'd gotten out of the habit, however, and she wasn't in the tiptop shape she had been in before. She was still able to run a decent mile, though, and set about jogging at least three every other day.

It probably would have been a better stress reliever for her if she didn't insist on jogging past the mystery neighbor's house every day. She was always careful to plan her run when she saw his car was out of the parking lot, so there'd be no chance of seeing him by accident. But even so, there was always a risk that he would return while she was running and she'd come across him on her return trip. And one day, it finally did happen.

She cursed herself the second she saw the dark blue Hyundai sitting in its usual spot. Why did she

insist on going this route when it would have been so much safer to lope around the other way? Well, she thought, darting an anxious glance towards his front door, at least he was already inside....

At that exact moment, the door opened and before Molly could force her eyes away, out he came. He was dressed in faded blue jeans that had a hole just below one knee, and a hunter green flannel shirt. He looked down at her and smiled as he closed the door behind him. Molly lost her breath that fast, then tripped on one of the cracks in the sidewalk, and went sprawling forward to land hard on her bare knees.

"Are you all right?" her neighbor asked, running down the steps to the sidewalk with an ease and balance that was ironic considering the way she'd just tripped over her own two feet.

Molly was embarrassed beyond belief, and didn't have the voice to answer him at first. She sat back and winced at the angry red scrapes she now sported on both knees.

He made a sympathetic sound. "Here, let me help you."

Before she could even start to protest, he had literally picked her up in his arms, draping her wounded knees over one forearm and supporting her back with the other. He started climbing the steps to his home.

"Uh—I'm okay," Molly managed to squeak as he deposited her on the wooden porch chair that sat on his front stoop. "My house is just two doors down. I'll just go and...."

He gave her a gentle push back into the chair when she started to get up. "You'll just sit right here and let me clean those knees," he said in a matter-of-fact, no-nonsense-tone that did funny things to her insides when all it should have done was rankle her. "Just wait here a second while I go inside for a couple things."

What could she do other than what he'd asked?

She could run home despite what he'd said, but the man was her neighbor, and though she'd done a pretty good job of avoiding it so far, she was going to be running into him more often just because they lived so close to one another. How awkward that would be if she were to skip out on him now.

He returned quickly with a wet washcloth, a dry one and a bottle of antiseptic. As he knelt down before her and began to gently clean the red wounds with the wet cloth, he glanced up with a charming smile and said, "Name's Dylan Stein. How do you do?"

She smiled shyly. Dylan, huh? That was a nice name.

"Molly Gray," she answered. "Nice to meet you."

His touch was so light she didn't feel any pain at all as he tended to her.

"I've seen you sometimes going to and from your car, but I've never been able to catch you to say hello," he said.

"I...I've meant to stop over and welcome you to the neighborhood," Molly quickly replied. "But I just haven't had the time."

He shrugged. "Well, here you are now."

They lapsed into silence as he finished cleaning her knees and prepared to run some antiseptic over them. "This might burn a bit," he warned quietly.

She nodded, thinking of other things she'd let this handsome man do to her that would burn, in other ways, as well. He made quick work with the antiseptic and after an initial gasp of air, Molly was fine.

Dylan sat back from her and gave her bare calf a pat. "All better now."

She smiled. "Thank you." She found herself staring into his eyes, which were a deep, dark green, and she had to really pry her gaze away before she looked foolish. She stood slowly and started to move towards the steps to continue on home. He stopped her with a light hand on her arm.

"Do you run every day?" he asked.

She nodded, a surge of ridiculous hope coursing through her.

"Would you mind some company sometime? I used to run myself, but I've gotten out of the habit since the move. I've been meaning to start up again, but I keep finding excuses to put it off. Maybe if I had someone to run with it would be the motivation I need to get off my butt again."

She laughed, though her stomach was knotted fitfully. She'd just fallen on her face in front of the man, would she be able to survive running with him? But as she looked into those eyes and glanced down at the warm, strong fingers that encircled her wrist, how could she say no to him? She didn't want to say no to him.

"Sure, I'd like that," she said. He smiled. "I usually run in the mornings between 8 and 9, before I have to go into the office, but on the weekends, I'm pretty flexible."

"Sounds good to me," he released her wrist and she felt the break of contact with a sharpness that was unsettling. She smiled at him once more in parting, before hurrying down the steps and around the corner to the safety of her own home.

And so it was that Molly Gray began running with her neighbor, Dylan Stein. It was the last thing she had expected to have happen, and to her even greater surprise, it turned out that they became quick, comfortable friends. For the first time in a long while, Molly had someone to share her time with. And though she was still pretty shy around him, he made steady work at erasing her uneasiness.

They started out running together, and then they added an occasional meal together, taking turns at who did the cooking. She met his cat, Sterling, and they talked about books and movies

and complained about their jobs. Dylan was a new history professor at the Community College, having just come from teaching at a private high school for four years. The idea of Dylan as "Professor Stein" gave her goose bumps, and she started having a whole new flock of erotic dreams revolving around her as one of his naughty pupils. She blushed to the roots of her hair sometimes when she was with him and he would tell her about his day at work. She'd get to daydreaming about one of her fantasies of classroom discipline from him and he'd eyeball her sternly for a minute and ask, in a mockingly terse tone, "Young lady, are you listening to me?" She wondered what he might do if one time she said no instead of assuring him she had been attentive.

If Molly had thought herself already half in love with Dylan before she'd even met him, now she would have had to admit she was both feet, head over heels in love with him. The more she saw of him, and the more she learned about him, the deeper she fell. The stories he told her about history were animated and alive with his love for the subject; the jokes he told were sweet and cute, never crass or dirty; he lent her his jacket if it was cold or raining, he held doors and always let her walk ahead of him as a gentleman would; he talked baby talk to Sterling and told her he'd love to have a whole passel of kids one day tearing around a big house with a huge front yard, nothing like the little condo he lived in now; he wore worn jeans and faded flannel shirts that hugged his lean legs and muscled arms, all the while looking as sexy as hell when he was really just careless about his dress; he liked to have music playing and candles or incense burning, and he was always ready with a smile or a gentle tease to brighten her day when she was in a bad mood. She also found out that he, too, did some creative writing in his spare time. Neither asked the other what kind of writing, or to see what had been written, though. Of course, Molly was

curious to see something that Dylan had written, but since she didn't feel comfortable sharing her stories, she didn't ask to see his. She figured he refrained from asking to see her work for similar reasons.

In short, Molly was quite sure that she had found the perfect man for her, the one she wanted to wake up next to for the rest of her life.

But Dylan had come out of a nasty breakup just a few months ago, and had told Molly that he was taking "a break" from dating for a while. Molly figured that was the main reason why he had befriended her, and why she felt so comfortable with him. They were just friends, nothing more. Though she might hope for the friendship to grow into something more, she knew better than to think that a handsome, charming man like Dylan would fall for Mousy Molly.

The only problem with their new found friendship for Molly was the guilt. It was about a hundred times worse now than before, because she still couldn't stop herself at night. She still sat on the floor of her bedroom, all lights off, peering around the curtains at Dylan as he read before bed. She'd felt bad enough about it before, when she hadn't known him. But now it was her friend she was spying on. Every night she told herself she wasn't going to do it, and every morning she had more and more trouble looking Dylan in the eye when they met for their run.

She wondered what was wrong with her. She'd always known she wasn't normal, but what was it that made her watch him night after night like some obsessed nutcase? Normal people didn't do that. But then again, normal people didn't get turned on by the idea of being spanked, either.

Sometimes it was all she wished for, to be a normal person. To be able to find satisfaction in the normal sexual turn-ons, and not be so painfully shy that the loneliness she felt at night drove her to

stare out her window at a man she hardly knew but had already given her heart to.

It had been about four months since the start of their friendship when one Saturday afternoon as Molly was working at her computer on a new story, she heard Dylan's familiar knock at her door. Smiling at the welcome intrusion, and wondering why he was stopping by, she quickly saved her work, closed the file, and turned her monitor off. She was so anxious to answer the door, she just left the computer running for the moment.

"Hi," he said, smiling, when she opened the door. He stepped over the threshold and strode into the room, surprising her a bit with his forwardness. She didn't mind his coming in, of course, it was just not like him to do so without her inviting him first. She shrugged mentally and closed the door behind him. It was when she turned that she saw the box in his hand. And her heart sank to her feet when she recognized the plain, inconspicuous, brown cardboard box, with the unremarkable return address. In Dylan's unsuspecting hand was the paddle that Molly had impulsively bought online two weeks ago. How had he ended up with it?

"The mailman delivered this to my box by mistake," Dylan said, answering her unasked question. Molly's heart began to beat again as she smiled shakily. She forced herself to walk past him, towards the kitchen in the back of the house. Maybe she could collect herself if she had a moment alone....

"Thanks for bringing it over to me," she called from the other room. "Would you like a glass of iced tea?"

"No thanks." There was a pause. Molly busied herself with pouring herself a glass of tea while trying to get her hand to stop shaking. "I would like to talk to you about something, though. If you have

the time."

"Sure."

Molly took two deep breaths, closed her eyes in a brief moment of silent prayer for her nervousness to fade, and started back towards her living room.

She very nearly dropped her glass of tea when she walked in. There stood Dylan in the middle of the room, the black leather paddle she'd purchased out of its box and in his hand. Behind him, on the computer monitor she knew she'd turned off was the damning background she'd loved so much when she'd found it on the internet: a cuddling picture of a couple, the woman's bottom bright red from a recent spanking.

Dylan tapped the paddle against the palm of his opposite hand and fixed her with a steely glare. "You've been a very naughty girl, Molly," he said. Molly gulped. The glass shook in her hand.

She couldn't say anything for a few moments, could only stand there and stare at him with that paddle in his hand and wonder how he'd found out and how long he'd known.

"I know that you've been watching me at night," he continued. "That's a very naughty thing to do, Molly. Spying on a friend...." He made a low 'tsk 'tsk sound in his throat. To her relief he set the paddle on her coffee table and came over to her to take the glass from her hand. He set it down on her table and took her hands in his for a reassuring squeeze that surprised her. Wasn't he angry with her?

Although she knew she ought to be explaining her own behavior, she heard herself asking about his instead. Not that her words made much sense in the jumbled way they fell over themselves as they left her mouth: "My package... you... why.... Open...?"

Dylan chuckled warmly. His eyes were kind on her face and she felt her cheeks blush with hot color. He cupped one side of her face with his hand and stroked the bloom of rosey red with his thumb.

"I opened it by mistake," he explained. "I thought it was my order."

Molly's eyes grew so big they actually hurt. *His* order..... !!

Dylan chuckled again. "I guess we're both out to one another now, huh?"

Molly managed to blink, though she was still too stunned to speak.

Dylan gave a tug on her hand. "Come sit with me a minute, Molly. We have to have a talk...."

The words were so like those she'd read hundreds of times in the spanking stories she loved, and gooseflesh broke out all over her skin as she meekly followed him over to the sofa. When she started to sit beside him, he stopped her and pulled her down to sit on one of his knees instead.

She couldn't help but glance at the paddle out of the corner of her eye. It looked a lot bigger in person than it had on her computer screen.

"Molly, look at me, please."

She managed to meet his eyes, though just barely. She felt her lower lip tremble.

"You've been watching me at night when I read in my bedroom," he said. "Care to tell me why?"

She swallowed hard on the tears in her throat. Her voice was husky when she spoke. "I... I was drawn to you from the day you moved in. I started doing it before I even met you. I'm not proud of it. I kept trying to stop myself but it was like I couldn't help it. Even after we started being friends, I just couldn't stop myself, even though I wanted to...."

Dylan was frowning at her. "I don't really buy that, Molly," he said sternly. "You have the ability to control your own actions, just as everyone else does. If you'd really wanted to, you would have found a way, young lady."

She looked down at her hands in her lap, sniffled, and nodded. "You're right," she admitted.

She could feel the heat of his gaze on her face, and the warm weight of his hands where they

gripped her hips.

"What you've done is very wrong and naughty, Molly. You know that. What happens to naughty girls, Molly?" She couldn't answer him, couldn't say the words out loud, especially that *one* word. Dylan gripped her chin gently in one hand and turned her face up and over towards the damning wallpaper on her computer screen. "What happened to *that* naughty girl there?"

She found her voice somehow, and as she starred at the picture, squeaked out, "She got spanked."

"Yes, that's right." Dylan brought her face back around to him. His eyes were still so warm and kind even though his voice was all business and no-nonsense. "Do you know what I think, Molly?"

She did, God help her. A shiver ran down her spine though she wasn't sure if it was borne of excitement or dread. Probably a little of both.

"I think that you need a good spanking, just like she did. I mean we've got the paddle right here for it and everything. And you certainly deserve it."

"I...I've never been s-spanked before," she admitted quietly.

"Well, there's a first time for everything, I guess," Dylan said dismissively. "And really Molly, the matter's not up for discussion. But don't worry, I'm an old hand, shall we say, at this." He chuckled at his wording. "And you'll be safe with me."

Safe. That was an interesting way to describe it. She'd always felt safe with him before, she realized. And even though she was nervous and a little scared, as well as excited by what was coming, she also knew that what he said was true. She trusted him.

"First I think a little corner time is in order for you, young lady," Dylan was saying. He helped her to her feet and led her to an empty corner of the room. "Nose in the corner and no turning around until you're told. Is that clear?"

"Yes sir," she whispered, tucking her chin to her chest and feeling more shy now than she ever had in her life.

Dylan studied her a moment, then pressed a reassuring kiss on her cheek. "Don't hide yourself from me, Mol," he said gently. "Okay?"

She met his eyes briefly. "Okay."

He ran a hand tenderly down her long hair before pointing back to the corner. When she had righted herself again, he left her side. She could hear him moving about behind her. There was the sound of the blinds being drawn and then the darkening of the room as the drapes were drawn. A lamp clicked on to bring more light. Then she heard the scrape of the coffee table being moved away from the sofa, and finally the springs of the sofa as they gave under his weight. She concentrated on the sounds and their meaning, trying to distract herself from the thought of what was to come and the way the skin on her bottom was quivering as she stood there waiting to be punished.

Finally she heard his voice. "Okay, Molly, you can turn around now. And come here."

Molly found her legs stiff and quivery as she moved to stand to his side. He looked up at her and took hold of her hand. He pressed a feather light kiss across the knuckles.

"Being spanked is something you've fantasized about for a while, isn't it?" he asked.

She didn't see the sense in denying the obvious; the proof of her kink was sitting within his reach on the coffee table, waiting to be applied to her backside. She nodded her head and said softly, "For as long as I can remember. But I'm still nervous."

Dylan nodded. "Well, I think you should be. I am flattered, really, by what you did, but I'm not pleased by it. And I'm going to punish you for your behavior. But you should know that I'm not going to be all that hard on you. You don't have any reason to worry, okay?"

"Okay." She managed to give him a wobbly smile.

"That a girl." He cleared his throat. "Now then, let's get started, shall we? Bend over my lap here, Molly."

She could only look at him for a moment, absorbing the moment and his words, accepting the fact that doing as he asked would be submitting to his control and willing herself and her correction into his hands. When she finally obeyed his request, bending her body over his jean-clad knees, her skirted bottom topside, a delicious feeling of absolute vulnerability washed over her. A tremor of need coursed through her when Dylan's warm hand cupped her curves through the cotton cover, smoothing the material of the skirt over her backside.

She heard herself whimper and blushed furiously at the helplessness of the sound.

Dylan made some fuss of positioning her body over his legs until he finally got it to his liking. Molly could feel her knee length skirt riding up due to the angle at which he had her bent over. She wondered if he would spank her on her bare bottom, and couldn't decide if the idea excited or repelled her.

He didn't say anything before the first swat fell and it caught her by surprise. It was louder than she had expected, and the sound was more of a shock than the pain, which was minimal. He followed the first spank with more of the same, pausing after a dozen had rapidly rained down. By then she was beginning to feel the first heat through the cotton of her skirt and the silk of her panties beneath.

Dylan reached past her and she knew he was grabbing the paddle that lay waiting on the table. Her stomach was suddenly alive with jittery somersaults when she felt him rest the weight of the paddle against her.

"This is a beautiful paddle," he remarked as he

circled the large, black leather business end around one cheek and then the other. "I saw it myself on line, and was tempted to buy it to add to my collection."

His *collection*? Good Lord, what had she gotten herself into??

He tapped the blade of the paddle ever so lightly against her. "I think we'll start with five, for now. Are you ready?"

"O—okay."

A split second later, the first smack fell and Molly gasped at the sting of it. Even through the layers of clothing, that paddle was hard. The second spank cracked down, followed by the third and Molly let out a loud, "Oww!" in protest.

"Stings, doesn't it?" Dylan remarked dryly.

"Yes!"

He didn't seem to have much compassion, for he fired down the next two swats, one after the other, and they seemed even harder than any before. Then he said, "And we're just getting started, young lady."

Molly glanced over her shoulder and he grinned at her. He handed her the paddle, and said, "Hold that for me a minute."

And there she lay over the man of her dreams' lap, holding that horrible paddle that she'd spent her hard earned money on, while he folded up her skirt, and surveyed her lacy white silk panties with both his gaze and his hand.

"Very nice," he remarked, running his fingers along the elastic at the legs and waist of the expensive panties. She was sure he was going to pull them down, but he didn't. The warmth in her bottom was spreading, and she felt a throb of desire as she anticipated his next move.

He began spanking her again, slower this time, so that each swat had a chance to really sink in. Just as the sting began to fade from one smack, he gave her another, and Molly was gasping from the

intensity of them. The swats were much crisper and sharper now, of course, since he had pulled her skirt up, and Molly didn't think he was really staying his strength for all that he had said he would go easy on her. She hadn't expected, despite all the different kinds of spanking stories she had read, that it would really hurt this much, and she was unprepared for it. She found herself kicking and squirming over his lap, whimpering and yelping in time with the tempo he beat on her backside.

When he had given her another dozen swats, he paused to rub at her bottom. "Shh, Molly," he crooned.

"It hurts!" she complained, to which he laughed. She shot him an angry glare over her shoulder.

"It's supposed to hurt, you silly little girl," he said. He put out his hand and said, "Paddle please."

She handed it to him and turned away quickly, sniffing daintily and laying her head on her folded arms. She felt pretty sorry for herself, though she knew she probably deserved it, given what she'd done.

"Five more, and this time I want to hear you count them."

SMACK!

"Ow! One."

SMACK!

"Oh! Ow, two..."

SMACK!!

"Owiie!" Molly kicked her legs to vent the sting of the leather. Without the cotton skirt for padding, these swats were much worse than the previous ones. "Three."

SMACK!

"OH! Four!"

SMACK!

"Five," Dylan supplied for her.

Molly panted over his lap, as he once again set aside the paddle and kneaded her cheeks with his hands. She heard herself groaning and whimpering

and tried to stop, but found she couldn't.

"Poor Molly," Dylan crooned as he stroked and caressed her. "You're not used to being punished. You've always been a good girl, haven't you, Molly?"

"Yes," she answered. "I was never one to get in trouble when I was growing up..."

"I'll bet you didn't spy on the last person that lived in my house, did you?"

"No..."

"I didn't think so. It's only been since I moved in that you've had these naughty urges that, as you said, you couldn't control. It's almost like I brought out the bad girl in you. Like Fate stepping in and bringing us together just for that purpose. To fulfill our lifelong fantasies and bring out the bad girl in you, the one who knows what she wants, what she needs, and isn't too shy anymore to ask for it."

Molly moaned as his fingers dipped inside the elastic at the legs of her panties. She was sure that at any moment he was going to tear them off and touch her aching sex with those deft fingers, and she was frantic for him to do it, now. She did feel like a bad girl then, brazen and bold, and so very, very naughty in her desires. She ground her hips against his leg as he teased her further, moaning, and whispering the word out loud.

Dylan chuckled softly above her. "That's right. Good thing I know how to deal with naughty little girls like you, Molly Gray." Her panties were tugged down to her knees in one swift motion and his hand was fast to cover the bared flesh with a steaming hot slap. "But they certainly don't get to keep their panties on for their spankings."

The renewal of the swats, on her now very bare backside made Molly gasp and buck and wriggle in an effort to try to avoid his unerring aim. Her panties slithered down to her ankles, only to be kicked off and sent sailing across the room. Her bottom was on fire with the onslaught of his hand and she was nearing tears. Yet even through the

pain, she was aware of the sexual tension between them, heightened by their positioning and by her half nakedness. The warmth in her bottom was spreading like a sweet wildfire through her veins, heating her sex and hardening her nipples to tight buds that strained for attention. There was a wonderful intimacy and feeling of submission and vulnerability that she found wildly exciting, and Molly wondered what it would be like if the spanking was lighter and her heart wasn't laden with a month's worth of guilt over what she'd been doing every night before bed.

Molly lost track of how many of Dylan's hard, open palmed smacks she endured, but she was sniffing and fighting tears when he finally did stop. He caressed her again, and this time his touch was even more powerful since she was bare from the waist down.

"How long have you been watching me, Molly?" Dylan asked as he traced her tenderized flesh with the very tips of his fingers. She shivered with the sensations, and hesitated in her answer. "I only noticed you about a week ago," he went on when she remained quiet. "But I didn't know how to go about confronting you about it until I got your package by mistake and opened it." When she still didn't answer, he gave her a sharp smack and asked again, "How long, Molly?"

"Since the day you moved it," she whispered, her face burning in shame.

There was a stunned silence.

"I tried to make myself stop, especially after we became friends, Dylan, I really did," Molly added quickly, talking fast as she felt him shift his weight to grab up the paddle again. The leather snapped down on her bottom with a furious sound and she hissed at the sting of it. "I hated myself for doing it, but I..." another stroke fell and the breath momentarily left her. She panted over his knee as another swat fell, and another. Finally, she forced

out the rest of her defense, pitiful though it was. "I... I had a crush on you, I guess. I couldn't help watching you, even just watching you read a book. I looked forward to it every day. I'm so sorry! I wish I hadn't done it!!"

For a time there were only the sounds of the leather snapping against her naked bottom and of Molly's tears. Finally, the spanking slowed, and finally came to a stop. Dylan still held Molly's body over his knees, tucked inside of one strong arm and snuggled against his chest. She sniffled and tried to compose herself while she waited.

One last fiery smack crashed down and she gasped.

"I've lived in that house nearly four weeks now," Dylan said. "I ought to spank you once a day for that long just to even the score."

Molly didn't argue with him. What could she say? She just lay there, waiting. And finally she felt him toss the paddle aside, and he helped her to stand.

"I'm sorry, Dylan," she said, searching his eyes beseechingly for understanding. "I'm so sorry."

He nodded. "I know. I forgive you."

He stood up then, as well, and watched her with a bemused expression as she reached back with both hands and rubbed gingerly at her seat. The front of her skirt had fallen down when she stood, but she didn't try to hide her backside from his view. Not that there'd be much point in it now, anyway. He pulled her hands free and swatted her once with his hand.

"It's a good bright red," he told her. "You go and look in the mirror if you want, but no rubbing. I want you to feel every last second of that spanking."

"Okay," she agreed. Feeling silly, she nonetheless disappeared into the bathroom and examined herself in the full-length mirror, admiring the red heat he had put in her bottom, though she refrained from rubbing.

When she returned to him, he was waiting for her with his arms crossed. He grinned at the expression on her face.

"I have just one more question for you, Mol," he said.

"What?"

"Why didn't you just come on over and introduce yourself to me?"

Molly looked away. She shrugged, wishing he hadn't asked. Looking at the carpet, then at the picture behind his head, and then again at the carpet, she answered, "Well, I thought about it. But I was just too shy to do that. I was afraid you wouldn't like me..." In her head she heard and saw all the people in her past who'd poked fun at her, who'd called her Mousy Molly and tossed aside her efforts for friendship. She closed her eyes briefly, and when she opened them again and made herself look at Dylan, he had such a ferocious look on his face that for a second she thought she was in for another spanking.

But when he closed the step between them it wasn't to throw her over his knee, but to grab her up in his arms instead and crush his mouth down on top of hers in a blinding, sense numbing kiss that seared her soul and branded her heart as his forever.

When he drew back from her, Molly swayed in his arms, looking up with a dazed expression into his smoldering green eyes. "Just for the record, Molly," he said in a very determined voice. "I happen to like you very damn much."

She blinked. Then she tucked her chin to her chest and started to sob.

"What... what's wrong?" he asked, and he sounded comically like the typical man, at a loss as to what he'd said to upset his lady. "What did I say?" He tipped her chin up and wiped ineffectively at her tears with his thumbs. "Why are you crying?"

"Be-because you only like me as a friend," she

cried. "And... and you know now that... that I feel more than that for you..."

Dylan smiled and kissed her cheeks. "Shh, sweetheart. Molly." When she kept crying, he finally sighed and tipped her face up, bringing his lips down against hers again, this time in a slower, sweeter kiss. Molly melted against him, letting his fingers wipe away her tears.

"Did that feel like a kiss between friends to you?" he asked her a few minutes later when they came up for air. She smiled, confused and waiting for him to continue. He framed her face and grinned. "I think that my little 'break' from dating has officially ended, don't you?"

She giggled.

"If your bottom's up to it tonight, would you have dinner with me?" he asked.

"I'd love to," she answered, her smile broadening.

"Great. I'll pick you up at seven. And if you're good, maybe you'll get another spanking tonight."

"But you just spanked me!"

Dylan chuckled. He kissed her cheek, then her neck and whispered in her ear, "You've got a lot to learn. Be glad I'm here to teach you..."

He swatted her softly and started for the door.

"Dylan?"

"Yeah?" He turned and waited.

"Can we make love afterwards?" It was the most uncharacteristic thing she'd ever said. And it felt wonderful to hear the words come out of her mouth.

"That doesn't sound like something a good girl would ask," he scolded teasingly.

She shrugged. "Like you said, you seem to bring out the bad girl in me."

He grinned. "Is that what you want, sweetheart?" he asked gently. "To make love?"

She nodded. "Yes."

He studied her quietly a moment. "I don't know. I think we should take things slowly. But we'll see

where the evening takes us....." He grinned and shook a finger at her. "Be ready at seven, Missy."

She gave him a little salute and a saucy smile. "See you then!"

Making Repairs

Carly James wiped what had to be the hundredth smudge of paint from her forehead and continued to maneuver the roller down the last wall in the room. She would be so glad when the painting was done, and she was no longer speckled with the stuff from head to toe. Of course, finishing the painting had its drawbacks too – it meant tackling the bigger projects that were needed before she could open the day care here, namely fixing the leaky kitchen sink and replacing the missing or broken shingles on the roof over the side entrance of the house.

As another dot of paint sprang from the roller and plummeted down to land with a splatter on her bare big toe, she sighed. When she was back at Penn's main campus finishing her doctorate in early childhood education, she should have found a way to take a couple courses somewhere in home improvement. Of course, up until three months ago, she had always thought she'd have Sean O'Reilly by her side, and he knew how to take care of all of this kind of stuff. She never envisioned being on her own when she came back home after getting her degree.

With the determined mental discipline that had gotten her through her years of college with flying colors, Carly firmly pushed away her wayward thoughts of Sean. She refused to waste any more time or tears on her childhood love when he had so obviously moved on with his life without her.

"There," she said softly as she finished the last wall with a flourish of the now hated paint roller. She took a step back to admire her handiwork and smiled. Not bad for an amateur.

She was on the way to the kitchen with her painting paraphernalia, thinking regretfully about the more pressing projects she should start on next,

when her doorbell rang. Hopeful that it might be someone who had seen one of her advertisements for the soon to open daycare, and wishing she wasn't a paint smeared mess, she dropped her supplies in the sink and hurried back the way she'd come to answer the front door.

On the other side, as if magically conjured there by her earlier wayward thoughts, stood Sean O'Reilly.

Carly was so surprised to see him on her doorstep that all she could do at first was stand there and stare at him. He looked basically the same as he had the last time she'd seen him, now almost five months earlier, though there did seem to be something different about him, or maybe it was more like there was something missing. Though the physical appearance was the same – tall, broad shouldered, handsome man with shaggy reddish blond hair, and green eyes – there was a shadow in his eyes where once there was light. And, the smile he wore now was off too; though maybe that wasn't surprising considering the way they'd parted company. It was just that Carly had never seen Sean look uncertain, and that smile on his face was as uncertain as anything she'd ever seen.

She noticed then that he was dressed for working in a beat up pair of Carhartt jeans and an even more battered concert t-shirt from a show they'd seen together eons ago as teenagers. It had been her first rock concert; with a flush, her mind unwillingly recalled how many other firsts she had shared with this man standing in front of her.

"Hello, Carly," he said gruffly, his voice rough as if he'd forgotten how to make it work. She watched as he shifted the toolbox in his right hand to his left, still looking unsure. Though she knew she should be enjoying his obvious discomfort, it didn't sit well with her at all, and that made her angry with

herself. When was she going to get over the jerk anyway?

"What the hell are you doing here?" she finally snapped, reversing the anger she felt with herself back at him. He was the one who really deserved it anyway, she told herself.

The hesitant smile quickly faded from his face and in its place a frown that looked much more at home there surfaced, and one eyebrow rose over his stormy eyes. For a sudden moment, Carly felt the old panic of knowing her butt was in for a dusting, and then she remembered that she was no longer in danger of that from Sean. When he'd given her up, he'd given up any more chances of getting her over his knee again as well. The realization that there was nothing he could do to her now, no matter what she said, was so triumphant that she had to resist sticking her tongue out at him and chanting 'nah nah nah nah nah nah!'

Instead, she folded her arms over her chest and frowned right back at him. She even tapped one foot. "Well, Sean? I asked you a question. What the hell do you want?"

The last emotion Sean expected to feel within the first few seconds of seeing Carly was the white-hot desire to throw her face down over his knee and wallop the breath right out of her. Though, he supposed he shouldn't have been surprised; with Carly, that emotion had always been a quick one to rise, and he wondered now why he thought this time would have been any different.

Of course, just because that was his first response to seeing her again didn't mean it was his only one. She was still as gorgeous as ever, even if she was wearing the rattiest clothes he'd ever seen her in, and even if she was covered from her blond, pony tailed head to her bare toes with paint splatters. He would have been just as happy,

probably, to have just grabbed her up in his arms and kissed the nasty expression and hard words right away. Her cherubic face was not made to look so fierce or tense and his fingers could also just as easily have been placated with soothing those hard lines away.

Even though she stood facing him all messy and disgruntled, she still fairly took his breath away, just as always, and all the while his hand literally itched to smack her pert little rear end.

Mentally, Sean gave himself a rough shake. He took a deep breath. And instead of answering her last question truthfully, with any one of the things he longed to do to her, knowing what her reaction would be to them all, he said instead: "Your mom and mine ran across each other yesterday in the supermarket. Helen was telling Mom about you coming back to town and buying the old Burrows place to fix up and make into a preschool. She mentioned you had a lot of repairs to make first, though, and thought you were going to need some help with some of them. Said something about part of the roof needing new shingles and about a leaky kitchen sink. Anyway, Mom called me last night and... well, here I am."

"I don't want any help from you," Carly snapped, and made to slam the door in his face.

Sean barely caught the edge of the door in his free hand before it rattled home against the jamb. Holding it firmly against any forthcoming onslaught from her, he patiently advised, "You may not want it, but it's obvious to me that you need it, especially now that I'm here and see the place in person."

"I said no. Now, I want you to leave."

He shook his head, watching as her eyes widened and she stomped one bare foot in pure vexation. Oh yes, it had definitely been too long since his Carly had been over his knee. "I'm not going anywhere until some of those repairs are taken care of. If I do Mom will never let me hear the

end of it. Now move out of my way, or I'll move you out, kiddo. It's your choice."

Something flashed in her eyes at the nickname he'd always teased her with growing up. He'd only been a year older than her, but calling her kiddo had never failed to get a rise out of her. Today though, it was obvious that the name only made her sad, and Sean cringed inwardly at the obvious pain she felt. He knew that he was likely behind it, as well.

Sternly, he reminded himself that what he'd done three months earlier in letting her go had been the best thing for the both of them. They may have been childhood best friends, and later first loves, but that didn't mean they were meant to be together forever. Carly was his superior in so many ways, and he knew that he was just holding her back. She'd been offered a great job in Connecticut running a well known private preschool, and he knew she wasn't going to accept it because of him. There were other job offers too, almost all of them involving a move out of state, and he didn't want her to decline them because she didn't want to leave him. If she did that, she would only come to resent him in the end, if she didn't grow tired of his simple plans and old fashioned ideas first. Really, he had been shocked that she had come back home at all now, having fully expected her to accept one of her proposals in a big city somewhere, or at least a more affluent area than the little Pennsylvania suburb they'd grown up in.

For now, though, Sean figured he'd spent enough time dwelling on the fact that what they'd shared was over. Whatever reasons she had for coming back didn't matter; she was here now, and she was going to accept his help if he had to tie her to a chair in the kitchen in order to get her to allow him to set to work in peace. At present, that seemed unnecessary, though, as she was still standing there with a hollow look in her eyes, stuck

on the nickname. Sean sighed, wishing he could erase the pain from her heart, and shouldered his way past her into the small foyer. From there, he strode purposefully on until he found the kitchen, and its sink, and set to work.

Carly stood fuming on the living room side of the kitchen doorway as Sean worked. How dare he just barge in here and take over like he had a right to come to her rescue? How dare he call her 'kiddo' like nothing had ever changed between them?

Of course, part of her realized she should be grateful for his unexpected help, considering that it was free (and money was a little tight), and that it would save her the trouble of attacking the repairs she was nearly clueless about. Even so, she couldn't help wishing her well meaning mother had kept her mouth shut about the work she had ahead of her before she could open her business. She may not have wanted to go anywhere else after finishing her degree, but it was hard enough just being back in this town, where it seemed everywhere she looked she saw another reminder of her youth with Sean O'Reilly; she didn't need the man himself right under her nose.

Even though she was out of sight where she was standing, and especially with Sean's entire head being under the sink, he seemed to sense her presence none the less; to her amazement, she heard the jerk start to whistle while he tinkered away at her pipes. It was all she could do to control the impulse to storm in and pull him up by the hair, then kick him out of her house.

It was maddening that he could be so calm, cheerful even! It wasn't as if they'd had a conciliatory break up, after all. Carly didn't even think of it as that – they hadn't *broken up* – he'd *dumped* her. Suddenly, cruelly, and for no apparent reason other than some flippant excuse of wanting

to see other people. He hadn't even had the guts to tell her in person; instead she had gotten a phone call from him one night while she'd been studying for finals.

And since then, at least until today anyway, she hadn't spoken to him again after ending that call with a sobbing, screaming, "Fuck you, Sean."

Interfering mothers or not, she just couldn't fathom how he could show up here like nothing bad had ever happened between them.

Unless, she considered, as she pushed angrily away from the doorjamb to go back to attack her own chores, he's tired of playing the field – or he can't find anyone else to put up with his caveman ways – and wants to try to get back together. She snorted indelicately at that and muttered, "Don't hold your breath, buster."

By lunch time, Sean had just about finished fixing the sink. Carly had made brief appearances throughout the morning to get drinks of water or cleaning supplies, but really, he thought she was just coming in to check up on him. She hadn't spoken another word to him, though, and he decided that it was probably for the best to mind his own tongue for the moment as well. This way, he could get his work done here and leave, then try to get on with his life – as if there was much hope of that.

Around noon, he heard her tread again on the kitchen tile as she went to the fridge. Poking his head out from under the sink, he watched her take sandwich fixings from the fridge.

His stomach chose that time to remind him of his lack of breakfast that morning. The fierce growl in his middle made him revise his earlier no-talking decision. "I'll take one of whatever you're having, if you don't mind," he called as he looked back to his work, and gave the wrench a final twist.

The answer from above was a haughty sniff, then, "Actually, I do mind. I suppose I should feed you, even though I never asked for your help, but I'm not your servant. If you want something for lunch, you can just fix it yourself."

Sean felt the heat rise in his blood, but he still managed to keep his cool as he unfolded himself from under the sink and came to his feet. It wasn't that he minded making his own meal, it was just the bratty way she'd told him to do so. He stood watching her as he wiped his greasy hands on a rag, noting the way her hands shook ever so slightly as they plunked the sandwich onto a paper plate and then gathered all the fixings back into the fridge. When she bent over slightly to replace a jar of pickles to the refrigerator door, he admired the view, thinking he'd never seen a backside more perfect – or more in need of a thorough tanning.

"You know," he finally said in a dangerously low voice, "in the old days, Carly, you'd have been over my knee a good two or three times already this morning."

Her blue eyes rose to meet his and he had to admire her bravery. "Those days are over, remember? That was your decision. So, I guess I don't have to worry about that anymore. I'm not yours to... to do that to anymore."

Sean chuckled at the way she avoided saying the word 'spank.' She always had hated having to say the 's' word. He watched as she turned on her heel and stormed off then, her lunch in her hand. She was gone so fast, he didn't even have the time to voice an answer to her declaration of freedom, but the thought was there in his mind all the same. Just because she wasn't his anymore didn't mean she didn't have to worry about getting her bottom smacked; who'd ever said that little triviality would stop him?

The storm door banged shut behind Carly as she escaped out into the brisk autumn air. A string of

expletives aimed at the man she'd left behind in the kitchen fell from her mouth as she plopped down in the rocking chair on the porch.

How dare he? *How dare he???*

In her mind, she heard his softly spoken words again with the dangerous, sensual threat woven through: *in the old days, Carly, you'd have been over my knee a good two or three times already this morning.* Even as she ground her teeth in anger at his highhanded threat, she was aware of the pounding of her traitorous heart, and of the tell tale heat between her legs.

God help her. He still turned her on, even though she hated the man. He hadn't even touched her, all he'd had to do was *talk* to her about it and she was excited. If the jerk came out here right now, she doubted she'd be able to feign indifference if he came on to her; and if he did spank her like he'd pseudo-threatened... well, then she would truly be lost.

Unwillingly, thoughts of previous times she'd found herself in that position came to mind, staining her cheeks pink in embarrassment even though the memories alone made her nipples tighten beneath her tie dyed tee shirt. She remembered the first time Sean had spanked her, when she'd been all of fifteen years old. She'd had a fight with her parents over something she could no longer even remember, and had run off in the middle of the night. Everyone had been out searching for her, but in the end it had been Sean who had found her in a sheltered area they had found together by the lake.

Her own parents hadn't been as angry or as worried as he had been, it had seemed. And, they certainly hadn't taken as swift or as strict measures with her as he had. Within only minutes of finding her and surmising that she was indeed alright, he had tucked her upper body under one of his arms – powerful and strong, even back then – and rained a barrage of punishing blows to her never-been-

spanked backside.

A small smile escaped over her face now, remembering how mad she had been with him afterwards. She had refused to talk to him for days later, especially after she felt the first innocent stirrings of lust later that night when she was home in her bed, in the dark, with a warm backside and very vivid memories in her mind. The realization that the spanking had aroused her sexually embarrassed and frightened her. She didn't know how to deal with it and wasn't about to ask for help or advice. It was a while before she even started talking to Sean again because of her confusion about her feelings.

When she finally did relent and started seeing him again, he didn't apologize to her for his actions – in fact, he told her right up front that he'd do it all again if she did anything so foolish again. If she hadn't loved him so much, if she hadn't missed him enough to think she was dying while they'd been apart, she probably would have broken up with him right there; just hearing him threaten to spank her in the future made the place between her legs heavy, and something deep inside there twitch.

As the years went by, Sean was true to his word, and Carly found herself over his lap many a time, much to her mortification and secret delight. Somewhere along the way, he became aware of the way Carly's body responded during and after a spanking, and he began to incorporate more playful love taps into their relationship. During intercourse, he would lightly swat her bottom to help bring her to her climax. He even confronted her about her arousal one day, reassuring her when she got upset that he didn't think she was weird, that he enjoyed spanking her as much as she enjoyed receiving it. But, despite his reassurances, Carly still felt ashamed of her feelings.

It wasn't until she was in college, and alone in her dorm room one night, that she had searched

online for the word spanking, just out of curiosity and because she was missing Sean. The community she'd found there, just waiting for her with open arms and a sense of normalcy and belonging, had made her weep with relief. It had amazed her that she'd managed to get up and go to class the next day, considering how late she had stayed up that first night exploring all the different sites she'd never known were there.

As Carly finished her sandwich, she found herself blinking back tears. Sean's spankings had been special because she'd known he gave them out of love; for punishment because he wanted what was best for her and them, and was willing to correct her behavior when it got in the way of that, and for their mutual enjoyment during lovemaking because he wanted them to both enjoy the act as much as possible. But for him to threaten to spank her now, when he had abandoned her only three months earlier and obviously did not love her anymore, was the highest of insults.

It made her want to hurt him back somehow, but no matter how hard she tried to think of something to do to him that would even remotely compare, she couldn't think of anything. Finally, after a good ten minutes of hard thinking, she admitted defeat and stood up with a purpose. If she couldn't get even with him, she could at least work on getting rid of him. And that meant getting started on those shingles on the roof herself.

Sean was just finishing his own lunch when he heard the first nail being pounded above his head. At first, he didn't quite realize what the sound was, but when he heard the second nail strike home, he slammed the plastic cup he'd been drinking from down on the table and shot to his feet with a loud groan.

He hurried out the front door and down the

porch steps, but was careful to slow his pace as he came around the corner of the house; Carly always had been easy to startle, and the last thing he wanted to do was scare her and have her lose her balance.

He came to a quiet stop beneath her and gazed up at her, slowly shaking his head. Oblivious to his silent observance, she sat on the weathered and torn shingles, bent intently over a nail that she held upright in her left hand. His breath caught in his throat as he watched her heft the hammer in her right hand high above her head, then bring it down hard, only to connect with her left thumb instead of the nail. As she shook her hand furiously and rattled off a string of expletives that would have gotten her a good paddling from him in earlier years, Sean fought the instinct to charge up the ladder after her and toss her over one shoulder to carry her down to the safety of the ground – after kissing her battered thumb, of course.

Instead, he drew in a deep breath, and with both hands on his hips, squinting up at her through the rays of the autumn sun, called out, "Just what the hell do you think you're doing up there, Carly?"

Even with the sun in his eyes, he could still see the murderous look she sent flying down to him – after she jumped a mile in the air from the start his sudden voice had given her. "What's it look like I'm doing? I'm fixing these bad shingles up here!"

"I thought we agreed I was going to do that."

"No," she said, coming to her feet, her own hands finding their way to her hips. "*YOU* decided that. *I* didn't get to have any say in the matter!"

"Carly," Sean said mildly, his tone a sharp contrast to her rising voice. "Come down here, please. It's not safe up there. If your ma knew I'd let you slip past me and get up there, she'd box my ears."

Above him, Carly began to pace on the roof, just as she always did when she was brewing for a good

fight. "I've got a news flash for you, Sean – I'm not some kid you can just boss around. I'm not your girlfriend anymore, either. This is *my* home, and *my* business, and I can damn well do whatever repairs I want to. And, if you don't like it, then you can just get lost!"

"Carly, honey, calm down...."

"Don't you call me honey!" she shrieked, but Sean didn't miss the way her voice hitched as she repeated the endearment. "In case you've forgotten, Mr. Fixit, you dropped me over three months ago so you could be free to date around. So why are you even here, Sean? You obviously didn't want me anymore, so why would you even care if my mother mentioned to yours that she thought I needed some help with the repairs? And even if it's true that your mom guilt tripped you into coming out here, why are you bothering to stay when I so clearly don't want you here!?!?"

She interrupted her pacing to stomp her foot in emphasis to the last six words of her outburst; at the same moment, Sean felt his heart constrict at the pain beneath her words, and he felt the beginnings of a smile tugging at his lips. She always had been cute when she was mad. He half expected her to point one work roughened finger to his truck and shout '*GIT*' as if he was a mangy neighborhood stray.

He straightened his shoulders and made the smile curling his lips iron out. Then, he ignored everything she had said, and said, "I'm counting to three, missy, and if your sweet butt isn't down that ladder by then, I'm coming up to get you. And believe me, you don't want me to have to do that, Carly Marie..."

"Don't you threaten me, you bastard..." Newly incensed, Carly began her pacing with even more angry energy than before.

"One."

"You have no right to come here to my house,

and threaten to spank me..."

"Two."

"I ought to call the damn cops on you! I... Oh!"

"Shit!"

She had been so caught up in reading him the riot act, and not paying attention to where she was putting her feet as she paced, that Carly had tripped over the small pile of roofing supplies that she'd carried up the ladder with her. As Sean watched from below, his heart in his throat, she landed on her backside and slid down the slant in the roof. It all happened so fast that she hardly had time to attempt to stop her descent, or even draw a breath in and out as a scream before she was falling off the edge of the roof and sailing right towards the ground.

Carly squeezed her eyes tightly shut, anticipating the hard impact and the likelihood of broken bones. But instead of that, what she felt a moment later was the warm, solid safety of two very familiar arms locking around her.

Cautiously, she opened first one eye and then the other, and found that she had indeed been saved from injury – somehow, Sean had managed to catch her and now he held her close to his broad chest, one arm under her knees and the other beneath her back. His expression was pinched with worry.

"Are you okay?" he asked. "Are you hurt?"

Being this close to him was doing funny things to her; her skin tingled from the contact, even through her clothes, and her chest felt tight. She blinked several times as she tried to clear her suddenly foggy brain. "I'm fine," she snapped after what seemed like a very long time. "Put me down."

"Put you down?" he repeated, his voice rising. "You damn near just broke your stubborn neck and all you can say to me is 'put me down'?"

"What more do you want? Put me down, 'o wondrous hero man?"

Sean made a sound like a growl low in his throat, and if anything, his hold on her only tightened. Carly moved to twist in his grip and found herself effectively immobile.

"How about 'gee, thanks for catching me, Sean'? 'A broken leg or arm would have really set me back in the plans for the school.' Would that kill you?"

Her eyes narrowed as she stared up at him. "I'd rather break *both* my arms *and* my legs – *and* my neck – than be ingratiated to the likes of you!!"

He had to chuckle at that, he just could think of no other possible response to such a ludicrous claim; not that he had any doubts that she meant every word of it, at least at the moment.

"Don't you get it yet, Sean?" she cried, kicking her legs angrily where they lay folded over his arm. "I don't want you here! I don't want your help! I don't want you to save me! If you see me trapped in a burning building, I want you to keep walking, don't even call the fire department for me! You made it very clear that you don't want me anymore, and now I don't want you! So why are you still here??"

His gaze was hard as he held her eyes. "I don't know," he answered forlornly. "But seeing as I am, and how all I've done here today is stuff you don't want, I may as well finish it all off good with something I've been wanting to do since the moment you opened your mouth this morning."

He was already starting over to the steps of the porch with her, and Carly knew immediately what he was referring to. She began her efforts again to wiggle free of his arms, but knew in her heart that her struggle was in vain. In no time at all, Sean was seated on the top step of the porch, and had easily flipped her over his knee. With his left leg, he pinned both of her kicking limbs between his muscular thighs.

"There, now," he mocked from above her. "I put you down. Happy now?"

"Let me go this instant, Sean O'Reilly, or I swear I'll..."

SMACK!!

"Ow! Damn you! Ow! You can't do this to me... OW!"

"Seems to me I *am* doing it to you, just fine."

The rain of swats onto her upturned bottom was merciless, and even through her faded jeans and cotton underwear Carly felt the sting and heat behind every one of his meaty wallops. Despite all her attempts to wriggle away from him, he kept her easily in range, and never once did his hand miss its target.

"Stop it! Please stop, Sean!"

He tsked her then, and caught the small hand she had thrust back to try to shield her battered behind. "I'll stop when *I* decide to, little girl," he assured her. "That's the way a spanking works, Carly, or have you forgotten that already?"

It had been a while since she'd been in this position, but no, she hadn't forgotten his rule about only stopping the onslaught of smacks when he felt she had learned her lesson. She knew from experience that no amount of begging or fighting or promising would change his mind.

"You are the most stubborn woman I have ever met in my life!" Sean said, his stinging blows falling in time with the words for emphasis. "All you had to do was let me help you, I would have done what I came to do and it would've been over. But, no, just like always you had to fight me every step of the way...."

"Ow! God, Sean, you're going to kill me! Please, not so hard!"

As always, he was oblivious to her complaints when she was over his knee. The next spank fell with just as much power behind it as all the others before it, and Carly groaned. As if she hadn't even voiced a complaint, Sean went right along with his lecture: "It's just like when you were going to give

up the scholarship to Penn just so you could stay around here with me. You never were community college material, Carly. You were too smart for that, and you were just going to throw away your chance to do something better for yourself! I don't even know why you're back here. You should be off in a better town, making big bucks as an elementary school principal or something, and instead you throw away all those years of education and potential to come back here instead!"

"What are you talking about, you jackass?" she demanded, glowering up at him over one shoulder. He gave her a particularly hard swat for the curse word, she noticed. "Maybe I wanted to come home, maybe I missed this town and my family and friends here. Last I checked it was still my life, and a free country, so I should still be allowed to do what I want!" For the first time since being over his lap and receiving his rough discipline, tears pricked her eyes; a moment after that upsetting realization hit her, two fat ones rolled down her cheeks. Instantly, Sean's assault on her bottom stopped, and Carly turned her face quickly away from him; she'd rather he spank her for the rest of the day than stop because she'd broken into tears.

He turned her face back towards him gently with two fingers, and used the pad of his thumb to wipe away the telltale wetness. The expression in his eyes was so warm and loving that she couldn't stop the tremulously spoken vulnerable words from tumbling out of her mouth.

"Am I so disgusting to you that you don't even want to share this town with me anymore?"

Sean sighed. His eyes closed momentarily, and he shook his head slowly. Then he pulled her up by the back of her jeans at the waist. When she moved to take a step back, he surprised her by pulling her down to sit on the same knee she'd just been draped over. He did it so suddenly that Carly didn't have time to stop him, and she winced as her

tender bottom made contact with his hard thigh. His arms encircled her tightly and they sat that way for a few moments while he seemed to think over his words.

Finally, he spoke. "You don't disgust me, Carly. You piss me off, you make me hot, you drive me crazy in a thousand ways, but you could never disgust me. I've loved you all my life."

For a few dizzying moments, Carly could do nothing more than just sit there on his thigh, hearing his last words ringing in her ears. Then she got over them and gave his arm the hardest punch she could manage.

"Ow," he offered, though she suspected he'd hardly felt a thing.

"You jerk!" she hollered. "Now you love me again all of a sudden, huh? Do you have a split personality or something? If you love me so much, then why the hell did you dump me?"

"I thought I was simplifying things for you. You had that job offer in Connecticut and I knew it was going to be like Penn all over again. I wanted you to take the job, or any other one you were offered out of state, if you wanted it. I wanted you to be free to take any offer you wanted. I didn't want to hold you back. It killed me to let you go, Carly, you have to believe me. I've been a miserable s.o.b. ever since."

"All I've ever really wanted was to come back here, make a quiet living teaching kids, and have a houseful of them with you," she told him quietly.

Sean stared at her as if seeing her for the first time in his life. Then, slowly, he nodded. He swallowed and studied the ground beneath the steps. When he met her gaze again, he looked so miserable, Carly almost smiled. "I'm a real ass, then, huh?" he asked.

She nodded, her smile broadening. "Yeah, you are. And, don't you ever forget it."

He nodded solemnly.

"You're not always the one with all the right

answers, you know," she informed him. "And just for the record, you made the last three months of my life miserable, too."

"Understood. Maybe you'll let me try to make them up to you.... If you still love me, that is."

She pondered that for a while, just to let him squirm. Finally, she pursed her lips together and admitted, "Yeah, God help me, I do. Though I don't think it's a bit fair that I got spanked and you got off Scott free."

"Hey, you deserved every swat, young lady. You've been a royal brat all morning long, and I don't care what the circumstances were, you knew better than to go up on that roof. And, I'm telling you now, you ain't spanking me, so don't get any funny ideas."

She pouted prettily. "Can't I at least get a kiss to help ease the pain a little?"

"That can be arranged."

Carly had thought she'd never again taste those soft, tender lips. She drank of them long and hard, as if she was dying of thirst and they were the purest of water. His kiss had the affect of a fine wine, making her lightheaded and warm, tingling from head to toe. When they finally paused and pulled away to look into one another's eyes, Carly felt her heart swell with love and happiness.

Sean was the first to speak, in a husky whisper that gave her chills and reminded her of bedroom conversations past and future. "When I came over here today, I thought I'd just be making home repairs; I never thought I'd be working on repairing our relationship."

Carly glanced up at him from where she had laid her head against his shoulder. She smiled a knowing smile. "Yes, you did," she argued softly. "Somewhere inside, you knew exactly what you were doing, whether you realized it or not."

And then she kissed him again.

Establishing Boundaries

“So what’s the problem?”

John’s head snapped up at the familiar voice floating into his office from the outer room. Unfortunately, the tone of the familiar voice was becoming increasingly more familiar to him – and to everyone else in the office as of late – as well.

Craning his neck to the left, John could just make out the two females standing a few feet outside his open office door. The one who had just spoken, Donna Samuels, was his next in command here at Abertown General Hospital, in Patient Access Services. She was an excellent right hand woman, a good manager to those under her, and someone that John genuinely liked. A wry smile tugged at his lips; maybe ‘like’ wasn’t quite the right word, considering the night they had spent together recently after a few months of quietly dating outside the office.

But ever since the most recent department cutbacks, when she had taken on additional job responsibilities from a position that was eliminated, Donna had become a bit of a bear to deal with. John had been trying to cut her some slack by giving her some time to adjust to her new additional responsibilities and the need to manage her time differently in order to be able to see to everything that needed her attention during the day. But with each passing day, it was becoming more and more clear to him that he was going to need to have a long talk with Donna about her need for an attitude adjustment at work. And even though he’d been her manager far longer than her boyfriend, and they’d agreed from the beginning not to let their personal lives interfere with their professional ones, he still worried how she would take a reprimand from him now.

But the current situation unfolding right before his eyes just outside his office door was a perfect

example of her behavior recently. He couldn't hear what the other female was saying to Donna at the moment, but he was sure that it was an important issue or problem. The girl speaking to Donna was Jane, from the Central Scheduling department within Patient Access, and she was a quiet worker for the most part. John liked her; he knew her to be a conscientious and reliable employee. She had some kind of print out in her hand and as he watched, she pointed several things out on the papers to Donna as she spoke. John was sure that whatever she was bringing to Donna's attention was worthy of the time it was taking to explain, but clearly Donna didn't agree, judging by her unfriendly body language and facial expressions. Finally, she flung up her hands and suddenly interrupted Jane with a strident: "I don't have time for this right now! Just send me an email!"

Several heads turned at Donna's loud words, then quickly snapped back to their work as she turned and stormed out of the room. John shook his head at her behavior and stood, crossing his office in to quick strides.

"Jane?" he asked softly, standing at his door. When the girl looked up at him he saw that she was holding back tears, and he cursed inwardly. "Can I see you for a minute?"

"Sure," Jane answered immediately. John felt his hand itch when he heard the quaver in her voice. If ever there was a woman who needed a lesson over a man's knee, he thought, it was Donna Samuels.

John closed his office door behind Jane and motioned for her to have a seat in front of his desk. She perched on one of the chairs there and watched with nervous attention as he sat behind his desk.

John smiled then, wanting to assure her quickly that he hadn't called her in here for anything negative. "I couldn't help overhearing what just went on between you and Donna," he said. "Or, I suppose I should say, I couldn't help but hear her

side of the conversation. Would you mind telling me about whatever it was you wanted to bring to her attention?"

Jane shuffled the pages in her hands nervously, but nodded and stood. She came around to his side of the desk and laid the pages out in front of him. He saw quickly that they were labeled 1 and 2.

"These are instructions that come up for a cat scan of the pelvis, without contrast," Jane told him. "I just scheduled this patient for the test, but when the instructions came up I noticed that there are additional ones on the bottom of the ones we usually see, and these additional instructions are incorrect." She pointed to the page she had labeled 1. "This page has the correct instructions – 'Patient must pick up two bottles of barium in the Radiology Department at the hospital. Instructions for drinking the barium will be included in the bag. Patient should have nothing else to eat or drink for three hours before the appointment. Patient should arrive thirty minutes prior to appointment time to register for the test.' " John nodded; he was familiar with the instructions for these studies himself and knew that those instructions were correct. Jane pointed next to the page she had marked 2. "But underneath those instructions on the screen, these come up. Some of them are just repetitive, but others are just wrong. Like here, it says: 'Patient will drink one bottle of barium the night before the appointment and second bottle the morning of the appointment.' That's not true, because the times the patient drinks is based on their appointment time. If you have an afternoon appointment, you won't drink the first bottle of barium until the day of the appointment, not the night before. And then here, it says: 'Patient should fast for one hour prior to study.' That's also not correct, it's three hours."

John nodded. "Right. Hmm. I wonder how these other instructions even got in here? I'll have to call the guys who input all of this into the network so

they can get the incorrect instructions out of there before someone actually reads them to a patient on the telephone."

"Right. That's why I printed out the pages and tried to show them to Donna. Most of us in Scheduling know the instructions by heart and would know that these are incorrect, but there are a few new girls down there who might not notice the conflict and accidentally give out the wrong directions."

"I agree. Thank you, Jane, for doing that. And I'm sorry for the way Donna acted towards you. You didn't deserve that when you were just doing your job."

Jane shrugged. "I know she has a lot on her plate right now. I just got a little frustrated with the way she was talking to me. She wouldn't let me get out what I was trying to say to her, you know? But it's really okay. I know she didn't mean to come across that way."

John shrugged. "Maybe not. But I don't think it's okay that she spoke to you that way. And I do intend to have a talk with her about it."

Boy, did he ever....

That evening just before five o'clock, Donna appeared in John's doorway, leaning against the jamb.

"What a rotten day," she grumbled.

John looked up from his computer screen and smiled. "That bad, huh?"

Donna nodded.

He sighed. She looked exhausted. He wished he could just take her out for a drink, wind down, and then bring her back to his place and make love to her all night long. The last thing he wanted to do was address her behavior recently at work.

He'd been trying all day to figure out the best way to approach her about it. He didn't want to hurt

her feelings or anger her, but it seemed no matter what scenario he played out in his mind, the results always seemed inevitably the same. He'd finally come to the conclusion that he simply had to approach the topic head on, just as he would if he was just her boss still, and not also her lover. He'd let the chips fall where they may, and then decide how to best clean things up.

"Anyway, you left me a message that you wanted to see me?" Donna asked.

John nodded. "Yes. Please, come on in and close the door."

Her eyebrows rose over her bright blue eyes, but she did as he requested. "Behind closed doors, huh?" she teased in a low voice as she approached his desk. "I've either been a very naughty girl or you're about to talk dirty to me and don't want anyone else to hear..."

John smiled, gesturing to one of the chairs facing his desk. Once she had sat down, he folded his hands in front of him and met her gaze.

"Donna, we need to address your attitude at work lately."

Now her fine blond eyebrows furrowed over those sharp eyes. "What do you mean?"

He sighed. "I mean, you're a bear around this place lately. Half of the people who work under you are afraid to say 'good morning' to you anymore. You snap everyone's heads off!"

Donna gaped at him. "I don't know what you're talking about! I have a good rapport with my employees!"

John leveled her a hard glare. "You didn't have such a good rapport with Jane Thomas this afternoon." He held up one hand when she leaned forward in her chair and opened her mouth. "And before you try to defend yourself, I heard the entire thing myself, just before I invited Jane in to my office to explain to me what she was trying to show you. There's no excuse for the way you treated her,

Donna. She was just doing her job, going beyond her job, really. And the way you spoke to her was horrible. You owe her an apology."

"I-I was just busy," Donna stammered. "She caught me at a bad time."

"If you were really that busy, then you should have asked her to come see me about the problem. It was important, though you refused to see that at the time..."

"I asked her to email me about it. That should have been enough."

John shook his head. "It shouldn't have waited that long, especially considering the rate at which you've been reading your emails as of late."

Donna's eyes narrowed. "Now I'm not returning my emails fast enough? I'll have you know, John Hess, that I run circles around half the other management staff in this office. I'm a damn fine employee, even if I don't respond to every email within a day's time!"

John sighed again. "Donna, calm down. I know you've been swamped lately. I'm not saying you're not doing your job, or that you're slacking off. In fact, I think we need to sit down and look over your workload and see where we can thin it out, hand some of it over to others, so that you're not so inundated. I think you'd be a lot less stressed, and I think you'd like your job a lot more again..."

"I like my job just fine, Mr. Know-It-All!" Donna growled, coming to her feet. "And I'm not stressed, nor am I hard to work with! You can ask anyone! If there's anyone around here who needs to take a look at his relationship with his employees, it's you! Because if you believe Jane Thomas' word over mine – when I've been your assistant for over three years now, and a hell of a lot more than that in the past six months – than you don't have a clue as to which of your employees you can trust!"

"Donna, lower your voice," John commanded calmly, his steady gaze level on her wild one, "and

sit back down."

"Go screw yourself!" she shouted, and he barely resisted the urge to cradle his head in his hands as he saw several heads outside his office shoot up and look their way. "I don't have to stand here and take this abuse!"

He watched as she turned on her heel and started angrily towards his office door.

"Don't you dare walk out of this office, young lady," he warned her in a low voice. "Not unless you want to find out what kind of abuse I can really subject you to."

But his words didn't even slow her steps. Within moments, she had yanked the door fairly off its hinges and stormed through it, tugging it closed behind her with an impressive BANG!!

It took every ounce of willpower John possessed to stop himself from flying after her, tackling her to the floor and pounding the living daylights out of her backside in front of the entire department. Somehow, he resisted the urge, though, and calmly cleaned up his desk for the day. He grabbed his briefcase and his car keys, and walked out to the parking lot, ignoring the curious glances he received along the way from those in the office who had witnessed Donna's temper tantrum.

His thoughts were too absorbed in how he was going to deal with her behavior tonight. Obviously, she was unable to separate their business relationship from their personal one, judging by how personally she'd taken his professional reprimand this afternoon. And if that was the case, then John intended to approach this problem from both angles. He doubted she'd like it at first, but she was simply too important to him as both an employee and a woman for him to not give it at least one good try.

And so it was that an hour later John stood

outside Donna's second level apartment, knocking determinedly on the door.

There was a pause and then Donna's voice came through the wood panel. "What the hell are you doing here?" The wooden barrier between them muffled the sound of her voice, but did nothing to disguise the anger in its tone.

"Come on, kid," he said in what he hoped was a light tone, when he really just ached to tear the locked door down inch by inch. "You know why I'm here. We need to talk."

"I don't want to talk to you."

"Well, then, Miss Samuels, what about your job? Do you want to have a job to come in to tomorrow morning?"

There was silence from the other side of the door for a few moments. Then, "Are you threatening to fire me?"

John sighed. "No, I wouldn't fire you. But, I am still your superior, and we have to discuss this. Now open up the door and act like an adult. Please."

He waited her out while she thought over his words on the other side of the door. Then, finally, he heard the lock give way, and she slowly pulled the door back, revealing her still angry countenance, her arms crossed over her chest.

"Well, come on in, then," she snapped when he just stood there looking at her. "Let's get this over with!"

"Thank you," John replied as he passed by her, being careful to keep his tone as polite as it would have been had she invited him in nicely. "You have a beautiful home, Donna," he commented, taking a look around the neutral toned apartment that she had decorated with country accents and a lot of plant life.

"You can save the chit chat," she retorted, swinging the door closed behind him. "Just say what you have to say and get out of my house."

One of John's eyebrows rose at her words.

Calm, he told himself, stay calm.

Quietly, he crossed to the sofa and took a seat towards the center, motioning her to sit beside him. When she just stood there in front of him defiantly, her arms still folded over her chest, he sighed.

"All right, fine, if this is how you're going to be," he started, shrugging. "Let me say it plain and simple. The way you treated Jane today was inexcusable. Your bad attitude around work lately has got to change. Starting tomorrow, you are going to make that happen. You and I are going to sit down and have a meeting about how to make your workload more manageable by giving some of the tasks to others who have more time. Then, you are going to have a private meeting with Jane to apologize for the way you spoke to her today, and to give her a service award for going above her job duties and bringing that information to us so quickly. Tomorrow afternoon, you will have a meeting with the entire department, where you will apologize for any times in the past few weeks when you have been short tempered or hard to work with due to your excessive work load, and you will then pass out the new assignments to those employees who will be taking them over from you. And hopefully, after all of that, we will not have another problem like this again."

John sat back in the couch, and met the narrowed gaze of the woman before him unflinchingly. He took a deep breath and waited for her to start arguing with him, for her to ream him out for his ideas and his nerve in demanding that she apologize not just to Jane, but also to the entire department.

He waited, but the tirade never came. Instead, she said, "You're only doing this because we're dating. If I was just another of your employees you wouldn't be going so hard on me."

John just shook his head and got slowly to his feet. He came around the sofa and stood right in

front of her. Then he tipped up her chin with one finger and looked her in the eyes for a long, quiet minute.

"No, Donna," he finally said. "You're the one here who is having a hard time separating our work lives and our personal ones, not me. I don't care if you're my girlfriend or just my employee, I wouldn't have let you get away with talking to anyone the way I heard you speak to Jane today, regardless of who you are dating – me, the Prince of Wales or the President. The difference comes in only in the fact that as my employee, you get only a reprimand at work, but as my lady, you get one at home too, especially when you talk to me the way you did today, and when you walk out on a conversation between the two of us the way you did. That is where the boundary lies."

"Really?" Donna asked, and he saw the spark of anger returning, replacing the 'poor me, you're picking on me' attitude. "And just how, precisely, do you plan to 'reprimand' me at home, John?"

He held his gaze as he spoke, making sure to never break it. "I'm going to put you over my knee and spank you till you can't sit down tomorrow without remembering the reasons why your bottom hurts."

Donna's pretty face flushed bright red, though whether from embarrassment or anger John was unsure. Probably both. "Oh, no you are not, John Hess!" she proclaimed at the top of her voice. "Just who the hell do you think you are, anyway, walking in here like this and proclaiming to... to... do that?!"

Smiling smugly, John leaned towards Donna till his face was just inches from her own. He could smell her subtle perfume, and he took a deep breath before he spoke. "I'm the guy who's finally going to put Donna Samuels in her place."

And then before she had even so much as a moment to react, he grabbed hold of her lower arm, turned his body towards the sofa and leaned his hip

against its back. A second later he had pulled Donna over his raised knee and pushed her upper body over the back of the sofa. As her first exclamations and curses exploded into the room a moment later, so did the first hard blow of the flat of his hand across her rounded, up thrust behind.

"Ow!" she shouted, and her reward was another hard blow. "Geez, John, cut it out! Ow!"

"I'll cut it out when you apologize to me for the way you spoke to me today. And for the way you stormed out of my office. And when you agree to my terms concerning going back to work tomorrow. And when I feel you've learned your lesson about how not to treat people!"

John concentrated his swats on the lower part of Donna's writhing bottom, on the area just before her bottom met her upper thighs, where he knew she would most feel the after effects of his lesson tomorrow every time she sat down. Her howls and pleas were music to his ears; it wasn't that he enjoyed hurting her, but it just felt so good to have her under his mastery for a change. Despite the fact that he had always been her superior at work, Donna Samuels had a way about her of being the one in charge, of calling the shots. For once, it felt good to have the roles reversed.

"I'll have you arrested for this!" she was threatening now, waving a frantic hand behind her back in an ineffective attempt to shield her bottom. "I'll go over your head at work and get you fired for this!"

"You're welcome to try, though I doubt anyone will believe you. There won't be any physical evidence, I'm sure. No matter how you carry on about the severity of this spanking, it's very unlikely to leave you bruised, considering I'm only using my hand and you still have your pants on..."

"Only your hand....!" Donna shot a desperate look over one shoulder. "It feels like a freakin' two by four!"

John chuckled and dealt her left cheek a particularly hearty wallop that rewarded him with a throaty shriek from his overturned companion. "That could be arranged...." He offered in what he thought was a particularly acquiescing tone.

"No! No, that's not ness- eeiouw!!!"

John paused in his work, resting his aching hand on Donna's denim clad derriere. "You know, baby, I'd much rather engage you in other physical activities than this one. And all you have to do is apologize, and it'll be all over. That's all there is to it."

The eyes that peered up at him over her shoulder were anything but remorseful. "Go to hell." she growled.

John sighed, smiling inwardly, for he'd known she wouldn't give in that easily. She was simply too proud. "Have it your way, then."

This time when he lifted his hand off from her backside, he swung it up higher into the air, well above his head. He brought it down faster and harder than any of the swats he'd dealt her before, and the clap that resulted was more of a boom. Donna's entire body rocked forward from the blow, and she shouted out lustily.

That set the standard for the next twenty meaty smacks, and with each additional one, Donna's body grew limper and limper over John's knee, as if she was melting away with each hard whack. Her cries grew more frantic, especially when he increased the tempo of the swats, raining them down upon her seemingly without even a moment's pause, left-right, left-right, center-center-center. The room was filling with the sounds of the spanking, the hard, rapid smacks, the wails of the stubborn girl and the heavy breathing of the man as he exerted all of his energy upon his task. It was an endurance test, a fight to see which one would outlast the other's will and desire to not be the one who gave in.

It was the sob that stopped it all. Torn from

Donna's throat, it fell into the room like some alien dropped to earth from the sky, and it stopped John's hand immediately. He stared in silence at the back of her head until a second sob came, followed by more. A moment later, he had her up off the back of the couch and encircled in his arms.

But, before he could say a word, Donna's voice stammered the words he had wanted to hear. "I'm s-s-sorry! I'm sorry I was so rude to Jane and to you. I'm sorry I stormed out of your office today! I'll do whatever--- whatever you say to fix things! I promise!"

John smiled, and squeezed Donna tighter in his arms. He rocked her gently, talking to her calmly to try to soothe her. He listened to her cry out her frustrations and stress and exhaustion from the last few months. And, when she was finally done, he pulled back from her and smiled into her tear stained face as he pushed her dampened hair out of her eyes.

"You spanked me!" she suddenly accused him, as if she was suddenly just coming out of a trance and only now fully aware of what had happened. There was both incredulity and wonder in her voice.

"Damn right."

"But, how could you do that to me?" she questioned, seeming confused. "You made me cry, John!"

He sighed, then, and pressed a kiss on her forehead. "I didn't like that part. But, I did it because I care about you. Because I like you, and I can see how unhappy you've been lately. But, you wouldn't act reasonably and discuss things with me, so I had to do something to get your attention, to make you listen to me, and really hear what I had to say. I think it worked rather well, actually."

"Yeah, well, don't go getting any ideas about using it in the future or anything..."

"Too late, kiddo. I rather enjoyed the experience. It's something I've always ached to do

whenever your mouth got a bit too smart in the past. And, I certainly liked the cuddling and wiping away your tears afterwards, especially considering what a prickly little thing you've been lately..."

Donna smiled. "Yeah, I guess that part was nice."

"Wanna go back in the bedroom and continue it?" He waggled his eyebrows at her playfully and was rewarded with a giggle.

"O-kkkkayyy," she agreed, as if relenting by having her arm twisted. "But only if you promise to let me bring a pillow to work tomorrow to sit on at my desk."

John laughed out loud as he led her by the hand back into the bedroom. "You're the one they're going to talk about. Do whatever you want."

The next day, Donna went in to work and met with John regarding her responsibilities. She apologized in person to Jane. And, she met with the department, giving out their new job assignments and apologizing to them all as a group for her recent hard to live with behavior.

Not one employee made a single comment to her about the fluffy pillow on the chair at her desk. But, they all smiled behind their terminals when they watched her sit down and squirm despite the pillow's soft cushion.

Texas Rose

Kenny Conrad tossed two bales of fresh hay down from the bed of his truck and jumped out behind them. As he cut the twine around the bales and began to spread the hay with a pitchfork, he glanced up irritably at the pouting young woman sitting slumped inside the bed of the truck.

"You could help, you know," he informed her as the cows began to crowd in around him.

The glance she shot him could have frozen molten lava.

Kenny chose to ignore her cold glare and made quick work of spreading the rest of the hay. When he was finished, he set the pitchfork in the bed of the truck, careful not to come too close to her with the pointed end. As he approached the driver's side door, slapping his work gloves off his hands in agitation, he felt her angry, hard eyes on him the whole time.

At the door to the cab, he stopped and met her gaze straight on. "If you're so damn mad at me, Rose, why the hell are you doggin' my every step today?"

"I'm not about to make it easy on you my last night in town!" Rose Kelly exploded. "After tomorrow, I won't be here anymore to make you feel bad, but you can bet the rest of the time I spend in this god-forsaken town is going to be as productive as I can make it towards whatever guilt I can get you to feel after you abandon me to brave this trip myself!"

Kenny rolled his eyes. "God, you're melodramatic. When you finally get yourself to California, you ought to read for a soap opera. I bet they'd take you in a minute."

"If I get to California..." Rose amended pointedly.

Kenny sighed. "If you're so scared to go alone,

then why don't you just stay here?"

The look on her face was so incredulous it was nearly comical. "I can't believe you would ask me that, Kenny Conrad! Ever since you and me were kids we've planned to leave this dump of a town behind as soon as we got out of high school. That was over a year ago, in case you've forgotten, when you convinced me to wait longer so we could save up more money for the move..."

"Rose, you had a hundred and fifty dollars to get you from Texas to California...."

".... And now, here it is over a year later, and now you've suddenly got a case of responsibility fever, and you won't leave with me! Apparently, the blood oath we made to each other in fifth grade meant nothing to you!!"

Kenny shook his head and yanked his door open. "You can heap on the guilt all you like, Rose. You're not going to change my mind. My family needs me right now."

Rose struck the back panel of the cab as he climbed inside. "Good riddance, then!" she shouted. "Let them keep you!"

When the truck lurched to a stop outside the barn at Kenny's house, he jumped out from the cab, still annoyed, though he did have the good grace to offer Rose a hand down from the bed. She simply glared at him with her arms crossed tight over her chest until he made a sound of disgust and stomped angrily away from her.

Yet, not five minutes later, she was at his side again, this time making a face when she walked in on the scene of him raking out one of the two horse stalls in the barn.

"Peeee Yuuuew!" Rose exclaimed, pinching the tip of her nose closed as she sidestepped a playful nudge from the huge black horse that Kenny favored. For some reason, the beast was always trying to touch her with its wet sloppy nose.

Kenny didn't even glance up from his work. "If

the smell bothers you, don't hang around, Rose."

"You know, Kenny Case, you ought to be nicer to me. 'Cause after tomorrow, who knows if you'll ever see me again?"

Rose watched the muscles bulging beneath Kenny's thin white tee shirt and waited for him to comment on her threat. When he just continued with his job in silence, she began to wonder if maybe he wasn't happy he was getting rid of her.

Maybe that had been his plan all along. Maybe, as they'd grown older, he'd longed to be rid of her but being the nice guy that he was, he just didn't know how to go about shaking her without hurting her feelings. So, he'd played out the part of wanting to be a partner in her plans to ditch their small Texas town after high school, just so he could finally get her out of his life when he backed out at the last minute.

Except that scenario didn't make sense considering that Kenny had been the one last year who convinced her to stay, at least long enough to save up more money towards her dream escape. And, he also hadn't backed out at the last minute, either. It had been months ago, after his mother had died suddenly in an auto accident, and he had been left to either take guardianship of his two younger siblings or send them off to another state to live with an aunt and uncle they barely knew.

Kenny, being Kenny, had of course become their legal guardian. And, right from the very beginning, he had told her that it was no longer possible for him to join her in her escape. She just hadn't let herself believe him.

Because the dream of ditching Little Pointe Texas without Kenny Case by her side just wasn't the same. From the time Rose had been six years old, when she'd fallen on the playground at school and scraped her knee, and he'd suddenly appeared at her side and helped her inside to the nurse while everyone else laughed and pointed at the new kid,

she'd loved him. Really loved him, not just liked him as a friend, though he was the best friend she'd ever known. No, Rose loved Kenny the way a woman loves a man; he just didn't have a clue that was how she felt – nor did he seem to have a clue that she was a woman.

As she watched him with large, watery doe eyes now, realizing for the first time that what she'd just said to him about never seeing him again was likely true, and wondering how in the world she could survive that, not him, he finally answered her. "I'm bein' as nice to you as I can, considering the way you're behaving lately. I don't want to fight with you your last night in town, but you seem bent on it."

Rose straightened her spine and sniffed her tears back. "Well, maybe if you'd just hang out with me a little instead of running all over this ranch doin' this and that..."

Kenny's head shot up, and his eyes were dark even in the dim sunlight of the barn. "This and that, as you put it, needs to get done. This is a working ranch, Rose. If the work doesn't get done, then we don't make any money, and we don't eat. Get it?"

She managed somehow not to flinch under his hard gaze. "Well, why don't you get Robbie and Katie to do some of this stuff when they get home from school?"

"Because by the time they get done with soccer practice and band lessons, it's dinnertime. And after dinner, they have homework. And then, they do have their own chores to do. We have our own system, and it works." He glared at her again, his eyes glinting in the light. "Any more questions, or can I get finished here?"

Rose looked down at the floor of the barn and swallowed. She shook her head and jumped a second later when the horse nudged her again with his giant head. This time he neighed softly at her.

"It wouldn't hurt you to pet him," Kenny told her

as he went back to raking the dirty straw. "He likes you. That's why he does that."

Rose looked up at the warm, soulful eyes of the horse and tentatively reached out one hand. But when her fingertips came into contact with the tip of the horse's velvety nose and he snuffed her hand, smelling her scent, she squealed and whirled around. As she fled the barn, the sound of Kenny's soft chuckle followed after her.

An hour later, Kenny slumped wearily against the upper story service doorway of the barn, letting his feet hang down outside the opening. He propped his shoulder against the wall and sighed when he looked down across the land, and the house, all his now at the age of twenty. He'd never seen it coming, had never thought he'd be the legal guardian to his younger brother and sister before he was even legally able to drink.

So far, things were going along fairly smoothly, though he worried a lot about the future. What was he going to do when Katie starting liking boys, for example? And what about when Robby decided the time of mourning their mother was over and went back to his rebellion stage, the one he'd started a few months before she died? What then?

Kenny realized suddenly as he was staring across at the scene below him, thinking, that his truck was gone. He swore silently, though he knew immediately that it had to have been Rose who'd taken it. It wasn't really surprising; she 'borrowed' his stuff like that all the time, always had. And, really, he didn't mind. There was another car here that he could use if he needed it, and Rose didn't have transportation of her own. No, he cursed inwardly because for the first time in all the years of her going on and on about leaving Small Pointe, it finally just now hit him that after today, she really was going to be gone. No more turning around to

find something of his missing, no more talking to her about his problems, no more unwanted 'world-according-to-Rose' advice, no more teasing and laughing with his best friend.

Kenny sighed. He wanted her to stay, he just didn't know what to say or do to make her change her stubborn mind.

Lately, the only thing he'd really wanted to do was wring her neck, she'd been so damned annoying! Well, actually, if he was really honest with himself, that wasn't entirely true. The true fantasy he'd had as of late had been a lot more specific than wringing her neck; he'd wanted nothing so much as to throw her bodily across his lap and pound her shapely backside till she screamed that she'd stay – and behave!

It was the most ludicrous idea he'd ever had, but it was certainly his most prevalent one lately. Whenever she got on his nerves, the image surfaced in his mind. At night, he had dreams about it. On occasion, he found his hands actually itching with the urge to paddle her. And, he seemed extremely distracted by the sight of her rounded bottom in cut-off shorts...

Even more ridiculous than the idea of spanking Rose, however, was what the concept did to Kenny. The simple thought of having her writhing over his knee while he smacked her bottom made his jeans tight and his body ache with wanting. It made him want to kiss away her tears when the spanking was over, then move his lips further down her body to cover her all over with those softer marks of love. It made him hot, and hard, and extremely unable to concentrate on anything else until the moment had passed.

And, that was what really had Kenny confused. Because he and Rose, they were just friends. The best of friends. And that was all – wasn't it?

Rose frowned at the open suitcase on her bed, then darted her dark blue eyes to the contents of the open closet before her. Deciding what to pack for her escape was proving more difficult than she'd imagined.

Of course, some things had been easy: The old ratty stuffed bear that Kenny had given her on her sixteenth birthday was already carefully nestled in one corner of the case, as was the gray-blue zippered hoodie sweatshirt of his that she'd stolen from his house so many times now that he'd stopped asking for it back. Underneath the sweatshirt was the shoebox of photos and memories she secretly kept of their past as friends.

But, so far, the only other items in the case were a couple of her favorite CDs and her toiletry bag.

Of course, she wanted to travel light, because she didn't know what adventures she might run into. She certainly didn't want to be too encumbered with luggage to fully participate in whatever life threw her way on the road. There were always Laundromats where she could clean what she did decide to bring along.

The problem was, she couldn't seem to make herself put anything else in that suitcase. It just seemed too final, too once-and-for-all to pack up her everyday clothes and close the lid on the case. Doing so meant that tomorrow she was leaving.

Mentally, Rose shook her head at herself. What was wrong with her? She wanted to leave! Had thought of nothing else but leaving for years now! She was just being ridiculous!

Angry with her sappy behavior, she reached blindly inside the closet now and pulled out a few pairs of worn jeans, a stack of underwear, a couple tee shirts and a flannel shirt. She threw them roughly on top of what already sat neatly in the suitcase, then flung a lightweight denim jacket on top of the mound. When she turned around, her

vision swam, and she rushed to the bed to rearrange the new clothes to one side so that her bear could breathe and her box of memories and sweatshirt wouldn't get crushed.

As she picked up the sweatshirt to refold it and place it carefully on top of the other items, she suddenly drew it around herself instead and inhaled the scent of Kenny entwined in its fibers, even now, months after she'd claimed official ownership of it. A lump lodged itself in her throat and no matter how hard she swallowed, it wouldn't go away. And neither would the tears that made her vision swim and her nose run.

Kenny felt bad about the way he'd spoken to Rose. He didn't want them to be on bad terms when she left town tomorrow. So, he hurried through his afternoon work, leaving what he could for the next day, and left the ranch to pick his brother up from soccer practice. Sixteen year old Robbie was only too happy to drop Kenny off at Rose's house, so that he could have the car to himself for the afternoon.

"Afternoon, Mr. Kelly," Kenny greeted Rose's elderly grandfather as he mounted the three front porch steps. "How are you, sir?"

The old man narrowed his eyes at Kenny the way he always did. Kenny never had liked him, considering the way he treated his one and only granddaughter. Rose had been sent to live with him when she'd been a small child after losing her parents, and Robert Kelly had taken her in out of sheer obligation and nothing else. Her childhood would have been completely loveless and miserable had she not found family and acceptance outside the walls of Robert Kelly's house. Seeing what she'd gone through under his roof had been a large part of Kenny's own decision to keep his siblings himself, instead of sending them to stay with other family

members.

When Mr. Kelly neglected to answer him, as usual, Kenny sighed and simply let himself inside the house. He felt the old man's eyes on his back the entire time as he passed by him, smelling the odor of his unwashed body and the tang of alcohol on his breath already. He'd never been so bold as to let himself into the man's house before, but then again he supposed it didn't matter anymore. Not with Rose leaving in the morning.

"Rose!" he called out, standing at the base of the stairs.

A few minutes passed and then she appeared up at the top, a suitcase in one hand and a deep frown marring her pretty features. "What are you doing here?"

He shrugged, wanting for some reason to seem nonchalant when he really was anything but. "I cleared up my schedule for the rest of the day. And, Robbie's going to stop and get a pizza for him and Katie for dinner. I thought maybe you might want to go down to the pond for one last swim."

Rose was bumping the suitcase step by step down the stairs as he spoke. When she got within the last few steps, he reached out and took it from her.

"If you're worried about the truck, you can relax. I was going to return it tomorrow morning on my way to catch the bus out of town."

Kenny gave her a warning look. "I'm not here about the truck, Rose. Earlier, you wanted me to hang out with you, and now I can. Wouldn't you like to go for one more swim, for old time's sake?"

She wrinkled her nose a minute, then shrugged. "Okay, just let me get changed into my suit."

Kenny grinned. "Okay. I'll meet you at the truck."

The pond sat on a secluded piece of land on the back of Kenny's family's property. He had to use the truck's four wheel drive to get back there, and they

grinned at each other in mutual enjoyment as the vehicle bounced and swayed over the land.

When they reached the water, he threw the truck into park, grabbed a couple towels he'd thought to bring along and raced her to be the first one in, shouting, "Last one in's a rotten egg!" just as he used to when they were kids.

Rose caught up to him quickly, and they both hit the water at the same time, coming up laughing and gasping. Kenny splashed Rose, and she retaliated, and soon a war was on to see which could dunk or splash the other faster. The battle raged on until Kenny picked her up high over his head and abruptly released her. Rose screamed, squeezing her eyes shut as she anticipated impacting the water and sinking down. But, a second later Kenny caught her, and instead eased her back onto her feet. For a moment, their eyes caught and a flash of electricity crossed between them; or, at least, it seemed to Rose that it did. Kenny, on the other hand, simply turned away from her and walked out of the pond to land on a towel on the shore, looking spent.

After taking a minute to collect herself, Rose followed him and let herself lay as close to him as she dared, even resting the back of her head on one of the arms he had folded behind his head. They were both breathing hard from their play and lay there in silence for a while, watching the clouds passing by overhead.

"So," Kenny was the first one to speak. "You still figuring on heading to California, or do you have another place in mind now?"

Rose shrugged. "California, for starters. Then, who knows?"

He slanted her a sideways look. "Whatever happened to New York?"

She wrinkled her nose in answer.

"Too scary, huh?"

Rose felt her hackles rise. This was the second

time today he'd accused her of being afraid of making this trip.

"I'm not afraid of anything," she boasted, sitting up and staring defiantly down at him. "You're the one who's afraid!"

"Me?" Kenny's eyebrows drew down over his hazel eyes as he too sat up. "What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"You know what it means!" she hollered, starting to get to her feet. But he grabbed hold of her arm by the elbow and stayed her gently, but forcefully.

"No, I don't, Rose. Why don't you explain it to me."

"Fine!" she snapped, leaning towards him so that they were only inches apart. "It means that if you really wanted to come with me, you'd find a way. You'd bring Robbie and Katie or something. But, the truth is, your responsibilities to them are just your convenient excuse! You're the one who's afraid to leave this town! You're scared of going out into the big bad world and testing the unknown. It's easier and safer to just stay right here!"

Now, Kenny's eyes narrowed, and his face clouded over. Rose had never seen him look so angry before, not even at her these last few days. She instantly regretted what she'd said to him. She wasn't even sure she really believed what she'd said; she'd just spoken rashly out of the pain and fear inside her of leaving him behind.

"You think that I'm staying here because I want to? Do you think for one second that I wanted to lose my mother the way we did, that I want to have sole responsibility for Robbie and Katie, at my age? You think it's going to be easy for me, for one single second, to finish raising them on my own?" His eyes were hot and hard on her face as he spoke, and Rose swallowed back on the lump in her throat that burned there at the pain in his voice. "You have got to be the most self-centered, single-minded child on the face of the planet! I cannot believe that I killed

myself this afternoon to clear up this evening so I could spend it with you! I must have been out of my freakin' mind!"

"Kenny, I...."

"No, save it, Rose. I don't want to hear anything from you." A light shone suddenly in his eyes, and she had a sudden foreboding sense of inexplicable dread. "Though there is one thing I'd like to give you. Consider it a goodbye gift."

He grabbed her elbow again, this time so fast she didn't even have time to think about getting away. But, this time, instead of holding her still in front of him by her arm, he used it to pull her unerringly down over his outstretched thighs, until she was flat on her belly, her bikinied bottom centered right in Kenny's lap.

"Let me up, Kenny!" she shouted, knowing where this was going, though she herself had never been in this position before, and most certainly not with Kenny Conrad. But, she'd seen enough spankings around this town to know the beginnings of one when she saw it.

"Not yet," he growled. "I haven't given you your present yet. And, God knows, you've earned it."

To her utter shock, she felt his thumb hook itself into the top elastic of her bikini bottom, and a moment later he was tugging the still damp material down to her knees.

"H-h-how dare you!?" she shrieked, wriggling and struggling to no avail under his steel like arm.

"You were pretty daring yourself a few minutes ago, with all that you said to me. Now, it's my turn."

And, with that, he lifted his right hand up high over his head and brought it crashing down on her naked bottom with a loud, stinging SMACK!!

"Ow!" Rose bellowed, immediately reaching one arm back to try to shield her behind. Kenny took the hand she presented at the wrist and imprisoned it in the small hollow of her back with the same

hand that was holding her immobile over his legs. To Rose, it seemed like he had five arms back there, so little was she able to move.

He delivered her another resounding swat and smiled at the muted scream it resulted in. Kenny didn't know who he thought he was, spanking his best friend this way; he'd never spanked anyone else before this. He'd gotten whipped a couple times with his dad's belt, himself, when he'd been younger and before the old man died, and he'd seen his sister and brother get smacked a few times by his mom. He'd even seen his mom get swatted a time or two when his dad had still been alive, though he'd been sure to keep his knowledge of the fact a secret. His mother had acted like it wasn't an out of the ordinary occurrence in her marriage, and so Kenny had never once thought of what he'd witnessed as abuse. It had simply been his dad laying down the law with his mother. Maybe that was where he'd gotten the idea to spank Rose in the first place. She'd certainly been out of hand lately, and he'd seen his own father deal with unruly woman in this manner. Maybe the spanking trait ran in the family...

Whatever it was that had finally snapped in him and drove him to put Rose over his knee was not fading; Kenny continued his barrage of smacks on her defenseless derriere until the creamy white skin of her bottom had turned to pink, then cherry. She shrieked and cursed him the entire time, kicking and bucking and pounding the earth beneath them with her one free hand. And still Kenny continued to wallop her, alternating her cheeks and covering them both from the top crest of her backside till just above her knees.

"Let me tell you something, Rose Kelly," he ground out between clenched teeth as he punctuated his words with rough cracks of his palm. "There is nothing, God help me, more that I would rather do than go running off with you on this little

escape of yours. I would love to run away from my responsibilities here, if only my conscious would let me. But, I can't. I have to stay here and face the scariest damned task of my life, by keeping this ranch floating and seeing Katie and Robert grow up. If I could change the stars, and bring my mother back, so I could just go off with you, I would! Hell, if I could do that, I'd bring my dad back too so I wouldn't be the only one in the family with memories of him left. And, I'd bring your parents back, so you wouldn't have had to grow up under your grandfather's roof. But, I can't do any of that stuff. I can only deal with what's been put on my plate here and now. Do you get that, Rose?"

It was then, as he paused in his task as well as his lecture, that Kenny first realized Rose was crying. Sobbing, really.

"I'm sorry!" she sniveled, clutching his knee with her free hand. "I'm sorry... I didn't mean what I said to you... you're right.... God, I'm so sorry, Kenny..."

He let her up then, helping her stand with an arm under her elbow. She scrambled rapidly to pull up her bikini bottoms, her face as red as her bottom was. She stood in front of him then, agape, holding both of her bottom cheeks, one in each of her hands. Tears continued to course down her face as she stood there, staring up at him with an indiscernible mixture of emotions on her face.

Kenny was suddenly glad that he'd gone for his swim in cut off jeans instead of swim trunks. He felt the rigid erection bulging in his pants and hoped that Rose didn't see it, and hadn't felt it while she'd been over his lap.

He took a step closer to her, drawn by the look she was giving him, by his own emotions from the past few days, and by the simple fact that if he didn't kiss her now, he might never get the chance again.

He cupped one side of her face with the same hand that had delivered the fiercest swats to her

backside, gentle now. His thumb traced her bottom lip just once and he would have sworn she trembled. Hesitantly, he lowered his head and sipped once, then twice at her pouty pink lips, drawing in her sharply exhaled breath and tasting the sweetness of it.

The kiss deepened, and Kenny swallowed a moan when her small pink tongue met his in shy welcome. He threaded one hand through her long dark tresses and took her weight with a small smile when he felt her lean into him.

When they broke apart, she looked dazedly up at him. Then, as he watched, her eyes filled with tears, and she pulled away. He watched her back grow rigid and slowly, the fire returned to her eyes.

He never even saw the punch coming. One second he was standing there in front of her, wondering how long this tirade was going to last, and trying to figure out if he should put her over his knee again, and the next he was flat on his back with a split upper lip, staring up at her.

And, in the next instant, she was gone. From his spot on the ground, Kenny heard the sound of the truck being fired up and briefly wondered if she planned to finish him off. As he slowly sat up, fingering his lip and watching his truck bounce across the ranch, he had to smile; after all, he was the one who'd taught Rose to throw a good punch. He supposed he had no one to blame but himself.

The following morning dawned hot and humid, the air heavy. Kenny grimaced at his busted lip in the mirror and frowned a few minutes later when he glanced outside his bedroom window to see that sometime during the night Rose had returned his truck. He was half surprised that she hadn't slit the tires on her way out.

He'd looked for her last night, at her grandfather's and around Little Pointe's hot spots –

the pizza place, the movie theatre and Wal-Mart – but no sign of her. He'd gone to bed late, feeling exhausted, only to toss and turn for what seemed like forever before he finally nodded off.

She was leaving today. Hating him.

He showered quickly and looked in on the kids, both still sleeping off their own Friday night events. After penning a quick note to whoever happened to wake up first, he headed out in the truck.

Jimmy Sparks's cows had somehow gotten through his fence again and a dozen of them were in the middle of the highway when Kenny came across them, blocking traffic and making a general nuisance of themselves. He jumped out of the truck to help Jimmy corral them off the road, more out of the rising sense of panic in his chest than out of friendly neighborliness. As soon as they were out of the way, he gunned the engine past them and sped off towards the center of town.

His eyes darted to the clock in the truck's dash, praying he wasn't too late, that he hadn't missed her. But, just as he came squealing to a halt across the street from the town's one and only bus stop, his heart leaped into his throat as he heard the whoosh of the morning bus's brake release and watched as it began to pull away from the curb.

"Wait!" he called, surprised to hear the catch in his voice. "Wait!"

But the driver did not hear him, nor did she see him as he began to run across the road, waving his arms. He felt his heart pounding in his chest, and he thought he would pass out from the intensity of the blood pummeling through his veins. He was too late, the driver wasn't going to stop, he was never going to see Rose again, and he'd never told her...

And, then, a flash of summer white and the flutter of dark curls caught his eye. And, when he looked up, there she was, still standing at the now empty bus station, her suitcase at her feet.

A grin broke out over his face, and he raced to

her side, only stopping himself from embracing her when he saw that she was crying.

"I'm the coward," she told him miserably. "I'm the one who's too yellow bellied to go off by herself."

Kenny thumbed her tears away and then tipped her chin up with one crooked finger. "Nah," he said, shaking his head. "You're just now realizing you're not meant to go anywhere. By yourself or otherwise. You're a part of this Texas town, whether you want to see it or not. They named a song after you, remember? The Yellow Rose of Texas?"

A small smile broke out over Rose's sad face. Then it widened into a grin and the next thing he knew, she was giggling. She all but fell into his arms then, and the laughter became mixed with tears again. Kenny had never heard a better sound, because it meant she was still here, that he wasn't imagining her presence here in his arms.

"Don't ever leave," he whispered in her ear, hugging her tighter. "Stay here. With me."

Her eyes were full of laughter and tears as she looked up at him. She ran one soft fingertip over his split lip and smiled.

"Are you going to... you know.... spank me again?" she whispered, coloring slightly.

Kenny shrugged. "Are you going to need me to again?"

Rose rolled her eyes. "This is me we're talking about here," she groused.

"I see your point. So, then, I suppose the answer would be yes."

Rose seemed to consider this a moment.

"What do you think about that?" Kenny prompted her when she said nothing after a little while.

"I think I must be crazy, but I don't care!" She threw her arms around his neck then and squeezed him with all her might. "Just take me home, Kenny Conrad. And never let me try to escape again!"

"First thing's first," Kenny insisted. He pulled back from her just long enough to press his lips to her own and kiss the very breath out of her. Then he hoisted her up over his right shoulder and grabbed her suitcase with his left hand. He carried her back to the truck, delighting in the musical sound of her laughter all the way, and drove her home to his ranch.

From that day forward, they were never apart again.

Closure

Lily woke up with a hard start, sitting up in the hospital bed and blinking around at her surroundings. She realized she was in a hospital room but she was still groggy enough not to remember why she was there.

Her eyes darted down to her arms and it all came back to her at the sight of the thick white bandages binding her wrists. She trembled and closed her eyes, feeling the same despair that had led her to drink herself sick, pop a dozen sleeping tablets, sink into a steaming bath and neatly cut her wrists with a razor blade. She'd been so completely out of it, she hadn't even felt any pain.

Beyond the blissful sleep that had followed, she didn't remember anything. How had she gotten here?

She forced her eyes open and saw a man sitting in the shadows of the room, recognized it to be her husband, Brett. Tears pricked her eyes as she looked at him; he was asleep in the chair and he looked awful. She wondered how long she'd been unconscious; Brett had been away on business the day she'd settled into that hot bath. If he was here with her now, it had to be, what?, Wednesday, at least. She hoped he hadn't been the person who had found her, but at the same time she realized no one else would have been inside their home.

The tears were escaping now, fortunately in silence, but flooding down her cheeks just the same. She was so ashamed of what she'd done; life was more precious than anything, Lord knew she should know that after losing the baby. And she had tried to end her life, the life she'd pledged to her husband's keeping in their marriage vows, as if it was nothing more significant than a candle to be snuffed out when it burned down too low.

She stared at her husband through her tears;

how could she have been so selfish, so disrespectful?

Brett was going to kill her, she thought briefly, ironically smirking at the wording she chose to frame the thought in her mind.

Then she remembered that it had been months since Brett had punished her; in fact, he hadn't spanked her once since her miscarriage. Instead he treated her as if she was made of glass and he tried over and over to brighten her days and break through her depression.

How could she have done this to him? To them?

Brett was dreaming again. He was home early from his business trip with good news of a new client. The house was quiet when he came inside, a bottle of champagne and a dozen roses in one hand and his suitcase in the other. He heard soft music from upstairs and, smiling, followed it, looking forward to seeing Lily and surprising her with his early return.

The sight of his wife, unconscious, in the bathtub with her own blood leaking from her wrists into the water had momentarily frozen him in the doorway. The roses and champagne bottle had dropped to the floor, unnoticed, as he flew to the tub and checked for a pulse. For a few horrifying moments he thought he was too late and he knew a deep, raw despair that he had failed her.

When he did find her pulse it was weak. He bound towels around her wrists, thanking God when he noticed that she hadn't made her wounds very deep in her drugged state, wrapped her naked, wet body in a sheet and drove her to the emergency room, praying every second of the way.

He woke from the dream as if someone had given him a shake. He rubbed his eyes with a thumb and forefinger, feeling like he had sand in them. He'd not been home in the two days since Lily

had come into the hospital and he hadn't been able to catch much sleep, either.

He looked to the bed then and sat up quickly when he saw that his wife was awake. Her slim shoulders were shaking and she was staring at him while large, silent tears tracked down her lovely, sad face.

"Lily, honey." Brett was by her side in an instant. He gathered his precious wife into his arms as gently as if she was the frailest child and rocked her slowly. "Oh, thank God, Lily," he breathed. "I'm so glad you're okay."

Her silent crying was getting worse, despite his efforts to calm her. Suddenly, raw, racking sobs broke from her chest, aching painful sobs that made Brett's stomach clench.

A nurse appeared at the door of the room, drawn by the noise. Seeing the couple, and the husband's dismissive shake of the head in her direction, she slowly turned away, hoping that the young man could somehow make things right again for his hurting wife.

The house had an almost stale smell to it when Brett and Lily returned home the following afternoon. Brett stopped Lily when she started for the stairs.

"Honey, I have to clean up the bathroom, so you just stay down here for a bit, okay?"

She paled, then nodded slowly. He squeezed her hand and mounted the stairs.

Lily opened one of the windows near the bookcase, then paused to look at the assorted framed photographs of herself and Brett that were kept there. Her eyes fell on a photo taken early in their marriage, while on a camping trip. She was nestled on the ground, Brett sitting behind her on a rock, his legs hugging her back against him. It had been taken the day before she had found herself

upended over Brett's lap, while he sat on that very same rock and gave her her first long, hard spanking of their marriage.

They'd had a minor argument that morning over something Lily couldn't remember now. Brett had taken a walk to the nearby lake to cool off, only to return and find his wife gone as well. He quickly grew worried, and not a little angry. He'd specifically asked Lily not to wander off too far on her own, considering her bad sense of direction and inexperience with the area, and with camping and the woods in general. She had promised him she wouldn't wander off alone, even agreeing with him about her sorry sense of direction and ability to get lost easily. In her anger at him, however, she'd apparently forgotten that promise and taken off on her own while he had been at the lake trying to give them both a little time alone to cool off.

It took Bret over an hour to find her and when he did, Lily was near hysteria, so upset was she from being lost and afraid. Brett had hugged her and calmed her down. Then he'd led her back to their camp, not once commenting on how easily it was to retrace the steps there, though she of course noticed this with great chagrin.

The entire hike back, Lily's cheeks had been an embarrassed scarlet while Brett scolded her in a quiet, stern voice. He reminded her of her promise not to wander away from the campsite, and made it a point that the reason he'd made her promise that was because he'd been worried that she might get lost easily if she did get too far away. Then he went on to tell her how very worried and frightened he had been the longer it had taken to find her. Lily had been relieved when the walk back to camp, and the scolding, was over.

But then Bret had shocked her by saying, in the same maddeningly quiet, calm voice, that her childish actions had won her a childish punishment. He had sat down on the large rock in camp, and told

her to come over to him for a "well deserved spanking."

To say the least, Lily had been shocked by her husband's words. They'd never discussed discipline in their relationship and she never would have expected her kind and gentle Brett to declare intentions to spank her. She'd read some romance novels before where the heroine got spanked and, in truth, there was a part of her drawn to those particular scenes, but she never dreamed of such a thing happening in real life – especially not in HER life!

She'd argued with him, even going so far as to say he was at least part way to blame because if they hadn't fought – and if he hadn't walked away first – she never would have either.

Brett listened to her arguments, unswayed, his arms crossed over his chest, frowning. When she fought against him physically, he easily overpowered her. And before she quite knew what had happened to her, her husband had her face down over his lap, staring at the woodsy floor beneath them.

She was so humiliated and embarrassed. And nothing she did or said, no matter how she kicked and flailed around trying to escape him, made a bit of difference. He pinned her against him and started spanking her bottom right over her denim shorts.

He didn't scold her again, just let his hand do his talking for him. She was crying out almost from the start, though more from the embarrassment of her situation than from any actual pain. But Brett saw to it that she did feel the affects of his hand eventually; though he didn't spank her bare, he did keep up the lesson for a good fifteen minutes. When he finally stopped, Lily was crying real tears and apologizing for her behavior.

When he let her up, a part of her wanted only to get away from him as far as her legs would carry her, but when she put her back to him, he'd pulled

her back and cuddled her against him until her tears had stopped. He'd told her how much he loved her and only wanted for her to be safe, and somewhere along the way her resentment faded with the sting from his hand, and she forgave him.

Lily smiled wistfully now, touching the handsome face of her husband in the photo. She hadn't understood it then, but Brett had known what she needed better than she had herself. And despite her soreness, she'd felt so much better after she'd calmed down and been held and reassured. She'd never felt the true strength of Brett's love for her until then. Of course, after that day, he'd applied similar correction to her backside without hesitation, the only difference being that after that first time, he'd always punished her bare.

That was, at least, until the miscarriage.

Lily sniffed as she heard his tread on the stairs. She had to be crazy to miss those painful, embarrassing sessions over her husband's lap, but she did. She craved them and longed for them like nothing else. Before the miscarriage, Brett would have blistered her butt good for what she'd done to herself while he'd been out of town that awful day. Didn't he care enough anymore to even make the effort?

The days passed slowly after Lily's return from the hospital. Brett had dreams still of the day he'd come home to find her near death in their bathtub. He spent his free time trying everything he could think of to make his wife happy again. He took time off from work and took her on a surprise camping trip. She'd always loved nature and when they'd first been married, they'd gone camping at least once a year. But even as he held her beneath a wonderful canopy of stars, telling her he loved her and was so glad to have her as his own, he still sensed the sadness in her. He didn't know what to

do to make things right again.

When they returned home, things went back to their normal routine. There was something missing and he wished he could put his finger on what it was. Despite the fact that Lily was attending her therapy sessions regularly, he would often come home from work to find her red eyed and quiet.

He tried to get her to talk about her feelings with him, but she would only say she needed time. He reminded her that the miscarriage had not been her fault; she'd blamed herself for that from the very beginning. He told her they could always adopt children, knowing how badly she'd wanted a baby and how it hurt her that she couldn't have another. Every morning before he went to work and each night before she went to sleep, the last thing he said to her was that he loved her. He didn't want her to forget that.

One day, a few months after Lily had come home from the hospital, Brett took a half day at work and went home early to be with her. He missed his wife, even when they were together anymore. He was determined to make her talk to him, and work through this with him.

When he came home, he couldn't find her at first, and for a few horrifying moments the images that had greeted him the last time he'd returned home early haunted him. Then he heard soft sobs from behind the bedroom door, and even as his heart ached at the sounds, relief washed over him.

He opened the door and peered in at his wife. Lily sat on the floor beside the bed, pictures and mementos scattered around her. She had her face in her hands, her shoulders shaking with sobs.

He came to her immediately and cradled her against his chest. She was so upset she didn't even seem surprised by his sudden appearance. She just clung to him and buried her face in his shoulder. He felt her tears as they fell on his neck and the collar of his shirt.

"Oh, baby, shhh..." He rocked her in his arms, but her sobs were growing louder instead of lessening. "Oh, Lily. Please tell me what's wrong. Lily please..."

After being held a bit, she stammered an answer to him: "I... just... all my y-y-years... and I... feel so.... Guilty. I tried... to ...end it all...never see you...again. After baby died...should know better...life too... precious..."

Her tears renewed. Brett squeezed his own tears back and continued to rock her gently and stroke her hair. If he could have had one wish at that moment it would have been to never see his wife cry again.

"Sweetheart, have you talked to your counselor about this?" he asked her gently.

She shook her head against his shoulder. When he tipped her chin up with his hand, she wouldn't look at him.

"Why not?" he persisted, a sinking feeling in her stomach guessing at what her reason would be.

She swallowed hard and a fat tear rolled down her flushed cheek. "I... haven't been going to... therapy," she whispered.

Brett shut his eyes briefly and reined in a sudden surge of anger. She needed his support and understanding right now, not his anger, he told himself. But he wasn't about to let her get away with skipping her sessions.

"I... I can't go, Brett. I can't talk about it...."

"Lily, you need to talk about it. With me, and with a professional who can help you understand what you're feeling and make some sense of it."

She shook her head sadly. "There's no sense to any of this. What sense is there in my baby being taken from me? Unless, like I feared, I wouldn't have been able to take care of her right. What other reason would there have been?"

"Lily..."

"And what sense is there in my being here

now?" she demanded angrily. "What good am I to anybody? I'm a mess, Brett! After what I tried to do to myself, I don't deserve a second chance!"

"Lily, stop it!" Brett grabbed his wife by her upper arms and shook her. She blinked at him in surprise and this funny look came over her face as she glanced down at his strong hands on her arms. "Everyone deserves a second chance, especially you. What happened is over. You're okay, you're still here and I'm here. We're together and that's what matters; that we're here to be good for each other. Do you understand me?"

Lily was still looking down at where Brett's hands were locked around her arms. She spoke as if she hadn't heard him at all. "I can't stop thinking about it," she whispered frantically. Brett's gut clenched at the raw pain in her voice. "And you... finding me like that..." Her eyes rose to meet his briefly, then squeezed tightly shut against any sympathy he could have shown her. "Oh, God. I'm so ashamed of myself!"

Brett released her arms and tenderly brushed the hair back from her face. He cupped the back of her head with one hand and pulled her close to press a kiss onto her forehead. He used his thumbs to gently wipe away the tears that still clung to her face. At least she'd stopped sobbing so heavily, he thought.

"Lily Marie Michelson, you open your eyes and look at me, young lady," he ordered her sternly. Lily peeked warily at her husband, and he nearly smiled at the familiar 'I'm-in-trouble?' look that had appeared on her face at his tone of voice. He realized then that it had been entirely too long since he'd seen that look, and maybe that was a big part of the problem.

"Lily, you have a second chance, honey. You have to forgive yourself – for the miscarriage you still insist on blaming yourself for. And for trying to commit suicide. You have a lot of years left to live,

kiddo, and you can't live them like this. I don't want you to live them like this.

"You need to move on, Lily. And I think I know what might help you take the first step in doing that." He lifted his wife's chin up when she tucked it shyly to her chest. "And I think you know what will help too, don't you Lily Marie? Tell me, baby. Tell me what you need from me...."

Lily looked her husband in the eye willingly for the first time since he'd come in and found her crying on the floor. Well, here was her chance, but could she really make herself ask him for what she needed? And what if it still didn't help her?

She hesitated and looked down at the carpet. She wanted to forgive herself, and she wanted so badly to have some sort of her old life back. She swallowed hard and sighed.

Brett tilted her face up gently and looked into her eyes. He gave her a knowing, secret little smile and she felt like her heart grew too tight for her chest. A warm feeling of security and unconditional love washed over her and she knew it was time to share with her husband what she needed.

"You-- you should spank me," she whispered softly. Brett's smile softened and he stroked her hair soothingly. She leaned her head against his palm and briefly closed her eyes.

"That's right," he agreed, his voice silky, as he continued to touch her like that. Oh, how she loved him. "I haven't punished you in a very long time, have I, Lily?"

She shook her head. More tears began to scald the back of her throat but she kept them at bay. She couldn't say anything more now, but she begged him silently in her head.

He seemed to be choosing his words carefully. "What you did – trying to kill yourself, Lily Marie, that was a very serious thing. About the most

serious thing I can think of, actually. You were basically throwing away all your past, our past, all those years and all the good things that happened. Not to mention the present and all of the days we have coming to us in the future. And like you said yourself, life is such a precious thing; you and I, of all people, should be aware of that after losing the baby. I have forgiven you for this Lily. But you need to forgive yourself."

Lily nodded jerkily. She swiped at her tears. "I want that," she whispered sadly.

He nodded and took her hand. Squeezing it, he added, "And, young lady? Let me be absolutely clear on something else here. You are in a lot of trouble for not going to your therapy sessions. That stops today. If I have to paddle you every day before a session, drive you there myself and hold you down in the chair, you will go and you will participate. I know it's hard to talk about and you would really rather have it all just go away. But, Lily, it's never going to all go away. It's going to get better, yes, but you have to work at it for that to happen. And a big part of that work is going to the therapy. Okay?"

She nodded again. "Yes sir." She glanced at him hopefully. "Would you... would you mind going with me?"

"Not at all. I'd be happy to do that."

"Thanks."

He smiled and kissed her cheek. But when he began to speak again, his tone was once more far from the gentle expression on his face. "Now then, young lady, you need to understand two very important things here before we get started. The first thing I want you to know is that in no way is this spanking going to be for your miscarriage. That was something you could not control. I can't help you realize that any more than to tell you that. You need to understand it in you own heart, baby. Hopefully the therapy with help you learn to do

that.

"This punishment is going to be for what you tried to do to yourself, and for not going to therapy – and for letting me think you have been all this time. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Brett," Lily answered.

"Okay." He took a deep breath. "The second thing you need to know is that this punishment – it's going to be a very hard one, Lily. The worst you've ever had, I'm sure. It has to be, really. Trying to end your life is about the most serious thing I can think of and I couldn't give you a light spanking to try to cleanse you of your guilt over it. I wouldn't work." Lily was nodding as he spoke. "I need a bit to think about what I'm going to do exactly, but before we start, you need to understand that it's going to be a very strict punishment. If you're not okay with that...."

"No, Brett," Lily interrupted. She took hold of his hand and squeezed it. "No, I need you to be hard on me. I... I don't know if this will help me or not, but I want you to do it. I need you to do it."

He studied her face and kissed her forehead. "Okay. Then, into the corner with you for now. Like I said, I need a few minutes to decide what to do with you. You think about what happened and I'll call you when I'm ready."

"Okay." She stood and went to the nearest corner. She stood silently, staring straight ahead. Behind her she could hear Brett cleaning up the pictures she had been looking through. Then she heard him leave the room.

It seemed like an eternity before he returned, but she knew it was probably only ten minutes or so. He called her out of the corner and she went to stand before him where he sat on the bed. He looked very solemn and a bit sad now. He held a couple of the pictures she'd been looking at earlier, and one by one he showed them to her.

The first was one taken of her, at around age

four, holding a tiger striped kitten in her arms and beaming for the camera. "What happened to that happy little girl?" her husband asked as she held the picture and looked into it. "I haven't seen you smile like that in... too long, Lil."

The next picture was a newer one of Lily, sitting at their kitchen table, surrounded by books. She had a pencil sticking out of her haphazard bun and she was so intent on studying she hadn't even noticed she was having her picture taken. "Remember how hard you were working for your doctorate?" Brett asked quietly. "Then after you lost the baby, all that work stopped. All that effort was wasted, and you didn't finish. You were so close to finishing. I hope you do finish, Lily."

The last picture he handed her was one of the two of them dancing on their wedding day. It was obvious from the expressions on their faces that neither was thinking of anything except the other person. They'd certainly never imagined this scene, or everything that had led up to it, back on that fairy tale day. A fat tear slid down Lily's cheek and splashed onto the picture.

Brett took the pictures from her and set them aside. He framed her face with his hands and said, "When I found you, Lily, the only thought in my mind was that you could not die. I couldn't imagine trying to go on with my life if you died. And once I knew you were okay, I was angry that you could be so willing to just throw away our life together – with children or without. But I stuffed those feelings aside and told myself to be glad that I had you back. And I forgave you immediately the moment I opened my eyes and saw you awake in the hospital. I want you to try very hard to forgive yourself. Okay?"

Lily nodded her head, still held in her husband's hands.

"Okay, good." Brett stood then and Lily saw that on the bed behind him he had stacked several

pillows. But he sat to the right of them instead of instructing her to stretch out across them as she had expected; then he patted his right knee and beckoned her over with that same hand. "I guess you should take those jeans and panties off, sweetheart."

Lily obeyed him without a second thought. And then, without waiting for him to ask, she came to his side and trustingly laid herself over his lap.

He took a few minutes as he always did to adjust her body to his liking. His hand smoothed the skin of her bottom and she pillowed her head on her arms. A tiny sigh escaped her.

"This spanking is for all the missed therapy sessions, Lily Marie," Brett told her just before that first swat. "And for your keeping that from me..."

Lily gritted her teeth in anticipation, but the first spank was rather mild. But Brett was quick to follow it with more, and it wasn't long before her backside was burning with the slow warm up he was giving her. She bore the sting and force of his hand stoically, not crying out or giving way to tears, hardly even flinching for that matter. She simply held on to his solid, strong knee, and listened to the crack of his flat palm against her bare bottom. She concentrated on the words he spoke as he spanked her, letting them burn into her mind for the future when she might need them.

"No more missed therapy sessions, young lady." Her husband told her, punctuating the sentence with an exclamation point of hard, ardent swats all focused on her sit spot. "You will attend every scheduled appointment, and I will go with you. And if you so much as think about weaseling out of just one, you'll be right back in this position getting your little behind good and smacked. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir...."

"Good." He gave her a few more heavy handed spanks to her sit spot, noticing how now she was having more trouble simply laying there and

accepting them so easily. Then he stopped, some ten minutes after he had begun.

"Alright, Lily. Stand up, please."

Lily got shakily to her feet with her husband's help, barely resisting the urge to touch her hot skin. She wasn't really surprised when Brett directed her back to the corner to think about this lesson and, he told her, to contemplate the one that was to come.

With her already reddened backside on display, Lily could think of little else than those two things. And when Brett called her out of the corner a little while later and asked her what she had learned, she had the right answer for him.

"I'm going to get the help I need at my therapy sessions," she said. He nodded his agreement. "And," she added, looking at him lovingly, "you're going to come with me to them."

He nodded again.

"That's my girl," he praised.

But the pillows were still piled on the bed, Lily saw.

"One last thing to deal with, Lily Marie," Brett said when he noticed where her eyes had strayed. "I want you to lay down across the pillows, baby."

She swallowed past the lump in her throat, digesting his words. She had known her punishment would be hard, but she hadn't thought he'd spank her twice. Yet, she knew in her heart that that hand spanking he'd just given her was hardly severe enough for the actions they were addressing.

When she was settled, her still pink, bare bottom propped up high on the pillows, she turned her head to the wall. "No, sweetheart, look at me a minute," her husband said.

Lily turned back to Brett and gulped as she watched him slowly taking his belt from the loops of his jeans. He'd never used his belt on her before, but had hinted once or twice that very dangerous behavior would earn her a good licking. Apparently, she'd earned such a one.

"Lily," Brett said and she forced her eyes up to his face. "I'm going to give you thirty-two licks with my belt – one for each year of the life you tried to toss away. I want you to count them out loud for me."

"Okay," she squeaked.

There was no more preamble. He started the whipping and each stroke from that wide, black length of sturdy leather fell hard on her vulnerable backside. She called out the count as instructed, along with her cries. He whipped her slowly, letting her absorb the full affect of each lick before pounding the next onto her bottom. The only sounds in the room were the 'swish-SLAP' of the leather in the air, then connecting with her bottom, and the sobbing call of the count.

Lily had never hurt so badly, but even as she cried and fought to lay still and accept her husband's punishment, she cherished each stroke of Brett's belt. She reminded herself with each one that it was for another year of her life. Certain years brought memories to the surface, like number twenty, when she and Brett had married, number twenty-three when she'd graduated college and started working towards her masters degree parts time. She thought of these, and many other times and how she had nearly put an end to any more like them to come in the future. She thought of how selfish she had been to try to end her life, and leave the husband she loved alone. And she thought of how lucky she was that Brett had forgiven her for that, and that she still had him, here, to give her what she needed. She swore to herself then and there that she would get the help she needed to move past all that had happened. He was right – she did have a lot of years left to live and she promised herself to make the best of them.

Brett forced himself to deliver each lick with the

same force and the same detachment. He pushed aside feelings of remorse as Lily's smooth, white skin grew crisscrossed with harsh red lines from the belt, then grew even redder overall. He wanted to stop and hold her in his arms, but he forced himself to mete out all thirty-two as promised.

When he was finished, he threw his belt down and stood over his wife, listening to her sobs and hating himself for causing her more tears. How could this help anything?

He sat gently on the edge of the bed, almost afraid to touch her. Finally he hesitantly stroked her tear dampened hair and rubbed her back. He couldn't even think of touching her bottom.

"God, Lily, I'm sorry," he said. His voice was hoarse.

She sniffled and dried tears from her face with one hand. She curled onto her side and rested her head in his lap, grasping his hand almost desperately and kissing it. "No. It's okay. Thank you, Brett. I love you, honey."

It had been so long since she'd told him that, though he hadn't doubted her feelings. He'd missed hearing the words, though. "Say that again."

She smiled and he traced that beautiful mouth with one finger. "I love you Brett Michelson." She looked up at him now. "I promise you I'm gonna get some help. And I'm going to get through this. You'll see."

"I'm sure I will." He leaned down and kissed her gently. "And just so you know, I'm going to help you get through it."

"Deal."

"What I'd like right now, though, is to make love to my wife. Cause it's been a long time. Are you up to that?"

She nodded, blushing a bit. She winced when she rolled over, though, and Brett quickly pulled her back to him so she was on her side again. He cuddled her next to him there.

"We can wait a bit, I think," he said. "We have the rest of our lives, after all."

Little Miss Secret: Part One

Jen Taylor stood with her back against the wall, watching the increasing numbers of people at the party as they mingled and chatted. She couldn't quite believe she was here, at her first spanking party... now if she could only work up her courage and peel herself off of this wall, she'd be on her way to her very first spanking experience.

That was proving harder and harder with every passing minute, however. Everyone seemed to know one another already, or at least everyone but her. Those who she'd been introduced to as newbies upon entering were obviously of the gregarious type, already walking around and introducing themselves. Not for the first time in her life, Jen wished that she could shed some of her customary shyness for just one night of comfortable extroverting. If she continued to hug the wall all night long, as it appeared she was doomed to do, all the primping she'd spent getting ready for this evening, not to mention the money she'd blown on her new outfit, was a waste.

She glanced down at the ensemble she'd chosen and frowned. She hadn't realized it before, but now that she was in the midst of the others at the soiree, she supposed she wasn't exactly dressed to catch the eye. While many of the other women wore more flashy, tempting outfits – leather and schoolgirl plaid seemed very popular, as well as little girl pinks and bright colors that drew the eye – Jen was dressed in a black rayon skirt and blouse set, demurely cut, that ran from the collar at her neck right down to her knee. The only risqué thing about her outfit was that she'd gone without pantyhose and slung on a pair of low heeled black sandals, from which her coral tipped toes peeked out. Her long brown hair was swept up and back from her face and clipped behind her with a barrette

that sported a bunch of artificial red rosebuds. Never one to wear much makeup, she'd opted only for a light basecoat of concealer and a touch of pink lip gloss. Given the setting, she'd doubted that she'd be needing any blush.

When she'd left her room twenty minutes ago, she'd been nervous but confident about her appearance. Now, looking around the room once more, she realized she didn't look much different than she normally did when she went in to work in the morning, with the exception of not wearing pantyhose. Ugh, she hated those things.

With a sigh and the glum realization that she'd probably be spending most of the evening right where she was, Jen lamented the fact that she'd come to the conclusion that this was the only way she'd find what she wanted in a man. Why couldn't she just find a nice spanking guy the old fashioned way? They said the best places to meet people were at church, the grocery store, or the Laundromat, but all the men Jen ran into in those places were already married, or gay. Her shyness made dating situations difficult, and the possibility of bringing up the spanking topic nearly impossible. And, while she was good at expressing herself in writing, she didn't feel safe placing a personal ad and meeting someone that way. And so she had come to conclude that this might be her best and safest bet.

Her thoughts strayed, as they usually did when she was thinking wistfully of living happily ever after with a spanking man, to Nate Shaffer. She'd had a crush on the man for nearly two years now, not that a thing had come of it, and if she had her choice of all the guys in the world, she'd choose him in a heartbeat. Nate was an outside contractor who did electrical work in the office building where Jen had been a secretary the last five years. She only saw him maybe once a week, but over the years they'd gotten to be on a friendly basis. He always

remembered her name and stopped to chat and flirt with her whenever he was in the building. Even though he was gorgeous in her opinion, something that normally would have left her stammering, Jen felt comfortable with Nate for two reasons. The first was that he'd initiated their interactions at first, and he was the one who flirted, she just sort of followed his lead. And, second, and more importantly, she knew he was engaged. That made it safe to talk with him, safe even to flirt with him. She knew she didn't have to worry about getting her hopes up over some simple flirting that meant nothing to him because she already knew he was taken. She didn't have to keep reminding herself that he was so far out of her league it wasn't even funny.

Nate... hmmm. With his slightly curly dirty blond hair and bright, laughing green eyes, he made her heart beat too fast every time she saw him, even though she knew better. His broad shoulders and tight, work conditioned frame filled out a pair of work jeans and a Shaffer's Electrical tee shirt quite nicely, giving her an eyeful every time he was in to redo some wiring. She could only imagine how wonderful it would feel to be kissed by his soft looking lips, to be held in his strong, capable arms... to be turned over his hard, unyielding lap...

Even though he was off the market, Jen couldn't help but wish in her heart that she could have Nate Shaffer – or at the very least, someone like him, with the spanking habit thrown in for good measure, of course. If only she could fast forward through all the difficult beginning stuff in a new relationship and get to the happily ever after part...

Softly, she snorted as she gave the diet coke in her hand a swirl. Dream on, girl, she thought.

With a sigh, she cast an eye around the room again, noting that it was nearly overflowing with people. She realized for the second time in as many months how wrong she'd been while growing up with her unusual interest, thinking all the while

that she was alone in what everyone one else would have considered weird fantasies. If this party, or the hundreds of spanking newsgroups and websites online, were anything to judge by, she stood in good company. Not only was the banquet hall nearly at capacity, but she'd already seen a few celebrities mulling around, two small stage actors and one radio personality. Though, of course, most everyone wore a name tag with a false name, which had been encouraged by the hostess as a safety precaution. Jen hadn't felt the need for that, though. Her name was common enough, and it wasn't like the tag included her last name, though that too was fairly common as well. If she was lucky enough to get spanked tonight, she didn't think that she'd remember to respond if her spanker called her by any other name than her own.

She bit back a nervous giggle at her last thought. Here she was at a party specifically held so people could spank and be spanked, hoping to be "lucky enough" to be on the receiving end of things, while countless children across the globe were simultaneously furtively wishing for the opposite. Life was ironic. But then again, some of those kids were like her, too, and like the tops here tonight. It had been her greatest desire ever since puberty, when she'd come across her first over the knee spanking scene in a beloved romance novel. And, now, here was her first real chance to experience it, and she was letting it slip away!

Angry with herself, she was just about to push away from the wall she'd been glued to all night to walk out into the crowd on her wobbly legs, when a familiar face across the room caught her eye. She gasped out loud as she stood on tiptoe for a better look and saw Nate walking across the room, right towards her, greeting people left and right as he came.

Oh, my God!

Unable to take her eyes off him, Jen stood

rooted to the spot, barely a step from her place holding up the wall before, staring at him. He was obviously a popular regular, for nearly everyone he passed seemed to know him already. The men turned to clap him on the back or shake his hand as he passed them, and the women – well, those he didn't pass by literally ran up to him, and they all wanted a hug or pressed a kiss on his smooth cheek, talking animatedly as they pressed up against him suggestively. A flame of jealousy sparked inside Jen's belly and burned there as she watched. Not that she could really blame those women. He looked more gorgeous than ever with his slightly curly blond hair slicked back from his handsome face, instead of mashed beneath a Shaffer Electric ball cap. His jaw line, so strong and straight, was shaved clean of its usual stubble. And, the Cardhardt carpenter jeans, red Shaffer Electric tee shirt and dirty work boots she normally saw him in were exchanged tonight for a dark grey tailored suit, spit shined black loafers, white dress shirt and tie. He was nearly breathtaking and seeing him dressed like that, suddenly she wasn't quite so surprised to find him here in this setting. He looked perfectly at home, in charge, so very different from the fun, flirting electrician that she knew.

Suddenly, he glanced up her way, as though he'd sensed her intense stare. His gaze fell right on her own, and her breath caught in her throat as a slow, dangerous smile broke over his face. He nodded once, a simple acknowledgement, and then he winked. The next thing she knew, he had disentangled himself from the woman who was currently vying for his attention, and was headed determinedly through the rest of the crowd, straight for her.

Jen's first instinct was to run, and given the amount of people he had to wade through to reach her, plus all the times he got waylaid by someone

along the way, she probably could have made a good get away. But, something stopped her from fleeing; maybe it was the nagging voice in her head, reminding her why she'd come here in the first place, not to mention all the fantasies she'd entertained over the past few years involving Nate and being over his knee. Here was her chance, after all – unless he turned out to be a bottom, the thought of which made her cringe.

More likely, though, the reason she stood stock still waiting for him to join her had more to do with the steady, steely gaze he directed her way every time he was forced to pause en route to her. She felt pinned to the wall by that gaze, on display for his inspection, all her secrets (or at least this one most important one) exposed, more vulnerable than she'd ever been before.

Eventually, after a small eternity, he came to a stop in front of her, and he smiled again, his green eyes twinkling in amusement. Jen swallowed back on the lump of nerves in her throat and offered a timid smile of her own.

"Well, well, Miss..." he paused and glanced at her name tag, frowning when he saw her real name scrawled there. Instead of using it, he said instead, "Little Miss Secret, that tag ought to say. Imagine my surprise to look up and see you over here."

Blushing, she glanced at his own tag, which read: 'Hi, my name is Troy, and I'm a top.' Beneath it, he had a pin, a product of the home spanking business, that read 'SMILE if you want a SPANKING.'

Abruptly, Jen felt her smile evaporate.

At least until she noticed his dark blue silk tie, printed with little cartoon Tom and Jerry's, chasing one another. Nate grinned approvingly when she giggled at the tie, reaching out to touch it briefly and smooth it down against his shirt. When she recovered from her giggles, her nerves slightly calmed from the release of laughter, she managed

to find her voice. "I'm as surprised as you are," she told him.

"Most pleasantly, though," he assured her. Jen nodded, gazing up at him with large eyes.

"So, is this your first party?" he asked. "I know I haven't seen you at one before."

"Yeah," she sighed. "It's my first. So far, very uneventful, though." One eyebrow lifted teasingly. "You sure seem to be a regular, though. You seem to be pretty well known."

Nate shrugged. "I've been coming to these for a few years now."

Suddenly, an awful thought occurred to Jen. "Is your fiancé here with you?" she forced herself to ask, voicing the ugly thought.

He took a deep breath. "No. Actually, we've broken the engagement."

"Really?" New nervousness and a flare of hope fought for supremacy in Jen's belly. "I'm sorry to hear that."

Liar, she thought.

Nate shrugged again. "Don't be. It was a mutual agreement to end things. We didn't want the same things from life. I'm just glad we had the sense to recognize that before we got married and brought children into the picture."

Not sure what to say, Jen simply nodded in understanding.

He surprised her by taking her hand. "Anyway, Little Miss Secret, enough about that. We're both here with one common activity in mind, I do believe, unless you've accidentally wandered into the wrong banquet hall..."

Smiling at his light teasing, she slowly shook her head, feeling the burn of a fresh blush on her face.

"Good. I know I can think of no one else I'd rather start the evening off with than you...So, if you'd like a breather from holding up the wall here, maybe you'd like to accompany me to my room upstairs...?"

Jen couldn't help chewing on her bottom lip, even though she knew it made her look like a ninny. She nodded her head.

"All right, then." He patted her hands, and for the first time she noticed his hands, the long elegance of his fingers, the tanned skin dusted with fine golden hairs. They were wide hands, strong, and slightly calloused and rough, no doubt from making his living with them. The light abrasion against her own soft skin was a welcome sensation. Everywhere he touched her left a tingling, foretelling warmth in its wake.

She had to pull herself out of her reverie when he placed her left arm through his right elbow and turned to lead her swiftly out of the room. Many pairs of eyes followed their progress.

Nate's room was on the third floor of the hotel, a cookie cutter square room like her own with two queen size beds and an adjoining bathroom. The noise and hubbub of the party two flights down was a memory up here, and Jen had the disconnected feeling of having stepped out of time.

She fidgeted beside the dresser as he set his key card on the nightstand by the bed, then went to the windows and closed the blinds.

"I don't usually bring party guests to my room," he told her as he turned back to face her. "But, considering that we know each other already, and it's your first time, I thought we'd be more comfortable here."

Jen nodded her agreement. "Yeah, I wouldn't have wanted my first... time to be in front of all those people."

Nate smiled softly at the way she skirted the sword. "Well, in this case, with me, you're safe. But, don't let me see you going off to anyone else's private room – it's really not a safe practice at these parties."

Again, Jen nodded, her heart fluttering a bit at the way he'd phrased his warning. It was on the tip of her tongue to challenge his words with an 'or what?', but then again, she already knew the answer to that.

Jen watched Nate turn the bedside lamps down one notch, shifted her weight from foot to foot. He looked up at her over one shoulder and grinned. "Nervous?"

"M-me?" she stammered, a bit too loudly. She cleared her throat and looked away, aware of heat crawling up her neck. "Oh, no."

Out of the corner of her eye she saw one golden eyebrow lift questioningly. "Never lie to a top, darlin,'" he advised lightly, moving now to clear the bed off, moving his suitcase to the floor by the window. "You've heard the phrase, 'liar, liar, pants on fire'? Well, we tend to take that warning to heart, if you catch my meaning."

Jen laughed nervously and admitted, "Well, okay, yeah... maybe I am a little nervous."

Nate nodded, now picking up a duffel bag from in front of one nightstand. Jen hadn't even noticed it before, but she was sure she knew what it held, judging from the bulkiness of it as he carried it over to the dresser and set it on top. Implements. She wasn't sure if she wanted to experience those yet.

"Perfectly normal," he remarked, referring to her nervousness. He glanced over one shoulder as he unzipped the duffel bag. Jen felt her eyes straining to see the contents of that bag, but from where she stood all she saw were the black folds of material. She realized she was holding her breath, waiting for him to remove something from the bag, but he didn't, just held her gaze for a tense moment, then turned around instead, grabbing the 'do not disturb' sign from the dresser. "Have you ever been spanked before?"

"N-no." She watched as he went to the door of the room and hung the sign on the outside knob,

then closed the door. When he turned back to her, he shrugged casually out of his suit jacket, and loosened his ridiculous cartoon tie with a tug of one muscular hand. Breathe, Jen, she thought frantically.

"Not even as a kid?"

She shook her head. Her eyes were now fixed on his tanned, muscular forearms as he revealed them with each twist and upward turn of first one shirt sleeve, then the other.

"You must have been a good kid," Nate remarked. He finished rolling up his shirtsleeves and turned his attention fully on her for the first time since they'd entered the room.

Jen shrugged, feeling uncomfortable with his sudden undivided attention. "I got sent to my room a few times when I was little, and I remember being threatened once or twice with a spanking, but I never did anything to really warrant it, I guess..."

He took her hand then and led her over to one of the beds, tugging her down to sit beside him. "What is it about the idea of being spanked that makes you want to experience it?"

She found she couldn't meet his gaze, and Nate let her eyes flit around the room as she tried to find the right words to answer his question. "I don't know, really. I can remember watching cartoons..." she touched his tie briefly, still not making eye contact, "Tom and Jerry, for one, where there'd be a spanking, and I'd be captivated by it. And when I got older, I read these trashy romance novels one summer that I'd found in my mom's closet, and the ones I loved the most had bratty heroines who sometimes got spanked." Jen shrugged. "It made me feel funny, you know? And, I started having dreams at night that I was the naughty heroine being spanked..." She laughed ruefully and shook her head. "God, this is so embarrassing!"

"No, don't be embarrassed, Jen," Nate scolded gently. "We all have similar memories, believe me.

Why do you think I own this tie?"

She met his eyes then, soft green, accepting, and smiled.

Nate squeezed her hand. "Is it a sexual fantasy for you? Does the idea of being spanked excite you that way?"

Jen felt like her entire body was blushing. She couldn't believe she was sitting here like this, discussing her most intimate secrets with someone – with this particular someone, especially. Looking down at the carpet, though, she slowly nodded her head.

Nate nodded beside her. "It is for me, too. It's one of the reasons that Nicole and I broke up, actually. She never understood..." he sighed. "Anyway, nothing sexual is going to happen here tonight. I didn't bring you up here for that, and I want you to understand that up front. No matter how aroused we might both get, I don't sleep with people at these parties, not even you. If, when we get back to the real world, we still want to keep seeing each other, and see then where things take us, then that's a different story. Agreed?"

"Yes. Of course. Thank you."

Nate nodded. Then he grinned wolfishly. "For right now, though, you are going to get your first spanking, young lady. And, I must say that I am honored to have the pleasure of being the first one to spank your lovely bottom. I must confess I've admired it from afar for a while now."

Jen rolled her eyes and snorted derisively. "Oh, please!"

He chuckled. "Don't degrade yourself, Miss Secret. That doesn't hold well with us tops, either." He cleared his throat and turned her chin to face him with one finger. "The way I see it, you've got three spankings coming from me, young lady," he informed her, tweaking her nose playfully when her eyes grew round and wide at his words. "The first will be a warm up, an initiation, a taste of what

you've been fantasizing about all these years. That one will be given with my hand over my knee, and you may keep all of your clothes on.

"The second will be a bit harder, given as a reminder to you that we are friends, perhaps even more than friends in the future, and friends do not keep secrets from one another. That one will also be over my knee, but your skirt will have to come up and I may choose to use something other than just my hand, depending on your behavior."

"I have to say I object to that second spanking," Jen interjected, surprised by her own boldness. "I'm not the only one who was keeping this interest a secret, you know. It's not like you ever announced to me that you had the spanking kink."

Nate nodded, a wry smile on his face. "True, true, all true. But little details like that are a moot point in this setting, darlin', because, you see, I'm the top, and you're the bottom. I'm the spanker here, and you're the one getting spanked. I decide what to spank you for, for how long, where, and with what..."

"And if I disagree with that?"

He shrugged. "Usually, I'd talk it over with you, and we'd find a compromise. But, not on this issue. Because if I'd known all this time that this pretty girl I was flirting with at work was a bottom, I wouldn't have wasted so much time trying to save my doomed relationship with Nicole. No matter how long I'd been with her. I was already attracted to you, and the spanking connection would have decided it for me, then and there. I would have poured on all my charm with you and been halfway towards winning you by now instead of just beginning."

Stunned, Jen just sat blinking at him in shocked silence, her objections forgotten. She nearly told him the truth, then, that it wasn't the beginning at all... he'd won her heart a long time ago, without even consciously trying, and without ever knowing.

"So, in this instance," Nate continued, "you either accept what I'm offering – all three parts – or you don't, and there's the door."

Jen considered this a moment, then found her voice somewhere deep inside her chest. "There are a lot of people in this community who would say in this instance I should take the door."

Nate nodded. "You're right. If any other top were to tell you what I just did, I'd say damn right, run for that door. But this is me, and you know – you know – that I will not hurt you."

Jen smiled crookedly. "Well, except for the whole spanking thing. I've heard that can sometimes hurt a little."

He grinned back. "Sometimes, yeah. In a good way, usually. But, I think you know what I mean here. You can trust me not to harm you. And, not to hurt you emotionally."

"Yeah," she agreed. "I know that." She took a deep breath and met his gaze straight on. "So, what's the third spanking all about?"

"That's for this," he flicked her name tag with a fingernail and fixed her with a stern, heavy gaze. "Never, ever use your real name at one of these parties, Jen. It's not safe, no matter how many people are here or how many Jens you think there are in this hotel. There are ways that some of the less than safe people can find out who you are at these parties, and then they can get to you at home or at your job. It's just plain not safe. You make up a name, and you stick with it and never, ever give out your real name to someone unless you know them very, very well. Got it?"

Ears burning from the lecture, Jen nodded. "I got it." She looked up at him hopefully. "Does that mean we can skip spanking number three, since I got it?"

Nate made a grumbling, growling noise in answer to her question and shook his head. "Nice try, but no. Spanking three will be pretty hard,

though I will go easier on you than I would someone else with more bottom experience. But, it will be on your bare butt, and it will be given with an implement. And, you should know, it will hurt."

Jen sat there for a moment, just looking at him, letting his words sink in.

When a few moments had passed, Nate drew a deep breath. "Those are my terms. The decision's yours, but I sure hope to hell that they won't mean that I'm going to lose you now when I've just found the real you."

"No," Jen said immediately. "I'm not going anywhere. I agree to your terms."

A boyish grin lit up Nate's face and he pulled her hand up to his lips to press a light kiss on her palm. "Good, then let's get started, hmm?"

Little Miss Secret: Part Two

And, so it was that Jen found herself lying face down across Nate's muscular thighs, blushing furiously as his large hand stroked the shape of each of her buttocks through the thin rayon material of her skirt.

"You must work out," he commented appreciatively.

She made a sound of derision in response. "Not nearly as much as I should."

"You're tight," he insisted, and the way that the words fell so huskily from his throat had a definite sexual underscore. "Muscular. And small." Jen snorted again indelicately, feeling self conscious in too many ways to count and not sure how to react to his compliments. "Yet still soft, and feminine. I like it." Nate squeezed her gently now, and she had to bite back a moan of sudden, sharp pleasure.

"Are you ready?" he asked a moment, later, still stroking and squeezing and touching.

"I...I think so..."

"All right, then..." And then he raised his hand, and Jen felt the sudden loss of contact, and her belly flip-flopped. She resisted the urge to look back over her shoulder at the descent of that hand, and squeezed her eyes shut instead, waiting. A millisecond later, she felt his open palm thump down right across the center of her bottom, accompanied by the sound of hard flesh against clothed skin. The swat wasn't all that hard, but it made her jump anyway.

Nate allowed her to absorb the effect of the first spank before he gave her the next, this time on the fullness of her right bottom cheek. A third swat fell barely a second later on her left cheek, and so began a pattern of center – right – left, each smack of moderate force and given at least a second apart.

"Tell me," he requested as he worked, "in your

fantasies, do you get lectured? Scolded?"

Too embarrassed and overwhelmed by her emotions to speak, Jen could only nod.

"Would you like me to do that?" the question was asked casually, as if he was inquiring if she would like a cocktail at a party. Yet, she knew that he realized the importance of her answer, because it would help to create her full spanking fantasy. Slowly, ducking her face down towards the bedspread, she nodded her head.

Never changing his pace or pattern, all the while smacking her bottom and watching her reaction, Nate began: "What a naughty little girl you are, bent over my knee, needing your little bottom smacked! I thought you were such a good girl, Jen, but now that I know the truth, I can see that I'm going to have my hands full just keeping you out of trouble! Best thing in the world for a bad girl is getting her naughty little bottom warmed up good and hot. And, if need be, I'll just toss you over my knee every single day for a good dose of old fashioned discipline..."

He paused for a moment, though his hand still clapped out its cadence against her skirted backside. He watched in silence the way Jen's bottom rose slightly to his hand, the way her neck was arched, and her mouth curled into a half smile. Every time his hand connected with her bottom, she made a soft mewling sound, and subconsciously rubbed her pelvis against his knee. He smiled, then he asked softly, "How was that, little one?"

Jen's voice sounded far away, even to her own ears. "It was perfect."

Even though she couldn't see him, she knew he was smiling. "I've had some practice at these parties," he said, answering the question she'd had in her head. "And I've learned from the stories on the web, of course."

She nodded her head.

"Does it feel good, baby?" he asked, pausing the

spanking to glide his hand over her bottom, feeling the warmth even through her clothes. "Sometimes, the reality doesn't live up to the fantasy. People don't realize that it hurts, or sometimes they might want it to hurt more..."

"It feels good," she assured him, touched that he would even bother to ask. "It smarts a little, not too much, though. I...I think I could take it a little harder, even. Not that I'm complaining. I... feel very good right now."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that. I didn't want to scare you off, so I was trying to be a little gentle... this is more the kind of spanking I would use as foreplay, though of course you wouldn't have any clothes on if that's what its purpose was..."

They were silent for a few moments, both engrossed in the mental images his words provoked, and Nate silently berating himself for saying his thought out loud after he'd already said there would be no sexual activity between them tonight. It was too late to call the words back, though, and he found himself making the situation worse by tracing one long finger of his right hand slowly up the valley between her two bottom cheeks. Shivers of pleasure swept down her spine at the unexpected touch.

"I am aroused," she admitted to him impulsively, feeling brave for saying the words out loud. She even looked briefly up at him over her shoulder, smiling shyly.

He chuckled and patted her skirted bottom. "Good. Then, I would say it's time for part two."

A swirl of emotions fought in her stomach at his words and their meaning. But, before she had a moment to decide which emotion was the highest, she felt his fingers at the hem of her skirt, bunching the material, then slowly raising it up and over her hips to lay in a cluster of folds at the base of her spine, just above her waist.

A shiver coursed through her as his hand passed

ever so lightly over her pinkened bottom, encased in only a pair of peek-a-boo white lace panties that had cost entirely too much. Much to her delight, as she was laying beneath his gaze, worrying about his opinion of her nearly naked lower half, he let out a low, long whistle, just once, and whispered the words, "Just beautiful."

Jen had to hide her face, she was so embarrassed, and conversely pleased.

"Your panties are virginal," he commented huskily, his hand smoothing over her cheeks once more, then down over the back of one bare thigh and calf. "But, you forgot to wear hose, as a lady would."

"I hate wearing pantyhose," she explained meekly, hearing the lame whine of the excuse in her own ears. "And, garters are even more uncomfortable." She had to express a sigh as his hand skimmed back up her opposite calf and thigh, ending where it had begun on her lace covered behind.

"Just as I was saying earlier," he said, shaking his head and abruptly the warmth of his hand left her skin, only to return a moment later with a loud SMACK!! SMACK!! "You truly are a most" SMACK!! SMACK!! "naughty girl at heart!"

Jen gasped at the increased heat in his spansks now that the skirt no longer covered her bottom. The flimsy lace panties, while pretty, were hardly any protection from his hard, flat hand at all.

While she realized this, however, and at the same time was aware that the speed of his slaps and the force he was putting behind them had increased, she was also aware that the rising heat and increased sting, all the while combined with his low scolding tone, was only serving to make her more aroused. Even as she bucked and hissed under his punishment, she was ever more aware of the growing ache between her legs and the slight abrasion to her peaked nipples whenever they

rubbed against her blouse.

After a few dozen of these meaty swats, Nate told her to stand up and go over to the duffel bag on the counter. On legs shaky with both desire and trepidation, she obeyed, carefully covering herself in front with her skirt but being sure to keep her skirt up off her bottom as he'd instructed her. Over the dresser was a mirror and she longed to turn around and see just how red she was getting from his ministrations. She could literally feel the waves of heat rising where her hands rested at her waist, holding up her skirt.

"Bring me the rectangular hairbrush, please," Nate asked, watching her carefully.

Jen saw the brush quickly, as it sat near to the top of the bag. Not wanting to look too closely at the rest of the bag's contents, she snatched up the brush, noticing the hard mahogany wood, the cool, smooth, flat surface of its back, and the soft, clean bristles, obviously never having seen a person's locks. She brought the implement quickly back to him and handed it over with a tremulous hand.

Nate accepted it from her and set it beside him on the bed. His green eyes met her brown ones in seriousness for a moment as he asked, "You remember your safe word?"

Jen took his hand as he helped her back over his lap. She closed her eyes briefly, knowing why he was asking this now. Slowly, she nodded her head.

"What is it, then?" he asked and she felt him circle the flat end of the brush around first one pantied cheek, then the other.

"Elmo," she answered, then giggled. It still seemed like a silly safe word to her, but he had insisted she think of one that she'd remember, as well as one that was something she normally wouldn't just shout out reflexively, like "stop." All bottoms say 'stop' or similar things at one point in a spanking or another, Nate had insisted. It didn't always mean that was really what they wanted the

top to do.

CRACK! "I don't know what you think is so funny?!" CRACK! "I see very little amusing about a naughty little girl who needs her fanny hair-brushed!" CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

"Oh! Ow! Oh, my God, that hurts!"

CRACK! CRACK! "Damn straight, missy! It's supposed to hurt. Just like it hurts others when you keep secrets from them, now isn't that right?" CRACK! CRACK!

"Oww!" Jen's legs were now scissoring wildly behind her and as another hard slap caught her right in the center of her backside, she couldn't help but buckle to one side in a half-hearted attempt to get away. "Right, right! Anything you say! Ow!"

She noticed a change in the severity of his blows after that. While he still gave her a full, sharp crack of the brush each time, none of them were as heavy as those first dozen had been. Still, they managed to steal her breath each time, and her breath hitched with each new slap to her already sore bottom.

"I want you to promise me, right this minute, Jennifer Taylor, that there will be no more secrets between us. Got that?"

"Yes!" She sang, jumping half off his lap as another clap of the brush connected with her battered skin. "I promise! I don't have any more secrets, anyway! Oh, Nate, please no more! Aieow!! Oh, please..."

CRACK! CRACK! "Very well, then. I imagine you've learned your lesson, here. And, as you pointed out earlier, I kept the very same secret, so I suppose it's only fair to let you off here...." CRACK! CRACK! "...and now."

Jen practically bit her tongue off holding in her opinion that what truly would have been fair was for her to not have been spanked for her secret – or, if he'd insisted on spanking her, he should have gotten the same treatment. She told herself she

was too exhausted to argue with him anymore, anyway, though really she just didn't want any more of the hairbrush right now, especially when she still didn't know what was to come from her third spanking. The fact that his large, work roughened hand was now massaging her battered bottom, and the heat from her spanking was spiraling down between her legs had nothing to do with it.

"You took that well, darling," Nate told her quietly as he continued to rub her cheeks. "Would you like to take a peek at your bottom?"

Slowly, Jen nodded and smiled wearily when he helped her up. When she looked over her shoulder in the mirror, she gasped out loud at the bright red hue that shone right through her lace panties. Gingerly, she fingered her tender flesh, wincing and, at the same time, moaning a little in pleasure.

From the bed, Nate grinned at her antics. After watching her a few minutes longer, he said, "All right, young lady, that's enough. I want your nose in that corner there, right now. Ten minutes. No rubbing, no fidgeting, no moving from that spot. And, while you're there, you'd better think of a pseudonym for when we go back down to the party."

Ten minutes seemed like an eternity for Jen as she stood in the corner with her nose pressed into the crease of the two walls, especially when Nate told her he'd be right back and then left the room. Even though she knew the do not disturb sign was still on the door, and even though she knew he would give his key to no one else, she still felt the hairs on the back of her neck stand on end, imagining someone coming in here to discover her in her corner, her panties drawn down just enough by his hand before leaving to reveal the round, redness of her battered behind.

She had to acknowledge that she was certainly getting more than she'd bargained for when she first signed up for this party. Though, she knew she certainly wouldn't have gone this far with someone she didn't know, even if he'd been more attractive than Nate. She was nervous about the third spanking, though, knowing he'd promised to be hard on her, and knowing how seriously he took her careless mistake of using her real name on her tag.

At ten minutes on the nose, according to Jen's wristwatch, Nate came back in the room. When she stayed in the corner, nose pressed tight in the crevice, her hands still holding up her skirt in the back, he nodded approvingly and said quietly, "My, my, what a difference a good spanking can make in a naughty little girl..."

Jen smiled into the corner, the place between her legs that was already swollen and damp from her time over his knee now pulsing just at his words. The man certainly knew just what to say and do to arouse her.

Behind her, she could hear him rummaging around in the duffel bag, and she fidgeted slightly at the sound, wondering what he was selecting to use on her butt. After a small lifetime, he cleared his throat and stepped up behind her, scraping her lace panties up roughly over her punished bottom flesh until the elastic snapped smartly into its proper place at her hips. She gasped at the sudden sensations and glanced worriedly over one shoulder at him.

Then he took her hand and, with a slight turn of his head, indicated for her to follow him.

"I noticed when you brought me the hairbrush that you were very reluctant to touch anything in my bag of tricks, so I took the liberty of selecting a few items for you to choose from for your third spanking. I wouldn't want any of my implements to get fresh and bite you, as it seemed you feared earlier." He gave her a warm, joking smile.

"They're only to bite your bottom, not your fingers, you see."

Jen rolled her eyes at his attempt at a joke and took a deep breath as they stopped at the dresser again. For a moment, she was struck by the sight of them in the mirror above the table, at the comparison she saw there between them. She was all disheveled, hair wild and askew from her barrette from thrashing around over his lap, her face flushed, her eyes wide. Her clothes were slightly cockeyed from being jostled during the spanking. She noticed with a blush that her nipples were tight little pebbles beneath her blouse, very visible through the thin material. Nate, on the other hand, still seemed the picture of calm and reserve, his dress shirt hardly creased from his exercises with her over his lap. The only sign that he was enjoying their evening as much as she was the brightness in his eyes and the smile tugging at the sides of his mouth as he gestured with one hand to the dresser top before them, drawing her eyes away from the mirror to the task at hand with one softly spoken command, "Choose one."

Three implements had been laid out for her inspection: a black leather paddle about the size of the hairbrush he'd used earlier, a long, heavy looking wooden paddle that reminded her of the type used in fraternity scenes in movies, and a brown strap, about sixteen inches long, made of supple leather.

"You'll be getting twenty five hard smacks with whatever you chose," Nate informed her softly, still standing close enough to her that she felt the warm sweep of his minty breath from time to time on her brow.

With trembling hands, she picked up each implement, testing its weight, feeling its power. The leather of the strap was soft and buttery, obviously expensive, and the quality of it called to her. Finally, she turned to him with the strap still in

hand, and he took it from her with a wink.

Jen followed Nate back to the bed then, and stood before him when he took both her hands in his own.

"This one will hurt," he told her seriously. "I won't lie to you. Do you remember your safe word?"

Jen smiled and nodded, "Yes. Elmo."

He smiled too. "Normally, if you and I were involved in a domestic discipline relationship, Jen, you wouldn't be able to safe word out of a spanking for something this reckless. But, since we are not in that type of relationship," the word 'yet' hung in the air as he paused, "and given that tonight is your first experience with spanking, you may certainly use your safe word if you need to. I don't want to ruin this night for you, so I want you to safe word if you need me to stop. Understand?"

Jen nodded again, touched by his concern. "I understand."

"Good." He reached up under her skirt then and found the waistband of her panties. While she blushed hotly under his unwavering gaze, his hands made fast work of rucking down her underwear till they puddled on top of her feet. "Step out of those, please."

Jen obeyed, using his shoulders for support and kicking the discarded undergarment to one side. Then, with a quivering stomach, she allowed him to guide her over one knee this time, his other strong leg pinning her legs between his own. Uh-oh, she thought, recognizing the position from numerous stories as one used for particularly hard spankings to minimize the bottom's struggles.

Nate lifted her skirt and layered it on her back. "You do have a beautiful little bottom, Jen," he told her huskily, stroking her heated skin lightly with his fingertips. She allowed herself to be lulled by his touch for a moment, forgetting temporarily what was coming.

She'd barely murmured a thank you for his complement before the first snap of the strap fell – hard – on her upturned bottom, right in the center of both naked cheeks. Jen let out a howl of pain.

"Protecting your identity at these parties is very important!" Nate scolded angrily as he delivered two more hard licks, one to each of her cheeks with just the tip of the supple leather. "There are shady characters here just like at any other social function," SNAP!

CRACK! "the difference being that sometimes the ones here" S-S-SNAPP! SNAP!! "already have a taste for hurting people."

Jen bucked and writhed with each fall of the leather, gasping and clawing at the bedspreads. The heat from the limber strap was unbelievable, and each new stinging snake-like recoil made tears prick her eyes.

"Oh – ow – not so hard – Nate – please – ohh!" she chattered nonsensically, trying unsuccessfully to dodge his unerring aim.

"Did you or did you not know beforehand about the rule here to always" SSS-NAPPP!!! "use a false name?" SSNAPP!

"I did! I'm sorry! I knew better!" Jen squeaked.

"Damn right, you did!" SSNAPP!

"Oh, Nate, that hurts!"

"Not as much as if someone got your name and followed you home!" SNAPP! SNAPP! "I do not want to find out about someone breaking into your apartment," SNAPP! "and hurting you" SNAPP! "any" SNAPP! "way" SNAPP! "they want to!" SSNAPP! SNAPP!

His words brought the reality of the possibility home for Jen, and the tears began to slowly spill over her cheeks.

"I know women it's happened to!" Nate told her harshly, giving her another round of particularly hard licks. "And, I want you to promise me you'll

never again be so careless!"

"I promise, Nate," Jen sobbed. "I swear. I'm sorry. Oh!" The last four licks whipped down rapidly, despite her fast agreement, and Jen was sure her bottom had to be literally smoldering behind her. By the time Nate was through, Jen was gasping for air and spent.

Nate cast the strap aside and helped her to sit up, then nearly lost his own seat when she launched herself into his arms.

"I'm sorry! I didn't think and... Oh my God!" Jen jumped up as her sore backside hit the mattress, and he chuckled.

Nate stood up then and took her back into his arms, his hands reaching down to rub some of the fire from her nether cheeks. "Shh, honey," he murmured. "It's okay, now. I know you're sorry. It's all over now."

Jen allowed herself to be placated a while, enjoying the feel of his arms around her, his hands on her bottom, his chest beneath her face. "That spanking really hurt," she told him, eventually, pouting up at him a little.

"Good!" he told her, leaning back from their hug to give her a stern, serious look. "I meant it to."

She studied him quietly a moment, and he held her gaze. Finally, he continued, "And now that you know how seriously I take such things, and what the consequences would be for you were we in a relationship, I suppose you'd like to leave now, like Nicole did."

Jen studied him a moment longer, noting the beauty in his face, despite the sadness now there. She touched his cheek with her hand and slowly shook her head. "No," she said. "I don't want to do that at all, Nate. I've wanted you for as long as I've known you, damn it, even before I knew you were the spanking man of my dreams. So, no, I don't want to go. What I want is for you to kiss me. Can you handle that, you big lug?"

Nate grinned. "Careful with the name calling, young lady, you might find yourself back over my knee for that..." he warned playfully.

"Just where I plan on being for as long as you'll have me," she whispered just before his mouth closed over hers in a kiss so warm it was a close rival for the heat of her backside and the fire in her heart.

When they broke apart, Nate cleared his throat. "You, um, want to go back to the party?"

Blushing, Jen shook her head. "I'd rather stay here, and make love to you..." she ventured.

Nate sighed heavily. "I already told you, honey, I don't ever do that at a spanking party. There's too much emotion going already. And, besides that, I'd like to save some of your secrets for another day."

Jen sighed too, but smiled and took his hand. "Okay, then, I guess we could go back to the party, although I'm going to want to visit the venders and dance as much as possible, to avoid sitting too much."

Nate laughed at that. "It's a deal. But, first, you have a new nametag to fill in, missy. I went down and got you one while you were in the corner."

Jen went to the nightstand where Nate had left the blank nametag. She accepted the red magic marker he handed her, and with a smirk on her face, scrawled the following across the surface of the tag: Little Miss Secret.

Peering over her shoulder, Nate let out a roar of laughter. He was shaking his head as she turned back towards him, smoothing the tag onto her shirt.

"Well, come on then, Miss Secret," he encouraged, holding out his hand. "You've got new friends to make."

Evolution of a Country Princess: Part One

Grace Kelly Benson crouched lower in the overgrown shrubs and grasses that surrounded the perimeter of Jimmy Valentine's property. Her pale blue eyes darted with every shift in the wind, and every tiny sound pricked her ears as she waited to make her move. As she watched, the remaining light in the front of the run down house blinked off, and she was left in the cool, dense darkness of the early spring night.

Never one to waste time, Grace immediately sprinted across the pasture that separated her from Jimmy's barn. Outside the weathered structure she paused to catch her breath and briefly turn her nose up at the conditions that White Lightning was living in. On account of her. Poor horse.

Shaking her head, Grace eased the side door open and let herself into the barn, mentally amending her ever-changing definition of herself. At the ripe age of twenty-six she'd evolved into many things so far. As a kid, she'd been a princess, a brat, and a pest. As a teenager, she'd blossomed into a rebel, a tomboy, and a daredevil. And now as an adult, she'd added gambler, sore loser and, tonight, thief – all in the last week.

The interior of the barn was dark, though surprisingly well cleaned, if her nose was any good judge. Grace allowed herself a skeptical 'humph' at the thought, and concluded that she must have just caught Jimmy on a good day when he'd actually cleaned up. She sorely doubted the man usually kept a neat, clean place for his animals. The house he lived in was an eye sore, and he was often so scruffy looking himself she wondered when his last shave and shower might have been. Not that Grace Benson preoccupied herself with thoughts of Jimmy Valentine in the shower, of course. She had her standards, after all, and Jimmy fell far, far too short to ever be a contender.

Grace dug into the front pocket of her snug blue jeans till she found the lighter she'd tucked inside before leaving her house that night. With a brief glance over her shoulder to be sure the door she'd just used to let herself inside was closed, she flicked the lighter and swept the resulting flame around in front of her in an arc, taking in the stalls before her, the tack on the walls, the tightly closed feed barrel and the blank, staring horses, two of them, snuffling impatiently through their noses at her.

"Hey there, White Lightning," Grace whispered, quickly crossing over to the giant, pure white stallion in the stall to her right. "Boy, am I glad to see you again." She scratched the huge horse's nose with just the tips of her fingers and giggled softly as he briefly closed his eyes in enjoyment.

"You here to burn my barn down?"

Grace nearly jumped out of her skin at the unexpected, deep drawl that crept out of the shadows in the room and seemed to crawl right up the back of her neck and into her ears. She spun around in a frantic lurch and very nearly dropped her lighter in the process, which would, ironically, have resulted in exactly that which she'd just been accused of.

In the far corner of the barn, right inside the door she'd just used herself, stood Jimmy Valentine, leaning up against the wall, one booted foot crossed over the other, his well-muscled arms folded over his wide chest as he studied her in the semi-darkness. Even with the distance between them, Grace could see the laughter in his piercingly intelligent hazel eyes. She could see the rough stubble on his chin and the way his nearly shoulder-length brown hair was mussed, like he'd had a tough day working with Lightning. She really hoped that he had. Nothing would give her more satisfaction.

Of course, not even that idea was enough to keep Grace from noticing the delicious way he

smelled, even from halfway across the room. Why did she have to notice that every single time she came across the blasted man, anyway? She swore it was that unnerving little detail that had cost her White Lightning in that damn poker game in the first place.

"No, Jimmy," she said regally, her nose already up in the air a few notches higher than it had been a moment earlier. She turned back to Lightning with a sharp snap of her feet, hoping he got the message that she was not about to negotiate the terms she was about to set with him. "I'm taking Lightning back home where he belongs."

"Oh no, you're not, Princess Gracie," Jimmy corrected her sharply, striding over to her in what seemed like two huge steps. Grace blinked up at him and tried to not grind her teeth at the nickname he'd used for her ever since they'd been kids in the same Sunday school, where Jimmy had perpetually sat behind her and pulled her long, bright blond ponytail. "I won that horse fair and square from you Friday night. He's mine now. *This* is where he belongs."

Grace put her hands on her hips and glared at Jimmy. "He's a prize winning stallion, Jimmy! My father is going to have a heart attack if he comes home and finds out Lightning is over here with you!"

Jimmy's eyes glittered dangerously. "Now, I'm not good enough for a horse, huh?" he muttered darkly. He stared her down for a moment, and Grace felt low for the way she'd phrased her last sentence. "I didn't force you to put the horse up for collateral in that poker game, Princess. You did that all on your own. It's not my fault he wasn't yours to play with. So, you just run on home and face the music with Daddy Warbucks. I'm sure this little loss won't bankrupt him. And, as far as a poor slob like me having that horse, you'll both just have to find a way to suck it up and live with it. 'Cause

Lightning's not going anywhere."

"Look, I'll pay you for him," Grace bargained. "How much do you want?"

"He's not for sale," Jimmy hissed, leaning in closely to her face. "Not everything in the world has a price tag on it, Princess. Besides, I don't know that I'd trust your money. You seemed pretty tapped out to me the other night at that poker game. Otherwise, why would you have bet a horse you don't even own?"

Grace sighed and pushed her hands into the back pockets of her jeans. "I had a really good hand. I thought it was a sure thing. And I really need the money so I can get out on my own and away from my father."

Jimmy studied her quietly for a few moments. "He's that hard to live with, is he?"

Grace looked away from him and tried to distract her thoughts from her father by petting Lightning's nose. "He's not easy."

"You... um..." He cleared his throat. "If it's that bad, you could always come here. Stay here, I mean..."

Grace turned back to him, her eyes round and huge. "With *you*?" she asked, incredulous.

He shrugged sheepishly. "I'd sleep on the couch," he offered.

All she could do was just blink at him. She knew what psychologists said about boys who picked on little girls, that secretly they really just liked the girls and didn't know the right way to show it so they pulled their ponytails or beat them at poker. But she'd never really thought it applied to their situation.

"I... don't know what to say to that," she finally hedged slowly. She could see that he was embarrassed now, red around the collar of his tee shirt. He probably wished he'd never voiced the thought. "I don't think it would come to that, but it's really nice of you to offer."

Jimmy nodded once, curtly. "Sure, no problem."

Grace sighed. "I really need to bring Lightning home, Jimmy. I'm going to be out on my ass if I don't."

He shrugged. "We just determined that's not a real problem, though, didn't we?"

"Come on, there must be some deal we can make here, Jimmy. There was to be something you want more than this horse. If it's not money, what is it?"

Slowly, as her stomach knotted, she watched as Jimmy Valentine's bedroom hazel eyes traveled lazily down her body. And a white-hot surge of heat swept over her skin in the wake of his gaze.

"Now that you mention it, I guess there might be a thing or two I'd be willing to trade you for that horse," he drawled as his gaze came slowly back up to her own.

"What?" Grace asked, and she realized she was holding her breath as she waited for his answer.

"You." He said simply and the knot in her stomach unfurled like a fist with the word, then dropped with a lurch all the way down to her toes.

"Me?" she squeaked. "I... I-I-I don't und-d-derstand..."

"I want you to go out with me. On a date," he clarified slowly, as if he was speaking to a dim-witted child.

"Why... why would you want that, of all things?" she questioned nervously. "I...I'll give you anything you want. Why would you ask for that?"

He shrugged. "'Cause I've wanted it for a long time now. As long as I can remember."

Grace could feel her eyes growing big again. "You have?"

He grinned at her now, a little wolfishly. "Yup. Ever since we were kids and I used to pull your ponytail in Sunday school." He watched her squirm under his gaze, and the grin broadened. "Want to know what else I want?"

Grace gulped. No, not really, she didn't. But she had to get Lightning back.

"What's that?"

"I want to spank you."

If Grace thought her eyes had gotten huge earlier, it was amazing that this time they didn't overgrow their sockets and fall right out of her head. For a few speechless moments it was all she could do to stand there and gape at him as he smirked back at her.

"E-E-Excuse me?" she stammered.

Jimmy chuckled at her reaction and to her horror Grace felt the surface of her skin warm at the sound. Sounding very much like a patient parent explaining a difficult concept to a tiny child, he repeated those same five words again.

"You... you can't be serious," Grace said, shaking her head at him in disbelief and noticing for the first time in her life how very *large* and... *capable* his hands looked.

He simply nodded his head as if what he wanted was as normal as asking for a glass of water on a hot summer day. "I'm very serious," he assured her. "You want your horse back, you go out with me on a date. At the end of the night, I get to light a fire on your fanny. That's the deal. You take it or leave it."

"That's the weirdest thing I've ever heard!" Grace complained. "Why would you want to... to... to do that?"

"Which?" he asked pointedly, and that annoying grin was plastered across his ruggedly handsome face again.

"Well, *either*, really," she clarified, brows furrowed. "I don't understand either one, honestly."

Jimmy cocked his head at her. "You don't understand why someone would want to go out on a date with you, Gracie? When was the last time you took a look in the mirror, girl?"

Though the compliment wasn't doled out in the manner in which she was used to, Grace still found herself blushing a little under his attentive gaze.

"So, that's it? Just because you think I'm... pretty?" she pressed, not really understanding why she kept pushing him for more.

"That's part of it. But it's always been more than just that." He shrugged. "I don't know. We've never been friends, exactly, but I've always felt something between us. A charge. I just want the chance to explore it a little. See if you feel it too. We're really from different worlds, and I figure this is likely to be my one and only chance to get to do this."

Grace nodded. "You're probably right about that."

He watched her silently for a few moments. "As far as the spanking goes," he finally said, bringing up the topic that he apparently knew she wasn't going to on her own. "I've been itching to take you over my knee for years now. For all the better-than-you looks I've been on the receiving end of, and for all the trouble you used to get me into at school for picking on you. And it's something that's a part of all of my relationships with women. So I guess I'm figuring that if you do somehow feel what I feel when we have the date, then you ought to know how a spanking feels, too. Because if you're in a relationship with me, you're bound to be on the receiving end often enough. I don't want there to be any secrecy about it."

"You spank your girlfriends?" Grace questioned incredulously.

Jimmy gave her that casual shrug again, as if to say 'doesn't everybody?'

"That's.... barbaric!" she hollered. "What are you, a caveman?!"

"I guess I am an old fashioned guy," he said. "But you'd be surprised how many men out there still spank their wives. It's not as weird as you

might think. Do an internet search sometime."

Grace huffed grumpily.

"Anyway, that's my offer. The choice is yours. What's Daddy Warbucks going to do when he finds out you lost Lightning to me?" Jimmy's hazel eyes watched her closely as Grace considered her options. "Take the lesser of the two evils."

Squeezing her eyes shut, crossing her fingers behind her back and hoping for the best, Grace opened her mouth and gave Jimmy her answer.

The next evening was Friday and that was when they decided to have their date. Grace was immensely grateful that her father was still away on business so that he wasn't there when Jimmy came to pick her up. Not that she cared what her father thought of her or the people she chose to keep company with. But something inside her wanted to protect Jimmy from seeing the scorn that would have surely been in her father's eyes had he been present that evening.

She was nervous about the 'date,' to say the least. She didn't know Jimmy Valentine all that well, for all that they had grown up in the same town and gone to the same church. That had been a twist of fate, because her mother had insisted she get a good church education as well as a good scholastic one. And as her mother had been Baptist and her father an atheist, she had been brought up in the same Baptist church her mother had. Otherwise, her exposure to Jimmy would have been even less.

In any event, she'd spent very little time with Jimmy on a one to one basis. She was a little worried about what they would talk about. If they would have enough in common to keep up a conversation for more than a few minutes, even. Usually when they met up, they spoke to one another only to argue. She still couldn't fathom why he'd asked for this date thing, anyway. White Lightning was worth millions. How could a single

date with her even begin to compare to that?

Of course, there was the whole spanking thing too. She supposed that might be worth a great deal to Jimmy, considering the way she'd behaved towards him in the past. Maybe that was all he really wanted out of this evening, and the rest was just icing on the cake. He could watch her squirm all night long, worrying over the spanking to come, and then enjoy that to the fullest at the end of the evening.

Regardless of his reasons for the whole thing, it was sure to be a very long night.

Grace wasn't even sure how to dress for the evening and very nearly found herself calling her 'date' to ask. But then she thought better of it and figured she could always make a quick change when he showed up if she was over or under dressed compared to him. So she selected two outfits, one dressy and one casual, then showered and changed into the casual one. The dress she pulled over her head was simple with a skirt that reached just below her knee, a sweetheart neckline and capped sleeves. She slipped a pair of leather sandals on her feet and pulled her long, gleaming white-blond hair back from her face with a barrette. Though she found herself wondering why she was doing it, Grace even took the time to spritz herself with a light mist of perfume, then applied a touch of makeup to her face. It was something she rarely took the time to do, but she realized it was worth the effort when she was finished and gazing at the person before her in the mirror.

She smiled a moment, thinking of Jimmy's answer when she'd asked him why he wanted to go out with her. *When was the last time you took a look in the mirror, girl?*

Her stomach was a bit queasy as she descended the steps and went to the great room to wait for her date. She felt as if there were a hundred Riverdance stompers in her belly, all dancing their

Irish jig together.

She'd never been spanked before. She wondered what it would be like. How much it would hurt. Jimmy was a strong guy. She knew he did all of the work himself on his spread. His hands were big, too. She'd noticed that yesterday. She would bet they were rough, probably even calloused, from so much hard work. Somehow, those images didn't offend her, though. Actually, there was something almost attractive about it, instead.

Grace was almost glad when she heard the doorbell ring signaling Jimmy's arrival. She felt that if she sat there imagining and worrying about the activities of the night to come for one more second she might very well go out of her mind.

She got up to answer the door herself, having given the maid the day off. She didn't want any of this evening getting back to her father if she could prevent it. She took enough of his guff on a daily basis without having to listen to him rant and rave about what a loser he thought Jimmy Valentine was.

When she opened the door it was to find Jimmy on the other side in pressed dark blue jeans, an ironed dress shirt with Western styling, polished boots and a bouquet of baby pink roses in one hand. Her favorite flower, in her favorite color. She couldn't stop herself from smiling, though she knew she wasn't supposed to be enjoying this night.

"Thank you," she said automatically, accepting the flowers as he held them out to her, silent but smiling. She motioned for him to come inside the house. "They're beautiful. You didn't have to do that."

He shrugged. "I wanted to."

"Thank you. I'll just get them in some water. Be right back."

Grace took the bouquet into the kitchen and filled one of her mother's cut crystal vases with water, then quickly arranged the roses one by one till they fairly overflowed the mouth of the vase.

She couldn't seem to shake the smile from her mouth. When was the last time someone had given her flowers? She wondered. She couldn't remember a single time.

She certainly hadn't expected Jimmy Valentine to show up with them tucked into his hand.

"That was really nice of you," she told him when she joined him again in the foyer. She noticed the way he snapped his head around to look at her and realized he'd been looking around the house. The place must seem like a palace to him, compared to his own run down home. Grace didn't like thinking about the differences between their classes. So what if he had grown up in a poorer neighborhood, and she had been one of the richest kids in the state? It didn't have to mean anything if they didn't want it to. Tonight, they were just two people going on a date.

And one girl who was going to get her butt beat at the end of it.

Okay, so maybe it wasn't exactly as normal as she would have liked to pretend it to be....

She was glad that Jimmy didn't try to take her someplace fancy. Her father might be made of money, but that didn't mean she was most comfortable in five star places. Her favorite restaurant in their town was a little Mexican place called Tortillas. And, strangely, that was exactly where Jimmy took her.

"I love this place," she told him as she opened the car door and stepped out. She fixed him with a wary eye. First the flowers, now the restaurant. "Okay," she said suspiciously. "What, do you have spies following me around, or what?"

He gave that Jimmy-shrug of his as he came around the front of the car. "I've noticed things over the years," he said. "That's all."

Her eyes narrowed as she placed her hand inside his proffered one. "How could you notice something like that? It's not as if you and I are

bosom buddies."

"This is one of my favorite restaurants, too. I've been coming in sometimes as you've been going out, or vice versa."

"Okay, I'll buy that," she allowed, studying him closely as they walked. "But how did you know that pale pink roses are my favorite?"

He slanted her an almost shy look. "I've noticed you tending the ones you have on the south side of your house, up by the road. At first, I didn't understand why you didn't just have your gardener do it, but then I figured you must enjoy it. All of those roses are various shades of pink, so I took a guess."

"Hmm, good guess." Grace had to look away from his piercing eyes for a minute. This wasn't the wisecracking, annoying Jimmy Valentine she was used to. The man walking beside her was far more serious and was beginning to live up to his surname.

Mexican music, cheerful and party-like, surrounded them as they stepped inside the intimate restaurant. A hostess motioned to them from across the room where she was seating another party.

While they waited, Grace fidgeted beside Jimmy. "Well, I have to warn you, you might not want to go through with our scheduled uh, *event* later on tonight. You may not want to be within ten feet of my butt once I get through with a meal here."

He grinned at her, a wolf-about-to-eat-Little-Red-Riding-Hood type of grin. "Nah, I'm a big boy," he insisted. "I can handle it."

Grace frowned at him and was on the dangerous verge of demanding to know why spanking her was so all-fired important to him, when the hostess came sailing up to them, a welcoming smile on her face and two menus in her hands. Sighing heavily, Grace followed her to a nearby table, then sat right down and snapped her menu open in front of her.

"You're not even giving me a chance to show you what a gentleman I am," Jimmy scolded her quietly as he, too, opened his menu. "You jumped out of the car before I could open your door for you, you jumped into that chair so fast I never even stood a chance of pulling it back for you first..." He studied her quietly for a moment. "You're not used to men treating you like a lady, are you?"

Grace didn't like the way he was looking at her. All sad for her, like. She made a face. "Most of the men in my life know I'm *not* a lady. I guess they treat me accordingly." She looked him slowly up and down. "And besides, you're not much of a gentleman, if you ask me. A gentleman would never spank a lady... it's a contradiction to his very definition. There's nothing gentle about a spanking!"

"Now that's where you're wrong. It can be gentle. It depends on the reason behind it. As for me, I am the real thing. Whether or not you choose to see it, whether or not you let me treat you the way you should be treated, that's up to you." His eyes pinned her to her seat from across the table and though she fought not to do it, Grace still felt herself squirm under his intense gaze. "But let's be clear about one thing tonight, all right, Princess? No matter what you say or do to try to get out of it, you *will* be spanked tonight. I promise you that..."

Evolution of a Country Princess: Part Two

The evening passed more comfortably than Grace had thought it would. After Jimmy's daunting 'promise', he'd made every effort to take her mind off the topic of spanking. And Grace had found herself pleasantly surprised by his charm and wit. If she wasn't careful, she realized suddenly, halfway through her enchiladas, she might just wind up liking the guy.

Image that. Liking Jimmy Valentine. He'd been the enemy of her heart her entire life.

"You know, Jimmy, you're a smart guy," she told him as they were finishing their meals and a lull fell over the table for the first time since they'd sat down. "Why don't you invest some of the money you blow every week on poker? You could really fix things up at your place."

He smiled at her slyly. "Poker *is* an investment for me, Gracie," he said. "It got me White Lightning last week, didn't it?"

She rolled her eyes.

"What?" he pressed. "Obviously, that horse is a damn good investment or else you wouldn't have been so hot to get him back."

"Yes," she said patiently. "But you just made my point for me. *I got him back*. And now what do you have to show for that poker game?"

His grin only broadened. Then he spread his hands out around him, motioning once towards her and then to the entire table and the restaurant around them. "This," he said. "You. Us, here together."

Grace shook her head and rolled her eyes again. But there was a soft spot in her heart that took his words and tucked them away for safe keeping, to be examined again later on when she was alone.

After dinner, Jimmy drove them straight to his place, without even so much as consulting Grace.

In a way she was grateful for that; she didn't really want the rest of the evening to take place in her own house, where she would be reminded of it day in and day out. It was easier to have the big event at his place, somewhere she only rarely passed by.

The house was surprisingly clean when he let her inside, though it definitely could have used a woman's touch to make it homier. The decorations were sparse and manly, the wood furniture dark. But it was neat and just as clean as her own home.

"What, did you think I'd be a slob?" Jimmy asked her as she glanced around, one eyebrow arched slightly. Her gaze returned to him, and she shrugged.

"No, not really. I just... figured it might be a little... messier... maybe...."

Jimmy grinned. "That's the same thing, Princess," he informed her.

"Oh. Uh.... I'm sorry... I don't mean it the way it sounds...."

He waved his hand dismissively. "Would you like a drink?" he asked.

"Sure," Grace said, trying to regain her composure. "What do you have?"

"Oh, just whisky. Straight up. Home brewed," he said, deadpan.

Grace's eyes widened. "Um..."

This time he chuckled. "How 'bout a glass of white wine, Gracie?"

She blinked at him a moment as she realized he was teasing her about the whisky. Blushing, she nodded her head. "Wine would be nice."

While Jimmy disappeared into the kitchen to get their drinks, Grace took a tentative seat on the overstuffed leather sofa in the living room and tried unsuccessfully to relax. She couldn't help but wonder if this was the room she would be spanked in.

When Jimmy returned with two glasses of wine, she accepted hers gratefully and took a slow, steady

sip, praying that it would help fortify her. Or, lacking that, at least help her relax.

"You holdin' up okay there, Princess?" Jimmy asked her, watching her motions out of the corner of his bedroom eyes.

Grace bobbed her head up and down in what she hoped was a brave nod. "I'm fine," she lied.

Jimmy snorted. "Liar," he accused lightly, his eyes still on her, seeing everything, apparently. He took a sip of his wine, and Grace found herself watching the motion in his throat as he swallowed.

"Well, maybe I am a *little* nervous," she admitted quietly.

He nodded. "That's understandable. This your first time? Being spanked?"

Grace nodded. "Yeah," she said shakily.

"I kind of thought so." He studied her quietly for a few moments. "You know, Grace, I'm not going to hurt you. Not really. I mean, it'll hurt temporarily, but it won't last long. You might even like the way it feels afterward, when the sting goes away. Or even while some of the sting is still there. A lot of women do. It turns them on."

"I don't think I'll be one of those women," she said defensively.

Jimmy shrugged. "You never know. I just thought I ought to warn you, is all. And I don't want you to be afraid of me, either. I would never hurt you, Grace. Even if we have been sparring partners for as long as I can remember."

Grace nodded, even smiled a little. "That's good to know, Jimmy. But I have to admit I'm doubtful as to how you can spank me without hurting me."

Jimmy sighed. "Like I said, it's not going to last. And I think you do know what I'm referring to here, you just don't want to admit it."

Grace looked down at her wineglass and watched the liquid as she swirled it in one hand. Yes, maybe she did see what he was getting at. He wouldn't hurt her the way her father did on a

regular basis. The way he had since she'd been a little girl. He wouldn't give her any lasting scars, physical or mental, that she'd have to carry with her for the rest of her life.

Still looking at the wine in her glass, Grace nodded. Then she lifted the glass to her lips and downed the rest of the wine in two big gulps. She set the glass deliberately aside and somehow found a way to look up and meet Jimmy Valentine's eyes.

"Can we do this now?" she asked.

She watched as Jimmy swallowed once, then set his own nearly untouched glass of wine aside. "Okay," he agreed, and his voice was hoarse. He motioned for her to come over to him with one hand, and Grace moved to him on shaky legs.

When she would have sat down, he took a gentle hold of her arm at the elbow and tugged her instead so that she stood before him. Then he did the strangest thing; he framed her face in his hands, tucking a few stray wisps of hair back behind her ears, and he traced the outline of her cheeks with his thumbs.

Grace found herself staring down into Jimmy's eyes, feeling lost and found all at the same time. She felt like she was in a downward spiral, twisting and turning and trying so hard to find something to hold onto. And what she found, and what she clung to, was Jimmy Valentine's hand. She pulled it down from her face and she mashed her hand inside of it and she hung onto it like it was her only lifetime to the world.

He smiled up at her when she did that, and something inside of Grace opened up. And a little piece of Jimmy moved into her heart in that moment.

And then he went and ruined it all by letting go of her hand and her face and instead used his hands to reach up beneath her skirt and skin her panties down in one fluid, unexpected motion.

Grace gasped as this indignity occurred and very

nearly slapped him. "What are you doing?" she whisper-shrieked at him, her mouth agape, her hands trembling as she held back from smacking him.

"I'm getting you ready for your spanking," he told her slowly, as if he thought it should be plain and obvious. "You didn't think I was going to give it to you over your skirt and your underwear, did you?"

"Well, yeah, I guess I did!" Grace exclaimed. "Silly me! I mean, we're barely acquaintances, Jimmy! And *you* didn't think I might be a little upset at the idea of you seeing my bare butt?!"

Jimmy shrugged. "I guess I didn't think about it from your point of view. But it doesn't really matter. We've already made a deal, Princess. You've got your part of the bargain already, now it's time for me to get mine."

"Me naked was not a part of the deal that I agreed to!" Grace hissed.

"You're not going to be naked, Gracie," Jimmy told her, his voice straining to sound patient. "You'll still have your dress on. I'm going to put you over my knee and then I'll pull up your skirt in the back so I can expose your bare bottom. That is all I'm going to see during the spanking."

Grace knew that wasn't *all* he would see. He'd likely see a great deal more, especially if she moved around as much as she thought she might while he was whaling on her. "My bare bottom wasn't a part of the deal."

"Maybe not to your knowledge, but yes, it always was," he insisted. "Now, I suggest you get over it unless you want to renegotiate our deal. But I can guarantee you that if that happens I won't be as easy going with you for the next round of negotiations."

Grace stared at him in a combination of hurt, betrayal and anger. "You are such a pervert," she hissed at him finally as she angrily stepped out of

the panties that were puddled around her ankles, kicking them brutally aside in her rage.

Jimmy simply smiled up at her as if she'd just given him a compliment. Then he took her hand, and tugged her down hard over one well-muscled thigh.

Grace screwed her eyes shut as she felt his hand at the bottom hem of her skirt, drawing it slowly up the length of her legs and hips, little by little exposing her body to his gaze. Her face heated with each slow inch, and she had to bite her bottom lip to keep from hollering at him.

And then the most incredible thing happened. When he finally had her fully revealed, and had bunched the material of her skirt up around her waist, out of the way, Jimmy Valentine skimmed his hand lovingly over her bare buttocks and then down the length of each naked thigh and calf. He returned to her bare cheeks and massaged them lightly, then skimmed his hand over them again, and again.

Grace couldn't help but sigh a little. She even felt her body relax, by just the slightest of degrees. And an unfamiliar feeling between her thighs pulsed to life, one she'd felt so rarely in her twenty-six years that she'd never paid it much mind in the past. Before today anyway. This time, it didn't seem like she'd be able to so easily ignore it, or make it go away.

"I knew you would be beautiful," Jimmy murmured, his work-roughened hand still touching her intimately, as no man had ever done before in her life.

Grace couldn't have found a way to speak then if her life had depended on it. So, instead, she simply lay there, secretly enjoying his ministrations and rationalizing her embarrassment as part of the price he'd determined she had to pay to get White Lightning back.

It seemed all too soon when Jimmy quietly

interrupted his caresses with the following words: "All right, Princess.... I'm going to spank you now, Gracie."

Grace wasn't sure what to do in response to those words. She knew what she wanted to do – jump up off of Jimmy's lap and run for cover, both hands cupping her behind as she did so. In lieu of that, she would have opted to at least have thrown back a warding hand. But, as it was, none of those options were available to her, for before she had a chance to try for either one, Jimmy had pinned both of her legs tightly between his own, like some kind of spanking vise, and he'd grabbed hold of both her hands and secured them tightly, if gently, in the hollow of the small of her back.

Grace knew that struggling against Jimmy's strength would only be futile. She'd seen the man in action from the roadside when she drove by his spread and caught him working; she didn't stand a chance against those muscles.

So she braced herself as best she could and waited.

And when that first spank fell, she let out a relieved gust of air at the gentleness of it. In fact, she very nearly laughed.

That was a spank? Was he crazy? He must be even more soft on her than he'd led her to believe, if that was the best he could do!

Silently, four more similar swats fell. Jimmy moved them around her bottom, changing between cheeks and from top to bottom. But each was soft, with hardly any sting at all. And again, Grace found herself biting back a grin.

"How you holding up?" Jimmy asked her after the fifth spank, pausing to readjust her position over his lap.

"Um..." How to answer that, exactly? She wondered. "Okay, I guess," she opted for a half-truth.

"Good!" he sang, tugging her waist in tighter to

his belly. "Then I guess I can up the ante a bit. I didn't want to start in on you too strong, after all."

Even before Grace could think the words, *oh shit*, the next spank fell with a thunderclap of sound that ricocheted off the walls and rang in her ears. Grace gasped loudly as the heat seared her skin from that one hard smack of his hand, then baked into her bottom cheek like a brand.

Jimmy didn't even give her a moment to absorb the change in the mood of the spanking; instead he dealt her another sizzling crack, this one on the opposite bottom cheek. And this time, Grace vocalized her distress with a loudly shouted expletive.

He chuckled above her. "You go right ahead and cuss, Princess," he encouraged her, delivering another fiery wallop to her nates. "I won't deny you that, so long as you refrain from any name callin.' Cause God knows I'm planning to give you every reason to cuss your head off."

And then, always true to his word, it seemed, Jimmy proceeded to do exactly that. His broad, hard hand traveled with bouncing smacks up and down Grace's quickly reddening behind without mercy, covering every tiny millimeter of space and back again. He seemed deaf to her screams and cries for mercy, oblivious to her struggles to free herself from his grasp, unfazed by her bucking and the mounting fury in her voice. He kept up his tempo without pause or delay, moving on to the backs of her unpainted thighs when her bottom was good and red.

His own hand began to ache with the physical abuse he was putting it through, but Jimmy didn't let that stop him. There was a slim, hard backed book on the table beside his sofa, and he reached over then to grab it, pausing only briefly before snapping that down hard on Grace's blushing behind.

"Hey!" Grace protested immediately, whirling

around to see what had struck her. "You... you never said that you'd use a... a.... a book?..."

Jimmy bit back a grin. "I never said I wouldn't either." He snapped the hardcover down on her aching cheeks again.

Grace huffed out an exaggerated sigh and turned back around. Jimmy continued to pepper her backside with the book, but only long enough to let his hand and fingers have a break. He knew from her body's reactions that despite the way she'd reacted to that first smack from the hardcover, it was a wimpy substitution for his hand.

When he felt like he was rested enough to finish the job, he tossed the book aside, noticing how her eyes followed it, and then started up again with his bare hand. Besides, the sound of skin meeting skin was so much more satisfying.

Jimmy set about a rapid, unforgiving pace for the last of his spanks, swatting her three times in the same spot before moving on to the next area. He moved quickly but would not be satisfied until every inch of her backside had been touched by his hand again. He even pulled her bottom cheeks apart to deliver blisters to the extremely sensitive skin in the crease between them. Grace was sobbing by the time he was only half way through, but it was only when she was completely and thoroughly heated at least three times over by his hand from the crests of her bottom to the backs of her knees that he paused to contemplate his work and the distraught woman over his lap.

"Is it really all that bad?" he asked her as he listened to her sobbing. He reached out with the hand that had brought about those tears and gently swept the tear-dampened hair back from her face. "You act like you're being murdered here."

Grace dealt him a dark glare over one shoulder. "It hurts!" she complained loudly.

Jimmy had the nerve to laugh at her. "Yeah," he agreed, glancing down at the hot, maroon-red

behind and thighs stretched out over his lap. "I guess that it does, huh?"

"It's not funny," Grace told him grumpily.

"Maybe not to you," he allowed with a one shouldered shrug. "But then I guess all those times when we were growing up, and you used to do whatever you could to get me into trouble at church – they weren't funny either, were they?" His hand punctuated his question with a loud, heartfelt WHAP!!!

Grace looked down at the floor beneath her head. "I guess they weren't to you," she acknowledged, knowing what he was getting at.

"No," he agreed. "You'd get me in trouble at church, then that got me in trouble at home. And when you used to point and laugh at me in town with all your rich little girlfriends, that wasn't funny either, just for the record."

Grace nodded. "I'm sorry, Jimmy. I... I didn't know how to take you. You weren't exactly nice to me, either, you know...."

"All I ever wanted was to have your attention for a minute," he told her. "I know I didn't approach it the right way, but that was my motive."

She smiled a little over her shoulder. "Well, you've definitely got my attention right now."

He laughed at that and clapped his hand down again on her bottom, once on each cheek. Then he stopped and caressed her again, like he had at first. He watched as she closed her eyes.

"I think there is a part of you that likes this, Princess Gracie," he told her. When she started to shake her head, he patted her still smarting behind warningly. "You're hardly in the position to argue with me."

Grace wisely clamped her mouth shut and for once just allowed herself to feel. Her body felt like it was humming with electricity just at this man's touch, and she had to admit that since the spanking the yearning between her legs had only grown more

heavy. Ever so slightly, she allowed herself to rub her mound, still covered by her dress in front, against his leg.

It was the closest thing to an admission that she was willing to give him, but Jimmy didn't miss it. He chuckled arrogantly behind her as she did it, and tickled her lightly at the center of her bottom.

"I knew it," he said proudly.

He let her enjoy herself over his thighs a little longer, as he dallied with her there, sometimes caressing, sometimes lightly spanking, sometimes pinching or massaging. Finally, knowing he either had to stop soon or end up with her in his bed and probably hating him in the morning for it, Jimmy encouraged her to sit up. But when she would have moved away from him and righted her clothes, he pulled her back down onto his lap instead, folding his arms protectively around her and pulling the skirt back up so that it pooled around her instead of falling down around her reddened backside and legs. Grace sighed her surrender and laid her head down on Jimmy's chest, her arms winding around his neck.

"I meant what I said earlier, Grace," Jimmy told her. "Why should you put up with your old man's shit for one more day? Come stay with me. I could make you happy if you gave me a chance."

Grace was quiet, and she didn't look up at him when he bent his head to look at her.

"What is it that keeps you there?" he demanded in a harsh whisper. "Is it the money?"

Grace shook her head. "I don't think I'm getting anything from him anyway. And it doesn't matter either way, because my mother left me everything that was in her name. Except that I don't get a dime of it till I marry."

Jimmy's eyebrows quirked up. "You're kidding."

"Nope. She was afraid I'd die an old, unhappy, unmarried maid with no one to love her or care for her. So she put the marriage clause into her will."

Jimmy wiggled his eyebrows. "Sooo... let's get married!"

Grace laughed. "Yeah, now *that* would really solve everything, huh? Hell, you'd even get White Lightning back!"

His brows furrowed. "He's part of your mother's will, too?"

"Yeah. Technically he *is* mine, he just wasn't yet at the time I bet him in that poker game."

Jimmy laughed. "I ought to tan your hide all over again, girl," he threatened half-heartedly, shaking his head.

Grace sighed. "Yeah," she said almost dreamily, not even realizing she'd said it out loud. They both burst out giggling as she realized what she'd said, and the next thing she knew, Jimmy Valentine was kissing her on the lips. Hot and heavy, tongues mating and groping hands and everything. And for the first time in her life, Grace liked the heady, out of control feelings she was experiencing. She didn't want them to ever stop.

But they did, eventually, when Jimmy pulled slowly back from her and gazed down at her with a glazed expression. "Marry me, Grace," he said, and Grace's heart flipped over itself in her chest then beat frantically. He was serious. "I mean it. Marry me."

"My... my father will have a coronary..." she stammered.

He gave her that Jimmy-shrug. "Who cares about him? Who cares about anybody else? What do *you* want to do? Ask yourself how you felt tonight being out with me. And then ask yourself what you want to do..."

"Are you just saying this to get your hands on my money?" she questioned brutally. She watched him wince at the words, and they tasted foul in her mouth, but she refused to call them back or even apologize for them. It was a valid question.

"You really are trying to get yourself back over

my knee," he warned her. But he met her eyes evenly as he continued. "I don't give a shit about your money, Princess. I'll sign whatever prenuptial agreement you want me to to protect yourself. I just want you. Someday, maybe you'll understand that."

"Well, you have to admit it is a lot to take in so suddenly."

He nodded. "I'm sure it is. I'm sorry I didn't get my act together and tell you how I felt sooner."

"Me too." She cuddled into his chest and nuzzled his neck. "I'm sorry I didn't say something sooner myself."

"So... maybe we ought to stop wasting time and start making some of it up with each other," Jimmy suggested.

"Yeah," she agreed, glancing shyly up at him. She leaned up and met his lip briefly. "Marry me, Jimmy Valentine?"

"Hell, yeah," he said, catching her lips longer now, harder. "You name the time and the place, and I'll be there, Princess."

As Grace tumbled down to the couch, welcoming Jimmy's weight above her, she mentally adjusted that old list she kept up of self definitions. Apparently she wasn't finished with her personal evolution, yet. Last time she'd checked – only a day ago! – she'd been a princess, a brat, a pest, a rebel, a tomboy, a daredevil, a gambler, and a sore loser. And she'd been about to become a thief. Evidently she'd be adding 'wife,' to the list soon, and maybe even 'mother' one day. Some of the other titles would stay, though, she knew. Princess, for one, was going nowhere; she'd likely hear it on a daily basis from Jimmy's mouth. And she supposed she'd forever be a rebel, marrying someone her father hated. The tomboy in her had been there the day she was born and would be there the day she died; she suspected that Jimmy would like that side of her once he really saw it.

She was sure he would have something to say, though, about some of her other traits – he'd likely try to handle the brat, the pest, the daredevil, and the sore loser in her with more of his horribly wonderful spankings. And she supposed that maybe some temperance in those departments might be a good thing, even if it was a little uncomfortable for her bottom.

As for the thief, she'd already committed the highest crime a thief could – she'd stolen Jimmy Valentine's heart. So maybe she could retire that title. And, hopefully, this would be her greatest, best, and last gamble for a good long time, maybe even forever – on love.

Katie Wants a Fast One: Part One

Katie Atwater drummed her fingers impatiently on the steering wheel of her bright pink Ford Lightning and let out a long suffering sigh.

If there was one thing Katie hated above all else, it was having to wait. Especially in traffic. On a Friday night. After a long, long, long week at work that had seemed like it would never end. When there was a piping hot pepperoni pizza with extra cheese waiting for her at Nat's Pizzeria by her house, and her favorite movie on HBO tonight. In – she checked her watch for the fiftieth time in the past five minutes – exactly ten minutes.

The line of traffic ahead of Katie seemed to go on forever. It certainly felt like she'd been sitting here at least that long. And what made it even worse was that she could see her exit from where she sat, immobile, in her seemingly paralyzed vehicle. If she could just get a little break in the right lane next to her, she could probably slide on over, then get onto the shoulder, fly right past these poor suckers and get out of here.

And, right then, just as the thought was taking place in her mind, her inner demon, the one who was the soul of her impatience, the one who always got her into trouble then took off running, reared its ugly little horned head.

The next thing she knew, she had her right turn signal on, and she was turning her wheels and inching her nose between the back bumper and the front of the two cars in the right lane beside her. Miraculously, they let her in, without even so much as an ill tempered, one fingered salute. Giggling to herself, Katie slid at an angle between the two vehicles and then right out onto the far shoulder of the road.

And, from there, it was clear sailing.

With a gleeful whoop, Katie put her foot down to

the floor and sped along the side of the highway, turning up the car radio with one hand as a good song finally came on. At the entrance to her exit, she stomped on the gas a little harder, laughing as the backend of the pickup skidded to one side as she took the turn just a little too sharp.

"Whoops!"

She was nearly to the stop sign at the end of the exit ramp, where she would turn right and be on the home stretch to the pizzeria and her movie, when she first caught a glimpse of the red and blue flashing lights in her rear view mirror. As her stomach dropped to her knees in a slow motion somersault, she heard a tiny blip of the police cruiser's siren.

Cursing softly to herself, Katie immediately took her foot off the accelerator and reluctantly set it on the brake. She'd been so close, too....

As she eased the pickup over to the shoulder of the road, putting her blinkers on for good measure, she started a repeating prayer in her head: Please don't let it be Cole. Please don't let it be Cole. Anyone but Cole....

Though she knew she should sit still and wait for the officer to come up to her window, Katie couldn't help but turn her head and crane her neck for a good look at whoever was coming towards her. And when she saw the tall, dark haired man with the piercing blue eyes bearing down on her, she jumped back around in her seat and groaned.

"Oh no...."

On the other side of her open window, Cole was just walking up to her car, a deep frown pulling down his soft, full lips and furrowing the tan skin between those blue eyes. "Oh, yes," Cole Messa confirmed for her.

"Hello, officer," Katie bluffed, pasting a false smile on her face. "How are you this fine summer evening?"

"I was doing a heck of a sight better before I

saw my fiancée flying down the shoulder of I-95 at breakneck speed, as if she was trying to deliberately thumb her nose at me."

Katie grimaced. "Of course, I wasn't thumbing my nose at you, honey."

"Don't call a policeman honey, honey," Cole advised curtly, though his eyes were twinkling.

Katie rolled her eyes.

"Did you forget that this is my stretch of the highway?" he demanded.

"No," Katie admitted slowly. "But I did think that it was past the time that you would still be out here on duty."

Cole put his hands on his hips and glared at her. "Well, I was hanging around, waiting to see you come down the road and then I was going to follow you home, maybe play a little game of cops and robbers." His dark eyebrows crashed down over his eyes. "But now, Miss Katie, you and me are going to play ourselves another type of game."

Katie's stomach turned sideways this time, and she squirmed in her seat. "What kind of game is that, officer?" she asked, though she thought she probably already knew.

"You and me are going to play Katie gets a lesson in taking things slooow."

"Oh," Katie said hollowly, wondering what he was planning in that handsome head of his. "That doesn't sound like a very fun game."

Cole just grinned wolfishly at her. He glanced at his watch. "Officially, I've been off duty a half hour. So, I'll just follow you on home, just to be sure you don't break any more traffic laws tonight, and then we'll see what you think of my game. Okay?"

Katie swallowed and slowly nodded her head, though what she really wanted to do was throw an all-out temper tantrum. "Kay," she agreed reluctantly.

Cole swatted her door panel once, sent her a wink and ambled away. Groaning, Katie eased her

truck back onto the road and crawled down the highway towards home. Even though it went against every instinct and grain in her body, she somehow managed to drive the entire way home at five miles below the speed limit.

The ride home seemed interminable to Katie, who was used to speed. But, as soon as she pulled into her driveway, Cole right up on her back bumper, she immediately wished she could rewind the whole journey backwards and start it over again.

Instead, she sighed heavily, glancing in her rear view mirror as Cole got out of his police cruiser, and debated briefly about playing the lock-the-car-doors-on-your-boyfriend-who's-about-to-beat-your-poor-little-ass game, but decided against it, knowing it would only prolong and impound the inevitable.

So, Katie turned off her truck's engine, gathered her purse and the little lunch tote she used on a daily basis, and climbed down from the cab. As always, at least whenever he was around to do so, Cole was already there waiting for her on the outside of the truck, his strong arm ready to help her as her short legs reached for the ground.

He plucked the lunch bag and her purse from her fingers and used his own key to unlock the front door to her house, pushing it open with a slight smiling flourish and gesturing for her to precede him inside.

"Go on upstairs," he said once they were both inside her home, the door not only closed but locked behind them. "And wait for me in the corner by the bed."

Katie frowned. If there was one thing she hated more than sitting in a traffic jam on a Friday night after work when her favorite movie was on, it could only be standing in a blank, silent corner alone. The

time was supposed to be used, according to her strange-thinking boyfriend, to think about the actions she had chosen that had landed her in the corner to begin with. But, instead, Katie always wound up thinking about how much she hated having to wait for anything.

Ugh.

With a long-suffering, fatalistic sigh, Katie turned towards the nearby stairs and thumped up them petulantly. From below her, she thought she heard a faint snort, but surprisingly no other remonstrations floated up behind her.

In her bedroom, Katie first went to the two windows across from her four poster bed and closed them, shutting off the pleasant summer breeze they had let in all day, but also performing the necessary task of closing off the room from her neighbor's hearing. Not that she planned to give Cole the satisfaction of making a lot of noise or carrying on like a baby. But, just in case, Katie figured it was better to take the precaution and avoid having to make any bumbling explanations later.

After lowering the blinds and firmly closing the drapes, Katie grimaced and shuffled slowly into the corner that Cole had indicated. There, she shook her head at herself and the way she so easily acquiesced to his authority. When had Cole become the boss of her, anyway? She wondered. But it wasn't such a mystery, really, if she was honest with herself. It had happened the first moment she'd spoken to him. And nothing had changed since then.

Not that it made following his often challenging instructions any easier.

By the time Katie heard the sound of the door behind her opening and closing, indicating his entrance into the room, she had her arms folded over her chest and her right foot was tapping impatiently in its high heeled prison. Normally, when she got home from work the first thing Katie

did was change out of her business attire and into sweats or shorts and a tee shirt. But, Cole's instructions hadn't included that, and she knew from past experience not to go outside the boundaries of his instructions when he was in a mood like this one.

A deep, rumbling, masculine chuckle surrounded her from behind, and a chill of pleasure tickled her nape.

"Is that how I've taught you to stand in the corner?" he questioned, and though there was an effort to sound stern in his voice, Katie heard a distinctive smile there too.

"No," she confessed with a huff. She unfolded her arms with exaggerated motions and straightened her spine, stiffening her legs, standing primly now with her hands at her sides. She shot him a quick look over her right shoulder, telling herself sternly that he was the enemy right now and most certainly was not as sexy as he seemed to be, standing there with a lopsided grin on his face, still in his police uniform, studying her so intently. "Better?"

"Much," he agreed, coming up behind her. To her chagrin, he cupped her chin in his hand and turned it gently back to the crease in the walls. Then, as her face flamed with heat, knowing what was coming from past experience, his hands came to rest all too briefly at the bottom hem of her knee-length business skirt.

And, then, a fraction of a second later, the entire skirt was hitched up around her waist, exposing her cream lace panties and nude-toned pantyhose to his gaze.

Not that it mattered all that much, because a few moments after that, those remaining items had been rucked down over her hips and down her legs till they pooled around her ankles. Silently, as Katie's face burned with heat and embarrassment, Cole guided her out of her uncomfortable high

heels, then helped her step out of the crumpled hose and now inside-out panties.

He stood back then and studied her a moment, and it took everything Katie had in her to keep staring straight ahead and not turn her head to look at him or make some unwise remark.

Finally, his wide, strong hands returned to her skirt, this time at the top hem. "I think this just needs to go too," he said, tugging at the button and zipper till the skirt gaped open at her waist. A moment later it was off of her body and in his hands with the rest of her clothes and her dignity. Katie pressed her eyes closed tight as his warm hand tapped her bare buttocks just once, right in the center, ever so lightly. "There, now, that's much better, don't you think?"

Katie didn't think, but she knew the question was rhetorical and so she kept her thoughts, screaming inside her head, to herself. Somehow, she managed a small smile in his direction while still keeping her eyes trained ahead.

"My, my," Cole commented, his hand still lying possessively on her backside. "Look at how good you are being now that we're here, all alone." Katie shivered with what she knew to be delicious anxiety. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw as he turned his free hand, wrist up, and consulted his watch. "Fifteen minutes, Katie-girl. I'll be back for you in fifteen minutes."

Somehow, Katie resisted the unbelievably strong urge to kick her feet and throw herself down on the floor in a full blown, screaming temper tantrum. But just barely.

Katie closed her eyes briefly as the warm weight of Cole's hand left her skin, then stood listening as the sounds of his carpet-muffled footsteps moved away from her and out of the room. There was a soft click as the door closed behind him.

Double Ugh.

Katie sighed deeply and tried to tell herself it

wasn't so bad. So what if she was missing Dirty Dancing? So what if her pizza was sitting untouched down at Nat's, congealing and going completely unappreciated while her stomach rumbled? She could do this. It was only fifteen minutes, after all. She could wait here that long. It wouldn't kill her. So what if it was the longest period of time he'd ever made her stand in a corner?

It was embarrassing as all get out, though. It didn't seem to matter that she was the only one in the room right now or that the only other person who would see her in this position was Cole, who'd seen just about every piece of her anatomy, from every conceivable angle, before. It was still incredibly violating and embarrassing to be standing there with her bare bottom on display and her face to the wall. But, then again, she supposed that was the point.

The minutes ticked by like miniaturized decades, and Katie passed her time by shifting her weight from foot to foot and picking at her unmanicured nails. Definitely time to get to the salon and get them cleaned up again.

Definitely not time to think of the spanking coming up in – oh, maybe seven minutes, now.

But, of course, her mind wandered to it anyway. There wasn't a lot of thought required for weight shifting and nail picking, after all. And Katie's mind, like the rest of her, was never, ever, completely still.

She wondered what Cole had planned for her. Would he bend her over his knee or over the bed? Would she have to lie over a pile of pillows on the mattress? Had her crime this time been serious enough to warrant a bent-double, grabbing her ankles punishment? She didn't think so, but she also knew from past experience that her mind and Cole's didn't exactly see everything the same way.

Like the time last winter – or early spring, depending on which of them you asked – when

she'd gone alone to the lake for one last skate of the year on its frozen surface. Katie had thought it was a great, fun idea, but Cole had thought it simply dangerous. Guess who's opinion had won out in the end and then been pounded into Katie's memory via her poor little backside?

Whatever position he put her in, she resolved right then and there, before even the first stroke bit into her bare skin (as it was sure to be, because Cole never spanked her any other way), no matter what he choose to use, be it just his hand, that horrid oak hairbrush, the shiny lexan paddle, or his wide braided leather belt, she would not cry. She wouldn't give him the satisfaction.

So there.

Of course, she made herself a similar promise each and every time she found herself in this type of situation, and, so far, she had yet to find a way to keep it. But this time she swore to herself that she would, no matter what.

Katie sighed and flexed the toes of one foot and then the other. She wished this corner time would hurry up and end. Not that she was happy to get on with the next event of the evening, but just because she was eager to get off her tired feet. Running around the office all day in heels was beginning to wear on her. She supposed it was time to take a step down into flats or those god-awful sneakers that some of her colleagues wore with their business suits and tailored slacks, regardless of how frumpy it looked.

Katie supposed it was worth it to sacrifice looking good in exchange for comfort. A smirk crossed her face, and she thought that once her fifteen minutes here were up, she'd likely have neither a good appearance nor comfort for the remainder of the evening, if not longer.

The sound of the bedroom door opening pricked Katie's ears and immediately all thoughts of anything other than what was about to happen in

that room between her and Cole disappeared. The skin on her arms pimpled with gooseflesh that rapidly spread down the rest of her body and the bare, exposed globes of her bottom clenched and crawled with dread. She sniffed and made her shaky knees lock, then found a high place in the air before her to stick her nose. With determination, she schooled her wobbly chin into a stable ledge and blinked away the sting of impending tears.

Not yet. Not at all, if she had anything to say about it.

She heard the soft moan of the mattress as Cole obviously sat down, then a muffled noise as he arranged himself and whatever else he might have brought into the room with him on the bed.

Then he spoke her name. Just once, quietly, but firmly. And he asked her to come over to him, just as if he was asking her to come to him for a kiss or so he could give her a present.

As she went to him on her jelly legs, Katie reminded herself that, in a way, he was going to give her a gift. Every time they danced this dance together, she knew it was his special way of showing his love for her, the only gift he'd ever given her that really mattered. The fact that he took the time to show it to her time after time, on occasions when he surely would have preferred to do otherwise as well as the times he relished the act, was a testament to his commitment to her and to their lifestyle. And though she would fight him and struggle, even if she gave in and cried, in her heart Katie accepted this physical form of his love. And she knew how lucky she was to have found someone who recognized that it was essential to her, even though everything she did and said suggested otherwise.

When she stood before him, he paused to give her a small smile, and he caressed her cheek, cupping her face in his hand. Katie leaned into his touch and for a brief moment closed her eyes,

allowed herself to forget what was about to come.

"Why are you here, baby?" he asked softly, and his hand left her cheek. Katie opened her eyes slowly and saw him pushing the sleeves of his sweatshirt up. He must have used the time she'd spent in the corner to change into some of the clothes he kept at her house, because the police uniform was completely gone and now he wore a pair of threadbare jeans and an Old Navy sweatshirt. Katie wanted to cuddle up in his lap, he looked so snuggly, but instead she knew she was doomed to go over it.

Trying not to pout, Katie answered his question. "'Cause I was driving recklessly. And too fast." She looked at the carpet beneath her bare toes.

But, of course, Cole wouldn't allow that. He lifted her chin up with the tips of his fingers and prodded patiently, "Why else...?"

She sighed, unable to stop the rush of unhappy air. "'Cause I'm always in such a rush and want to get things done in a hurry."

Cole nodded. "Why do you think that is?"

Katie blinked at the question. She'd never really thought about why she was always so impatient. It was just who she was. "I... I don't know...."

Cole frowned at her, and she suppressed another sigh. She knew he was never satisfied with an 'I don't know' answer. But, damnit, sometimes she honestly didn't know!

"Well, just for the record, Katie-girl, not everything is better when it's done faster. You'd miss your slow dances, I bet, if all the songs in the world were fast. And what about your beloved long strolls on the beach? I doubt you'd enjoy them as much if we ran down the shoreline instead."

Katie grimaced. Cole knew her well; she hated to run, even to jog. "No, it definitely wouldn't be as much fun."

He nodded. "Can you think of anything else?" He wiggled his eyebrows at her suggestively and

winked. "You know, something else in life that you prefer to do nice and slow?"

Katie blushed and ducked her head. She peeked up at him shyly. "Yeah."

"What?" he goaded gently.

"Making love with you," she whispered.

Cole grinned proudly. "Yeah, I thought so." He reached out and took her hands and gave them a squeeze. "When you go slow, things don't get missed. You can be thorough and careful and make sure you do it right and good. Know what I mean?"

Katie nodded silently, her stomach suddenly in knots as she sensed the 'talk' portion of this punishment coming to an end.

"Know what else is sometimes better done good and slow?" Cole asked.

Katie had a pretty good feeling she knew exactly what he was thinking of, but she wasn't about to just open her mouth and answer that baited question.

She saw the corner of his mouth twitch and knew he was wise to her evasion technique. Apparently unfazed, he leaned in closely to her and stage-whispered, "A spanking."

Even though she'd known all along where he was heading with all of this, Katie still swallowed hard, nearly gulping, when he finally said that word.

"And that's exactly what I have planned for you tonight, Katie-girl," he promised her softly, and if she didn't know better Katie might have sworn he was promising her a night of ecstasy in his arms instead of a thrashing across his thighs. His voice was so seductive, so warm and loving, as he told her of her fate. "A good, long, thorough spanking."

Katie blinked down at her bare feet, hearing his words echo in her head.

"Are you ready?" he asked her. The question was unnecessary, in Katie's mind. She was never ready to have her bottom paddled. But Cole asked her every time before he did it anyway. Katie

thought it was his way of asking her for her consent, and she always gave it to him, even when she knew it was going to be a particularly hard one.

This time was no different. She nodded her head immediately to his question and quietly agreed, "Yes, Cole."

"That's my Katie-girl." He patted her bare hip and gave her a brief smile. "I want you to go and get the leather slapper now."

Katie's stomach fell down to her knees. The leather slapper was something Cole had purchased online. Black leather, with a flexible business end as long as a doubled over belt but as wide as any paddle, Katie thought it was the worst of both implements.

She hated it with a passion.

But she nodded her consent again, and turned to get the requested item. Within all too quickly passed moments she had been to the peg inside her closet door and was standing before Cole again, the slapper in her sweaty hand. She quickly handed it to him, glad to be rid of it but anxious about its impending assault on her unprotected butt.

"Thank you," Cole said, setting the implement aside. He patted his right knee and took her hand, wordlessly helping to guide her into position over his taut, muscular thighs.

"All right then, Katie-girl," he told her as he caressed her bare bottom cheeks with his hand. "Here's to taking things slow. I want you to remember this every time in the future when you want to rush headlong into something. I want you to think first and consider if maybe you ought to take your time instead. I want you to realize the benefits to doing things slower, the rewards you can get from it, and the negative consequences you can sometimes avoid. I'm going to spank you nice and slow so that I make a lasting impression on you and you remember this for a long, long time...."

Katie Wants a Fast One: Part Two

Katie always hated the first part of the spanking when she had to drape herself over Cole's lap and allow him to adjust her body to a position what would work for the spanking he had in mind. Her skin was flushed with goose bumps, and her face as red as her butt was sure to be once that darn leather slapper was finished with her. Even though she was as intimate with Cole as she could possibly be, it was still mortifying to be splayed across his thighs as she was now, her bare behind sticking up in the air, her pubic mound peeking up through just-parted thighs. At least, while the spanking was going on, she briefly forgot the embarrassing position she was in, as she became temporarily distracted by the pain. Before the spanking started, it was all she could think about, however.

When he finished moving her around, Katie lay stretched across her boyfriend's thighs, her arms wrapped around his left leg, her head just reaching the mattress. Of course, her bottom was centered just so, a perfect target for his hand and the slapper. To her surprise, he left her legs free, for now anyway. Usually, when he used an implement to spank her, he trapped them between his own to limit her ability to kick.

For a few moments, Katie felt Cole caressing her bottom, first one cheek and then the other, then sliding his hand over both, gentle at first and then a bit more roughly. Just as she was beginning to enjoy the sensations his hand was making, he broke the contact, and she braced herself for the first swat.

That was when he reached over her to the bedside table, and she first noticed the little egg timer sitting there. He must have brought it up with him from her kitchen.

Frowning, Katie watched as Cole set the digital

timer for fifteen minutes.

And then she nearly fell over in a dead faint.

"You're going to spank me for fifteen minutes straight?" she nearly bellowed, straining her neck to look at him over one shoulder. "You never spank me that long! I... I'll die!"

Cole just chuckled as if she'd said something cute. "No, you won't. I don't know why you're so surprised. I already told you I was going to give you a long, slow spanking. And that is obviously going to take some time."

Katie stared at the timer and tried to regulate her breathing so she wouldn't hyperventilate.

Before she had another moment to state her case any further, the first hard swat caught her right buttock with a loud SLAP! Katie sucked in a gasping breath and blinked in shock at the sting that just Cole's hand imparted to her bare skin. Good Lord, he'd smacked her hard! Obviously, he wasn't planning on warming her up nicely tonight. Strictly business only, apparently.

Cole paused after that first burning spank. He sat there motionless for so long, in fact, that Katie was about to crane her neck around to check on him when the next air-splitting smack landed on her left bottom cheek, making her yelp out an involuntary protest despite her earlier decision to take her punishment stoically.

As that swat lay on her bottom, prickling the skin with its sting, Cole began his lecture.

"I do not want to ever see you racing down the highway like you did today!" CRACK! "You need to learn that sometimes you can't always have things the way you want them when you want them!" CRACK! "Sometimes, you have to be patient and wait your turn!" CRACK! "Taking the short cut way is not always the best way!" CRACK! "What you did today was not only illegal but also very, very dangerous!" CRACK! "And completely, totally unnecessary!" CRACK!

Katie lay over Cole's knees, her legs and torso jerking with each hard clap of his wide hand, grimacing against the heat that was rapidly building in her bottom, despite the fact that he'd only dealt her a total of eight swats so far. The way he was spanking her, though, firing down on her bare skin with such force and absolutely no build up to it at all had her gasping and grunting as easily as a normal rapid-fire spanking would have. And the pauses between each crack of his hand only seemed to add to the pain instead of helping to ease it. The pauses allowed for each individual wallop to sink into her skin and burn there till Katie thought she couldn't stand it another moment. And just as that thought entered her mind, the next smack caught her, and it started all over again.

Cole finished lecturing her, for the moment at least, and turned his full attention to the task of paddling the daylight out of her behind. He worked methodically, alternating his smacks from left to right to center, all over the surface of her bottom, till no spot was untouched. Then he worked his way down the back of her right thigh, and then up the back of her left. When he finished that first pass, he started in from scratch again, recovering her bottom with another coat of red handprints, then taking another journey down her thighs. By the time he stopped, as the egg timer reached the ten minute mark, Katie was beginning to really lose her resolve to take this punishment calmly.

Sensing this, Cole paused to shift her position, this time pinning her legs between his own. And that was Katie's cue that the leather slapper was about to start its torment, and she threw all vows to maintain her composure to the wind.

With a strength she would have thought she'd have lost by a Friday night after a long, tiring work week, Katie began to buck and struggle, to kick and writhe and wiggle over Cole's lap, attempting everything she could think of to make an escape.

But no matter what tactic she tried, Cole never once lost his grip on her. Nor did he seem even slightly challenged by her efforts. Which was really depressing, considering she was getting out of breath herself.

"All right, Katie-girl," Cole scolded as he reached next to him for the leather slapper. "That's enough now. Stop fighting me, and it will go easier on you."

Katie gripped the worn denim of his jeans and held her breath, knowing the first slap was about to fall.

When it did, she was just as surprised as she always was by the way the leather bit into her bare skin, then throbbed there with heat. Cole allowed the same pause between swats with the leather as he had with his hand, giving her plenty of time to absorb and really feel each slap. But instead of working from the top of her bottom and on down her thighs, he dealt her five slow, measured licks in the same spot on her right bottom cheek, then five in a similar spot on her left, ending with five across both cheeks in the center of her backside. By the time the first round of the whipping was through, Katie was panting from her pleas and cries for him to stop. And he was only half way through the fifteen minutes.

"Cole, I can't take this!" she told him frantically, twisting and wriggling over his thighs as she tried to avoid the downward arc of the implement in his hand. "Oww! Damn, that hurts!"

Cole ignored her comments, and started in on her right bottom cheek again, giving the lower portion of her buttock the same five slaps he'd administered to it earlier. Katie knew what he was doing. All of these spanks were right on the area of her bottom that Cole referred to as her "sit spot" and she was sure to really feel them for the next few days whenever she sat down. That was his goal, anyway. And the way he was going about it, she was sure he would be very successful.

As Katie yowled over his knee, Cole lectured her on the kind of accident she could have had that afternoon when she'd taken that chance and gone running down the narrow shoulder of the road. He'd been a cop for ten years and he'd seen more than his share of gruesome highway accidents. For once, the spanking was little distraction for Katie as he went into details about some of the accidents he'd witnessed that had come about pure and simple because of speed. His words bit into her memory every bit as sharply as the leather cut into her skin, and by the time the timer had counted down to the last five minutes of her spanking, Katie was in tears. It wasn't just the words Cole used to describe the accidents, though he was explicit and held little back; it was more the emotion in his voice. She could hear how some of them haunted him, and how he worried for her safety because he knew she had such a lead foot.

At the five minute mark, Cole tossed aside the leather slapper and paused to roughly massage her raw, battered bottom.

"I don't want to lose you because you were racing somewhere instead of driving safely," he told her quietly. "Do you realize that you risk your life every time you do something like that? Do you see how dangerous it is?"

Katie sniffled and looked back at him. "I think I do now."

Cole nodded, his eyes a little sad. "I need to be sure that you do," he told her. And then he glanced briefly at the digital timer before raising his hand up to begin her last five minutes.

Katie sucked in a breath as the first of those last spanks fell. His hand felt heavier after the whippy leather slapper, and her bottom seemed to absorb the slow, measured slaps like a sponge. She longed to put her hand back to shield herself but knew better. Once, she'd done that so many times that Cole had simply held her hand pinned behind her

back and started the entire spanking completely over from scratch again. She most certainly did not to take the chance of him doing that to her now.

So, she tried her best to lay still over his lap and take the last remaining minutes of his hand well. But she couldn't prevent the tears that continued to fall despite her best efforts. They rolled down her cheeks like a tiny waterfall, dripping off her chin to the bedspread and floor beneath her.

"Tell me something that is better for you if it's slow," Cole said.

Katie thought for a moment, and bit her lip as another measured spank caught her hard on the right buttock. "Um... I like a good meal to last..."

"That's good." His hand fell again, and Katie's breath hitched at the sharp contact of skin on skin. "What else?"

She squeezed her eyes shut as she tried to think. Two more spanks fell in the interim. "A... a holiday. Like Christmas or Thanksgiving... You have off from work and... your family's all there... and you want it to last... forever..."

To her everlasting relief, the digital timer rang just as Cole's hand landed one final time on the very center of her reddened behind. Cole sighed above her, and his hand rubbed some of the sting away as she let go completely and sobbed over his lap. A few moments later, he was helping her up and pulling her into his arms.

Katie went easily, any prior thoughts of him as the enemy completely forgotten. She wrapped her bare legs around his waist and curled into his chest as she cried. Cole cradled her sore bottom as gingerly as he could between his laced hands, and he rocked her gently in his arms, murmuring in her ear that he loved her, that it was all over, that she was okay.

"I promise I'll be safe from now on!" she vowed earnestly, looking up at him through her tears. "I'm sorry! I didn't even realize what I was doing was so

dangerous!"

"I know, baby," Cole nodded. He swept her hair, clinging to her wet cheeks, back from her face and kissed her forehead. "But you know now, and I know you will be more careful. It's all right."

It was almost harder to stop crying now that he was being so nice to her and the whole spanking was over. Katie sobbed into his shirt as if her heart were broken for a long while. It was always hardest for her to get over disappointing him. Cole was her whole world, and nothing hurt her more than seeing disapproval in his eyes.

Patiently, he waited out her storm of tears, till they gradually abated and left her with only a few stray sniffles. Then he leaned back from her and framed her face in his hands, brushing away the few lingering tears on her cheeks with his thumbs.

"I love you, Katie," he told her.

"I love you too."

"I have one last lesson prepared for you and then we can forget this ever happened. Okay?"

At that point, Katie would have agreed to just about anything to have her slate wiped clean with Cole again. She readily nodded her head and let him help her up from the bed.

He took her hand then and pulled her over to the closet, where he selected a set of sweats, a pair of cotton underwear and a pair of socks. While she stood there before him, he gently removed the blouse she'd worn to work as well as the bra beneath and pulled the soft sweatshirt on over her head instead. Katie's body was attentive to his soft touches, and she yearned to have him touch her more and longer. But Cole had a strict rule about no sex after a serious spanking. Maybe later tonight, when it was time for bed, if she was especially good the rest of the evening. But definitely not now.

He bundled the remaining clothes in the crook of his left elbow and took hold of her hand again. This time, he led her out of her bedroom and towards

the stairs.

At the head of the steps, Katie balked.

"Wha--- what are you doing?"

"We're going downstairs," he said, stating the obvious and tugging gently at her hand.

"But... what if someone... looks in and... sees us?"

Cole grinned. "Trust me. Come on."

He led her down the stairs then, seemingly oblivious to Katie's heated face at the idea of being in her downstairs living area with only a sweatshirt on and her bare, scarlet red behind sticking out for any passersby to look through her window and see.

Trying very hard to not be grumpy and provide him with another reason to paddle her further, Katie followed Cole to her dining room table. On the surface was a tablet of paper and a pen. The chair set behind those items was pulled slightly back already, and Katie got the sinking feeling that it was just waiting for her.

Sure enough, Cole gestured towards the chair and said, "Have a seat."

She stared at him in open mouthed astonishment. "You've got to be kidding! Those chairs are made of hard maple!"

Expressionless, her boyfriend simply nodded. "Yes, I know. And you can bet I've removed the chair pad from that one down there, especially for you."

Katie frowned, her eyes watering just at the thought of having to sit on that hard, unforgiving wood.

"Remember, I told you this is your last lesson, Katie-girl. You finish this for me like I ask, and I will have a really nice reward for you. If not, then I'll put you to bed right after supper and, well, then I guess I'll have to start all over from scratch with you tomorrow morning."

Katie grimaced at that thought. Reluctantly, she walked over to the chair that had been pulled back

and ever so slowly, wincing even before her bare seat touched the wood, lowered herself down to sit on the chair.

Watching her, Cole waited a beat till she was perched on the chair, then said, "Sit down all the way, baby. That's the whole idea of this little exercise."

Groaning quietly, Katie did as he instructed, putting all of her weight on her screaming, flaming backside. A few of the tears that had pooled in her eyes before spilled over and ran down her face. She looked pitifully up at Cole and saw the torn emotions in his eyes. Her heart turned over in her chest then, seeing the conflicting feelings in his face. Still, the determination and steel she saw there obviously won over the softness and sympathy, because a moment later his jaw firmed into an unyieldingly hard line, and he was at her side, indicating the tablet in front of her with one finger.

That was the first time that Katie noticed that he'd written something there already:

I, Kathryn Anne Atwater, will try my best to stop rushing through my life.

I will be more careful and safe when driving and will obey the laws of the road.

I will try to be more conscious of the good things that can come from taking things slow.

Beneath those sentences, Cole had written a heading that said:

Three things I enjoy more when they take some time to complete:

Katie looked up at Cole, waiting for his instructions, though she thought she might already know them.

He indicated the group of three sentences with a tap of his index finger. "I want you to write these out a hundred times each for me," he told her. "And when you finish that, you can complete the next item with three things you can think of that are

better slow. And no, you can't use something we already talked about upstairs."

Katie nodded her head, trying to ignore the throbbing ache in her nether regions. The thought of sitting here for as long as it would take to complete this "assignment" was nearly unbearable.

"When you're finished you can get dressed," he told her then, setting the underwear and sweatpants that he had carried down with him on the table at the next place setting. "But you are to sit back down in this chair and wait for me if I am not back yet at that point."

"Back?" Katie questioned. "Where are you going to go?"

"You'll see when I get back," he told her cryptically. "If, and only if, you do your assignment like my good Katie-girl."

Katie resisted the urge to roll her eyes, but just barely.

"Okay?" Cole pressed.

"All right," she acquiesced reluctantly. Trying not to frown, she picked up the pen he'd left on top of the pad for her and started copying her sentences – neatly, too. She knew from previous experience that Cole would make her do them all over again if her handwriting was illegible.

She could feel his warm gaze on her as she worked, but she refused to look up. He startled her into it, however, when his hand stroked the hair back from her face that had fallen over one eye as she bent over the table. He pressed a brief kiss on the crown of her head and tweaked her nose, then turned and walked out of the room as if he'd left her snug and comfortable on the soft couch, watching TV, instead of sore and tormented on that cursed hard wooden chair, copying sentences over and over till her hand ached, and the words echoed in her mind.

But then again, she supposed that was the idea, after all.

A few moments later, she heard the front door open and close, and she knew Cole had left the house.

For a few brief moments, she toyed with the idea of standing up and doing her work. Or of at least getting dressed first. Or any combination of other things that Cole wouldn't have wanted her to do while he wasn't there watching over her. She would hear his car pulling up outside and have plenty of time to get into the proper position before he came inside the house.

But she did none of those things. He'd trusted her to do the assignment as he'd told her to. And her curiosity was peaked about the reward he'd alluded to if she followed his instructions. She didn't really want to do anything that might jeopardize her chances of receiving it.

And she especially didn't want to do anything that would end up with Cole repeating his lesson with her tomorrow morning, as he'd threatened to do, either.

So, Katie sighed heavily and continued to copy her lines, the words circling in her mind as her battered behind ached and throbbed beneath her. Cole Messa was a smart man, she decided as she started her twentieth repetition. She certainly wouldn't forget this punishment for a long time to come, if ever.

Katie checked the clock on the wall above the dining room doorway and frowned at the time. She'd finished her assignment over twenty minutes ago and had gotten dressed and even bent the rules a little so she could use the bathroom, and Cole still wasn't back yet. She was darn tired of sitting here on this hard little chair too. She could see the living room couch through the doorway and it seemed to be just laughing at her with its soft cushions and plush covering.

Where was the infernal man anyway???

Just as Katie was about to give up and make a

beeline for the sofa, she heard the sound of his car in the driveway. Sighing with relief, she sat up a bit straighter in her awful chair and even folded her hands in front of her. A few moments later she heard the sounds of the front door opening and creaking closed, then the muffled footsteps of Cole as he came in her living room, paused, and then joined her in the dining room.

"Hey there," he greeted her, smiling. Katie managed a smile back, though she wondered secretly if it didn't look more like a grimace. "Let's see how you made out."

Katie turned the tablet towards him as he joined her. She looked up at his face as he scanned her lines, flipping the pages of the notebook as he went.

"Very good," he commented. "I see you remembered to write neatly this time."

Katie blushed a little, remembering the last time she'd had lines to do and how he'd responded when he hadn't been able to make them out.

On the last page of her assignment, Katie had written out the three things she'd thought of that she preferred to do slowly instead of fast. She watched Cole read over those with her heart in her throat.

As his eyes skimmed the page, she heard her own words in her head as he must be reading them:

1. Reading a good book, especially one by Susan Elizabeth Phillips, or watching a good television show, like *Lost*.
2. Going on vacation, no matter where it is.
3. Being with Cole Messa, no matter what we're doing, or where we are.

He smiled down at her when his eyes lifted up from the page and then bend down to kiss her mouth hungrily, his tongue mating with her own briefly before he leaned reluctantly back from her again.

"Very, very good," he praised.

"Thank you," Katie blushed.

"You've definitely earned your reward," he informed her. Then to her immense relief, he took her hand and tugged her up from her prison-like chair. "This way."

Katie followed him into the living room and a huge grin split her face as her eyes fell on the large pizza box from Nat's and the dvd lying on top of it: Dirty Dancing. Her favorite. And Cole's least favorite.

"You're the best," she told him as she flung her arms around his neck and squeezed the stuffing out of him.

"No, Katie-girl," he insisted, shaking his head, and leaning down to kiss her again. "You are."

Positive Reinforcement

"Okay, Elise, that does it! I warned you about your language and I'm sick of hearing your gutter mouth!" Elise Richards shut said mouth for the first time in fifteen minutes of very colorful vocabulary and gulped. She looked warily at her husband, Brendan, who had snapped the Sunday newspaper shut and sat glaring at her from the couch. His sky blue eyes narrowed. "You test me, and you test me, and I think maybe it's time we started having some discipline in this household, like they do in all those internet stories you like so much." A chill of excitement ran down Elise's spine. Then Brendan grinned evilly and amended, "Well, *sort of* like in those stories. I've decided a week *without* any spankings might do you some good in learning to curb your language."

Elise's jaw dropped open. A week *without* any spankings? None at all? But, that meant a week without any orgasms either, a week of basic total sexual frustration. Didn't he realize that? She looked into her husband's dancing eyes and knew he realized *exactly* that.

"Brendan, if you want to punish me, um... take away the tv or the car for a week." She hesitated, then added things more important to her. "The computer, or my books, or my writing notebook." The infuriating man she had foolishly married just sat there, calmly shaking his head, a smile twitching at the corners of his mouth. Damn him, this was *not* funny! She stomped her foot. "Why don't you spank me then?" she suggested hopefully. At his immediately denial, she rushed on recklessly.

"You could use the wooden spoon - you know the one you tapped me with last week and I screamed 'cause it hurt so bad, so you promised you'd never use it. Come on, Brendan. You could spank me hard and long with that spoon, and I'm

sure I'd be a very sore, sorry girl when you were finished."

Brendan Richards laughed outright at the hopeful look on his wife's face. "You should see yourself, Elise," he chuckled. "Your eyes are all glazed over and your voice is kind of" he mimicked her airy voice "breathless and sexy." He paused to laugh again. "I've told you before I will not spank you as a punishment. I don't have it in me to spank you hard enough to serve as a punishment. And besides that, you know as well as I do that *any* spanking you get you're going to enjoy. Be honest. And that's why I think this will be a good lesson for you. So you can stop trying to change my mind." With that said, he picked his paper up and opened it again.

Elise stood there fuming a few minutes, contemplating grabbing that damn paper and ripping it to shreds. She thought of getting the baseball bat from the hall closet and taking it to the headlights of his '67 Corvette in the garage. She considered slamming out of the house and disappearing for half the day. *That* would show him!

Then she had another thought - a terrifying, horrible thought. If she continued acting up, he'd probably increase her sentence!

She made herself take five long, slow breaths as she stood there staring at his paper. Then she walked briskly out of the room and up the stairs. She slammed the bedroom door on the laughter that carried up behind her.

Elise was determined to make her spanking-less week as miserable for Brendan as it was for her.

She didn't talk to him, or touch him, or even look at him. She went about her activities in the house as if she was completely alone. She prepared dinner for both of them, but would carry hers up to eat in the bedroom or in front of the computer. Early in her sentence, Brendan had tried talking to her as usual, but when she'd pointedly ignored him,

he'd eventually given up and he also acted like she wasn't there in the house with him at all. Although sometimes, Elise was *positive* that he was watching her; since she refused to look up at him, though, she couldn't be one hundred percent sure.

Elise absorbed herself in her favorite spanking stories, taking some comfort in the familiar characters. She marveled over how any of the men from those stories would have had her over his knee long ago, bare bottomed, for a good licking, if he was her husband. Hell, with some of them, she would have gotten it a couple times by now, and would surely be standing in one corner or another with a very red, maybe even blistered or bruised, behind on display. But once the punishment was over she'd be hugged and kissed, reassured and loved, and everything would be forgiven. She sniffed sadly as she clicked the mouse control. Why couldn't Brendan be like the men in the stories? Why did he have to be so damn *nice* all the time?

She remembered when she'd first started dating him; he'd just come out of a nasty ending to a former relationship and he'd told her more than once that in his experience, 'nice guys finished last.' She'd told him he was crazy. She liked that he was a nice guy; he held the door for her and called her when he said he would. He sent her flowers for no other reason than 'just because,' and he always let her choose where they went to eat or what movie they saw.

Now, after being married to him almost seven years, she wished once in a while he wouldn't be so nice and proper. She wondered why she even bothered with her bratty act because he always just sat back and let her get away with it.

She sighed. She missed being put over his knee, and she missed his smooth voice playfully scolding her as his big hand whacked away at her naked bottom. He knew what she liked and always spanked her so she was near climax well before he

had even opened his zipper. He knew she liked playing the naughty girl, so he'd make up some offense to explain the spanking, usually something laughably unrealistic. Then he'd take down her pants or pull up her skirt and flip her over his lap. He'd warm her up over her panties, scolding all along, then pause to let the butterflies build in her stomach before baring her bottom with a great amount of ceremony. And the spanking would resume, alternating the smart, stinging swats with soft, lingering caresses along her legs, back and between her legs. Sometimes he only used his hand, other times he'd make a great deal out of sending her for the paddle, hairbrush, belt, plastic spatula, yard stick, or riding crop. He always seemed to know just when he'd gone a tad over her limit, and then he would reward her body by filling it with his own. Oh, God, how she missed the whole wonderful thing...

Before she'd met Brendan she'd kept her spanking interest a secret from her boyfriends. She'd often spanked herself in order to ease the ache for it. She considered that now, but couldn't bring herself to do it. She had Brendan now, and that was *his* job. As much as she yearned for it, she couldn't do it the old way anymore.

Finally, the week of her punishment was drawing to a close and Elise was nearly giddy with excitement. She planned to virtually launch herself over Brendan's lap, bright and early Sunday morning. She couldn't wait for this to be over and for the silence she'd punished him with to end as well. She missed touching him, being held, even just holding his hand. She missed talking to him and hearing his voice after a miserable day at work. She especially missed looking at him, since she wouldn't even let herself glance at him unless she was positive he wasn't looking her way. She missed meeting his gaze, one on one, and seeing the secrets and memories and love of seven years

together in his eyes.

Maybe, she reflected, he wasn't such a *nice* guy after all. This punishment was far worse than anything else she could imagine.

On Sunday, Elise nervously fussed in the kitchen while Brendan was once again reading the newspaper in the living room. She wondered briefly what had gotten her so angry last week that her language had turned so atrocious, and she couldn't remember. Maybe she *had* been trying to push her husband; she knew how much he hated bad language, especially from her.

All of her plans to fly bottoms up over his lap first thing that morning had disappeared and she felt almost as jittery as the first time she'd told him about her spanking interest. He was silent, as he'd been all week. Finally, she hesitantly went into the living room and sat on the edge of the couch, as far from him as possibly while still managing to be in the same room. She glanced at him out of the corner of her eye and saw one side of his mouth kick up in a grin.

"Hello, there, stranger," he teased quietly. "You don't have to sit on other side of the world, you know. I promise not to bite."

Elise felt like someone had lifted a ton of bricks from her chest as he spoke. She leaned closer to him and rested her head on his broad shoulder.

"Am I forgiven?" she asked a few minutes later.

"I suppose." Brendan set his paper aside and made his wife look at him. "Although your behavior this week has been far from repentant."

"I know." She looked down at her hands, feeling real shame for the way she'd acted all week towards him. He was her husband and she loved him more than anything.

He didn't deserve to be treated as if he was invisible.

"In fact, let me tell you, if I was the kind of guy in all those spanking stories you read, you'd not be

able to sit as comfortably as you are right now, Mrs. Richards."

A shiver ran down Elise's spine.

"I'm sorry, Bren. I was a brat all week and I was really unfair to you," she whispered.

"If... if you want to extend my... punishment..."

"No," he interrupted. His eyes danced at her look of surprise. "I miss that too, you know." He winked at her and took her hand. "No, Elise, I have another idea to help encourage good behavior from you."

She was almost afraid to hear his idea. "What?"

"Well, most people use spankings as negative reinforcement - do something wrong, get spanked, hopefully be discouraged enough by it not to repeat the wrong behavior. Since you like having you tail warmed, that won't work for you. But, maybe if I use spanking as *positive reinforcement* we might have better results."

Elise liked where this seemed to be going. Smiling, she said, "What do you mean, 'positive reinforcement'?"

"Well, with positive reinforcement, the person is rewarded for good behavior. And hopefully the rewards are good enough to encourage that good behavior to continue."

"So, my reward for being your good girl would be a spanking?"

"That's right. It's really a kind of bribery I guess, but..."

"Who cares?" Elise laughed. Then a thought struck her. "But what about when... *if* I misbehave?"

"Well, then we'd have to stop your rewards for a while. Like we did this time, only in the future, I won't be as lenient as I was this time. If you're bratty again while on... restriction, let's call it... then I'd have to add to it."

"Oh," she pouted.

Brendan grinned at her little girl frown and

touched her protruding lower lip. "So, I guess that means you'll have to learn to be a good girl, huh?"

She nodded, looking comically determined. "Just you wait and see how good I'm gonna be!"

"Oh, I have no doubt." Brendan pulled his wife into his arms for a long overdue hug. They held each other quietly a few minutes, savoring the comfort of one another's arms.

Finally, Elise spoke. "So... I know I haven't been exactly an angel this week, but do you think maybe I could have a spanking anyway? You know, to encourage good behavior in the future?"

"Well, maybe just this once, Mrs. Richards." Before she could even blink, Elise was over Brendan's lap and her skirt was shoved to her waist. "Boy, have I missed this sight," he said reverently as he stroked her bottom through her cotton panties.

Elise moaned and wriggled against his leg, aroused by the long week of waiting and the anticipation of what she knew was to come. Brendan's hand fell onto her bottom with a loud SMACK and another moan fell from her lips.

Over and over he spanked her through the thin cotton panties, building the heat slowly. After a bit, he made a big fuss of slipping the panties down over her pink cheeks, then admired her bottom. He praised its shape and color, and stroked it gently, letting his fingers dip every once in a while between her legs. Elise lay over Brendan's lap, her legs opened shamelessly for his attentions, moaning and writhing against him. Just when she thought he was finished spanking her, he started up again, raining down swats faster and harder now than before. The room was filled with the clap-clap-clap spanking 'applause' of skin against skin. The sting increased and Elise's moans were interspersed with little yelps and cries. Still, she ground herself against her husband's legs, feeling the erection now straining his pants.

When she was on the brink of a mind-blowing orgasm simply from the spanking itself and the wandering of his fingers, Brendan suddenly stopped. He flipped her off his lap and onto her feet.

"You go on and get me your paddle *and* the crop, little lady," he ordered with one swat to set her moving. "I want to make sure this is a good incentive to help you remember to be my good baby." When Elise just stood in front of him, a bit too overwhelmed, he gave her another good swat. "Go on, Mrs. Richards, unless you want to fetch me the hairbrush while you're at it."

Elise flitted away, a greedy grin dawning on her face. She paused while gathering the requested items to glance at her pink bottom in the mirror. She touched the warm surface. Oh, how she'd missed this!

"Hurry up, young lady!" Brendan's voice, stern but with laughter at the edges, carried up to her.

Elise grabbed the paddle and the crop and ran for the door. With a giggle, she snatched the hairbrush as she passed it and ran down the stair with her treasures.

Release

Jess carefully closed the front door behind him and shut off the outside light. He hoped that Sarah had been able to get to sleep tonight; he knew she usually had a hard time sleeping if he wasn't in the house, and tonight had been his third late shift.

In their bedroom upstairs, his wife had left the one bedside lamp on its lowest setting. As he took off his shoes and uniform, he watched Sarah. And he noticed the electric blanket on her side of the bed was turned up to the highest setting.

"You awake, baby?" he asked quietly, hoping at the same time that she was and that she wasn't. He'd missed her these last couple of days, since he'd not seen her at night after work and had been asleep when she left for her own job in the morning. But he was bushed, too, and sleep held *almost* as much appeal as his wife's body.

"Hmmm..." she murmured sleepily. Her eyes fluttered open and she looked up at him from where she lay on her belly. "Hi, Jess."

He smiled. He crossed the distance, suddenly very happy that she *had* been awake, and sat beside the bed on the floor in just his boxers and undershirt. He kissed her forehead.

"Been thinkin' bout me?" he asked, indicating the high temperature of the blanket. He slipped his hand under the covering, down her back and found, sure enough, that her bottom was bare, and very warm from the blanket. He smiled as she nodded shyly. He rubbed her backside gently for a bit, making her wait him out a few minutes.

The first time Jess'd come into bed and found his wife as she was tonight, pajama bottoms and panties pulled down below her bottom, laying on her belly with the electric blanket on high, she'd been asleep. And her hands had still been nestled between her thighs.

Embarrassed, she had admitted in the morning to pleasuring herself while imagining that she was being spanked - thanks to the electric blanket her bottom got all toasty warm to aid in the fantasy. She'd told him it was something she'd done ever since she could remember, even before she'd reached puberty and learned how to touch herself to orgasm. She'd always had sexual fantasies involving spanking, but while growing up in a crowded, small house, she hadn't been able to do much more than imagine the scenes in her head.

Jess had been surprised and very pleased by the realization that his wife was turned on by the same thing that he too had been preoccupied with since adolescence. And so their spanking scenes had begun, mostly just as sexual foreplay, although there had been one or two occasions when Jess had given her a mild discipline session. He knew she had a fascination with the discipline aspect, though, so he often made up some offense as his reason for paddling her butt.

She knew not to touch herself now; he'd made her promise to stop that when she daydreamed like this. He imagined she must really be horny from laying there all night, fantasizing.

Finally, he spoke again. "So, what was happening in your fantasy?"

She hesitated, then said, "I was in trouble with you. You were going to spank me."

"Really?" he tried to sound surprised. "Why?"

"Because you caught me taking \$20 from your wallet," she whispered. Almost as an afterthought, she added, "And then I tried to lie about it."

"Well, that was very naughty of you, Sarah Michelle." He pulled the blanket down, exposing her plump bottom to the air, and turned off the electric heat. "What did I do?"

"Well, you spanked me first with your hand for trying to lie to you...."

"Just with my hand? That doesn't sound like a

very just punishment for lying."

"Well, I didn't lie very well and you knew right away what was going on."

"Oh, I see." Jesse's hand came down on Sarah's naked backside with a loud clap. He followed the first spank with another and another, keeping the pace fast and firm and grinning as he watched his wife moan and gasp while she writhed on her belly. "Is this how I spanked you?" he asked.

"Yes, except... well, you spanked me much harder in my dream."

"Oh." Jesse stood up and sat on the bed behind her. He draped his completely complacent partner over one knee, and whacked away at her bottom again, putting almost all of his strength behind the swats. He only gave her twenty or so, but even in the dim lighting he could see her skin pinkening darkly. "More like that?"

"Yes, Jess. Exactly like that."

He grinned, now rubbing her warm behind as she lay draped over his knee. She was a little breathless when she spoke and it made him hard just hearing her talk.

"Then what happened, baby?"

"Then, you scolded me a long time. You said how serious stealing was, and how you couldn't just pretend it hadn't happened since it's a crime and you're a cop and all."

Jess's fingers trailed down Sarah's legs, then back up all the way to her shoulders, then finally settled at her bottom, dawdling there a while. "That sounds like me, all right."

"Then, you said I had two choices: You'd take me down to the station for processing, or I could take a very hard spanking from you. 20 licks, one for each dollar I was stealing, with the leather paddle."

He smiled. His wife had a curiosity of late with that paddle. It was more like a strap; he'd seen that one of her favorite choices for wallpaper on their PC

was a picture of a man paddling a woman with a similar length of leather, so he'd bought one. He'd never used it before on her. Apparently she was trying to give him a hint to use it now.

"Well now, Sarah Michelle. That sounds fair to me. What did you decide?" Like he needed to ask!

"I choose the paddling," she whispered. "I didn't want a criminal record."

"Hmm, good choice." He patted her backside, just so she wouldn't think he'd forgotten why it was there. "So, then what happened, baby?"

"Well, you made me stand in the corner for 20 minutes, holding the paddle with my pants down. And, that's as far as I got." There was clear disappointment in her voice.

"The next thing I knew I heard you coming in the room... I guess I must have dozed off before you actually punished me."

"Well, we'll fix that!" Jess vowed. He leaned over Sarah's back and whispered into her ear, "And believe me, little girl, you won't fall asleep when I'm spanking you for real."

A shiver skittered through Sarah at her husband's threat. For, oh maybe the millionth time in her life, she thanked her lucky stars for having found her wonderful, spanking man. Tonight, especially, she needed the distraction and release that a good spanking would give her.

Jesse slid her off his lap and arranged several pillows in the center of the bed. "Okay, baby, lay down over the pillows and let's get that pretty little bottom up nice and high. That's my good girl."

Sarah felt so wonderfully exposed and vulnerable as she lay there. Her pajama bottoms and panties were twisted around her ankles by this point and her bottom was presented over the soft pillows like a spanking sacrifice for her husband.

He made her wait, like always and she refused

to let herself look back to see him. Her exposed bottom quivered and clenched in anticipation when she heard the dresser drawer sliding open, knowing he was getting out the leather paddle. She pictured the long, slender black leather as it would look in Jesse's strong hand and imagined it striping her behind as he wielded it. She felt her pussy lips weep as she saw it swung high over her husband's head, then falling again and again and again.

Oh, please, Jesse, don't keep me waiting.....

Suddenly the wait was over as the sound of the paddle whistled through the air then landed on her backside with a loud WAP! The sting was fierce, like nothing else before it, and was every bit what she had been hoping for from the implement. A long, low moan from her Sarah's chest.

"Count," Jess said.

"One!"

He made her wait again. The sting and burn of the first lick was almost completely gone when he suddenly delivered her second.

"Two!"

"Is your curiosity being satisfied, baby?" WAP!

"Three! Oh! Ow! Yes, Jesse."

WAP! WAP!!

"Four, five. Owwww! Oh!"

"You are never to steal from me, Sarah Michelle...." WAP!

"Six!"

"...not even in a fantasy. You're my wife and even your fantasies should be good girl ones."

WAP! WAP!!

"Seven... uh... eight... oh!"

"Tell me you'll be my good girl." WAP!

"Ouucch! Nine... oh, Jess, I promise I'll be a good girl."

"Good." WAP!!

"Ten!"

There was a pause and Sarah sensed light filling the room though her eyes were closed. "Open your

eyes, Sarah Michelle."

Sarah slowly opened her eyes, blinking against the bright light.

"Look at me, love."

It was awkward, but she managed to crane her neck around to look up at her husband. The sight of him, all muscles and hard, handsome features, the thick leather paddle in one fist and his hazel eyes hot on her face made her even wetter than she'd been a moment before. Her bottom throbbed and beat with a warm pulse all its own and she savored the feelings as she stared up at Jesse.

There was no censure in his eyes, no judgment of what she wanted and whether it was acceptable. He ran one large hand up from her bare feet to her hot red bottom.

"I love you, Sarah," he said finally. "No, look at me, baby. I love you. You can always count on me to give you what you want, what you need. You know that, right?"

Anything you want or need, honey."

Her voice was a little shaky. "Yes, Jess, I know that."

He immediately looked concerned at the tremble in her voice. "Are you okay, baby? Do you want me to stop?"

She shook her head. "No. I want you to spank me, Jess... till... until I cry."

Now he really looked worried and for the first time in a long while, Sarah felt the old fears of judgment and the old guilt for the sometimes strange things she longed for.

"Baby, I don't want to ever make you cry."

"Please, Jess. I need to. There's so much I have bottled up inside today. I can't let it out...."

He paused, his eyes focused on her face, then he glanced at her already striped bottom. "Are you sure?"

She nodded. "Please, Jesse."

He didn't look happy about it, but he nodded his

agreement. She closed her eyes again as he started paddling her.

She didn't continue the count; that whole play scene was over. Although it had been true that she'd been dreaming it before he came home, this was what she had really hungered for.

She lay quietly accepted the hard spanks that she had asked for. Jesse had never spanked her this severely, not even during one of her few punishment sessions. God, it hurt. Each stroke from the paddle fell across both cheeks and bit into the skin with a fierce sting that turned quickly into a hot burn. Then the next stroke would fall and the pain spread. Finally she couldn't help herself and she cried out and had to clutch at the bedclothes to keep herself from reaching back to shield her bottom. Even as she thought she couldn't stand one more lick, she was silently repeating, 'don't stop yet, Jess, not yet...'

Finally the volley of spanks grew very rapid and each swat dug into her bottom, smashing against her skin and bouncing back. She knew Jess was really putting all his strength into the spanking now, probably wanting to push her over the edge as quickly as possible so he could be done with this. She knew her husband well, and though he was doing this for her since she had asked, she also was aware of how hard it had to be on him to hurt her.

The dam burst inside her without any warning and the tears came. They were silent sobs, evidenced only by the shaking of her body. Her poor husband dropped the paddle as soon as he saw them, and gathered her against his chest for comfort. She cried against him as he rocked her in his arms and tried to soothe her. He rubbed her back and stroked her hair the way he knew she liked. He told her how much he loved her and tried to encourage her to tell him the events of the day, why she had been so upset. Finally, when she'd calmed a bit, she brokenly told him about the

woman and child who had come into the community center where she was a counselor; both had evidence of physical abuse, but when she'd tried to talk the woman into leaving her husband she had refused. She'd known when they left that they were going back to more pain and violence. There was nothing she could do about it. And there had been other cases that day, as well. It had been a hard day for her, and because she had to maintain her professional detachment, the emotions were just trapped inside of her. Even once she was alone that night, she hadn't been able to get them out. She thanked her husband for helping her, and took comfort in his arms as he promised to always be there for her.

Once all of Sarah's tears, and all of her words were out, Jess carefully laid his wife out on the bed and set about bringing her to another sort of release. He was as gentle with her now as he had been hard on her earlier, cradling her body to his own and filling her with his seed till she nearly overflowed with it. He swallowed her cries of lust, tasting them like a rare ambrosia after the wracking sobs from an hour or so before. When they were both spent, physically and emotionally, he hugged his wife against him like a child and fell asleep listening to her calmed breath and steady heartbeat.

A Subconscious Desire

"I'm going to count to three, Kelly Anne, and this door had better be open or you won't be sitting down for the next two weeks..."

Oh boy. Kelly's heart beat crazily at the husky threat delivered through the closed bathroom door. Mitch didn't make idle threats; experience had taught her that.

For a few weak-willed moments, she sat on the edge of the bathtub and considered giving in and opening the door. He'd surely go easier on her if she obeyed - for once. Oh, sure, she'd get some extra punishment for darting in here and locking the door when she'd been let up from his lap in order to fetch the paddle from the closet. But if she prolonged her stay in here past the count of three, she'd get much worse....

"One."

Mitch's deep voice carried through the wood to ring in Kelly's ears. Stay or go? She couldn't hide out in here forever...

"Two."

But then again, giving in now would mean he'd expect it from here out. Kelly crossed her arms over her chest and raised her chin. No, she wouldn't be his submissive little lapdog. Let him do him worst....

"Two and a half, Kelly Anne. Last chance."

She had to smile at that. Mitch would surely carry out his threat, but it was just like him to offer that one last resort, too.

There was a long pause. Then, "Three."

Kelly tried not to tremble as she watched the door; the handle rattled in its place and the wood jumped as Mitch banged on it from the other side. The key had been lost a long time ago and the lock hadn't been replaced; she bet it would be after today.

After a few more thuds, there was a loud

CRACK! As the wood gave and Kelly gulped, thinking of the brute strength it had taken to break the door open. Tall, broad shouldered, handsome, ANGRY, brute strength that now stood before her all but foaming at the mouth with ire.

"Hi," she squeaked, her bravado gone in the eye of the storm. Mitch stared at her in hot silence for a few terrifying minutes as her mind ran wild with wonder of what he was going to do. Even as her stomach churned fearfully, she felt herself going moist and hot, excited at his dominance despite her resolve to fight it. There was a part of her, in her soul, that loved the fact that he wouldn't let her get away with this, or with the original danger she had put herself in to wind up over his knees earlier. She'd be bitterly disappointed if he did.

One of Mitch's working man hands suddenly snaked out and snatched her wrist. With an easy tug, he had her back on her feet and was pulling her after him back into the bedroom she had fled ten minutes earlier in what she'd thought a moment of clever avoidance.

He plunked her down on the bed none to gently and proceeded to blister her ears with the scolding of a lifetime. Never, never, never, EVER was she to run from him, but most especially never, ever, EVER while she was being punished. Kelly's eyes stayed from Mitch's to where her panties and jeans lay towards the center of the room on the floor where he'd all but ripped them from her body before.

Mitch grasped her chin firmly and pulled her gaze back to his. If anything, she realized with dread, he only looked more angry than he had when he'd pulled down the drive and seen her in the corral trying to approach Devil, what a half hour ago? He'd looked capable of murder when she'd heard him quietly bark her name from the fence, trying not to spook the unbroken, unfriendly stallion but wanting her attention as well. In just that fraction of a second, as her eyes jumped from the

horse to her husband, Devil had lost his unusual calm and, neighing loudly, he'd reared up before her, pawing the air in prelude to pounding down on her 5'1" frame.

Mitch's voice had screamed her name in frantic warning even as she was running instinctively for the fence. Her husband's iron grasp had helped her over just seconds before the wild horse would have reached her.

Sitting there now, under Mitch's stern gaze, her ears ringing with his hard words, her bare bottom still smarting from the hard hand spanking he'd already delivered, the stupidity of what she'd done began to sink in. What had made her think she could approach that crazy horse when he'd already bested the most seasoned cowboys on the ranch, her husband included? She certainly never would have tried it if he'd been home, that was for sure. He'd forbid her to get too close to Devil's stall, even - she knew better than to get into the corral with him.

Mitch's tirade had stopped now and Kelly watched with wide eyes as he unbuckled his belt and drew it from his jeans. He stood her up on her watery knees and helped her bend over the edge of the bed. Despite his anger, and the hard punishment he was about to give her, Kelly felt the gentleness in his touch and the reluctance as he arranged her to receive his belt.

The belt connected with her already reddened bottom with loud SNAPS that stung her bare skin. Mitch's strokes were slow and evenly paced, letting the impact of each set in before delivering the next. After the tenth, a low sob broke free of Kelly's throat and tears fell from her eyes to the wedding ring quilt covering the bed.

Mitch continued the whipping in silence until his wife's backside was a hot red, nearly purplish in places. Kelly was limp over the bed, her sobs silent, but wracking her small body. Mitch dropped the belt

to the floor and closed his eyes briefly, seeing it again in his mind, the way Devil had reared back, just moments from trampling Kelly beneath his powerful hooves. Good Lord, what would he have done then....?

Mitch collected his shaking, sobbing mate into his arms and cuddled her to him on the bed. She curled against him on her side and burrowed her face in his neck, as if trying to crawl right inside him. Sometimes he wished he could lock her away, in a secret place inside, where she'd be safe.

"Shh, baby. It's okay." He stroked the hair back from where it stuck to her wet face and used his thumbs to wipe her tears. "God, Kel, you scared the hell out of me."

"I-I-I'm soorry..." Her body shook with more tears and Mitch squeezed her against him for a long time, waiting out the storm. It was always like this with her, even ten years after it had all began. He would tell her 'no' to something simple- like staying away from a wild horse. A reasonable, understandable 'no'. And she would turn right around when his back was turned and go do it anyway. He couldn't even count the number of times over the years that he had punished her for similar occurrences. Yet still she tested him, damn near every chance she had.

When her tears had quieted, she whispered into his neck, "I won't do it again, Mitch. I promise."

Mitch sighed. He'd heard that before. He pulled back from her enough so that he could look her in the eye. "Damn right, you won't."

She blinked. Waited....

"This is the last time I will be tested Kel. If you keep this up, you're going to get yourself killed one of these days and then what would I do?" He shook her by the shoulders as his voice caught. "No, from now on, little lady, each and every day, Kelly, you're going right over my knee. For a reminder to behave yourself. For assurance that I WILL punish

you, no matter what. So you'll remember every day of your life, that there are restrictions on your behavior for your own good and so I have a wife till I'm old and gray."

"Every day?" she squeaked.

"Yes, every day. More than once a day, if you need it." He kissed her forehead, right between her big, blue eyes. "Maybe having a perpetually sore bottom will discourage you from crazy stunts like today. Because, of course, you will still get a proper paddling or whipping for those, as well."

"Of course," she whispered. She sounded awed by his declaration.

Mitch met her gaze again. "I love you, Kelly. More than anything. I've put up with your tests for ten years now, and I'm done with it. You should know by now that nothing's going to change - you don't have to test my love for you at every turn. You can believe in it. It's real and it's not going to change. Do you understand?"

She nodded. She was still clearly shocked by the news that she would be spanked every day. Mitch was resolved in his decision, though - he was convinced that she needed it. Or wanted it. Why else would she constantly get herself in trouble when she knew exactly what the outcome would be?

Mitch kissed her slowly, savoring her warm, wet lips as he touched her still warm bottom. Kelly snuggled close to him again and closed her eyes, listening to his heart beat through his flannel shirt. In the morning, she would fetch the paddle from the closet and hand it to him for the first of her daily spankings. For some reason, as she drifted off to sleep, the idea of having her bottom warmed on a daily basis didn't seem quite as bad as it had at first. It was almost reassuring in a way, even comforting. Hmmm, how strange, she mused sleepily. Is that what I've been after all along? She'd always covered the things that got her

spanked with the defense that she was an independent woman, who wouldn't be told what she could or couldn't do.

Could it be that all along she'd really only done those things to get herself over Mitch's knee?

Nahh....

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