



TAKING IT SLOW

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He slowly lowered his briefs. May's fireman had nothing on Pete. What an ass! He could be an ass model!

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When Pete ducked and dove sideways, she lost him. This dance just kept getting weirder.

She searched. Nothing. And then, she caught him in focus again. Thank you, God! When he turned around, Misty aimed the lens at his crotch.

Oh, my!

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And then he turned around again. *Double damn.* Even as nice as his shaking ass was...she wanted to see more of the front. *Much more...*

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BY

BRIT BLAISE

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TAKING IT SLOW
AN AMBER HEAT BOOK

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*For all of you whose lives are complicated
and a little messy, even at the best times, there's always
hope for a happily-ever-after. Join me at my blog
(www.britblaise.com/blog) and share your experiences.*

CHAPTER 1

Pete Fusconi's just reward for being a damned lousy friend played out in front of his peeping eyes. In the high-rise apartment building, directly across from where Pete stood watching with binoculars, Misty Wilson clutched a pill bottle in her hand. The appearance of utter desperation on her beautiful face said Misty meant business.

Pete panicked. What could he do? How could he stop her?

He set aside the binoculars and reached into his back pocket. His hand shook so hard he dropped his wallet, and the contents spilled across the terrace. The wind caught some of the bits of folded paper, business cards, and money, sending it spiraling through the wrought-iron railing, where it dropped

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eighteen stories to the New York street.

Thankfully, the particular dog-eared and yellowed card he'd wanted fell off to the side and he dove for it. Misty's home phone number. In the next instant, when he flipped open his cell and saw the LCD display, his heart sank.

The low battery symbol taunted him.

He glanced at the number on the card and dialed anyway. When he put the cell to his ear and, thankfully, it rang, some of the alarm zinging along his nerves calmed. If only he could talk to her, he'd find a way to straighten this out before she did something stupid. As the phone continued to ring and she didn't answer, however, the panic returned.

He took a second look at the number on the card... He'd dialed wrong. Pete tried again and his screen went blank.

Dead.

Just like Misty Wilson would be if he didn't find a way to stop her. Or was this just his conscience making him crazy? His family often said he'd traded excessive drinking for rabid paranoia.

Pete needed to talk to her. He had to make certain this wasn't a product of his overly active imagination. Or guilt. Guilt, because Pete failed to take care of her like he'd promised his deceased friend.

He grabbed for the binoculars a second time. Spying on her every Thursday while he visited his lady friend didn't qualify as taking care of her. Peeking his head out of the kitchen when Misty came to the Fusconi family deli every afternoon didn't qualify either.

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Misty still had the bottle in her slender hand, fixated on it with her big eyes. She twisted the lid. Pete had to do something...anything. Her husband, John, had killed himself with pills.

He flashed the terrace light on and off several times and then left it on while he waved to get her attention. Even without the field glasses, their buildings were close enough he could see she'd lowered her hand.

Now what?

She turned off the small table lamp next to her. She must be watching him. He knew she occupied her time watching people out her window. Please let her be watching him. Had he lost his friggin' mind?

Pete had no idea what to do next. The funky blues playing on the stereo just inside the terrace door gave him an idea. A fucking stupid idea, but the first thing to pop into his mind. He danced to the music.

And began to strip.

If that didn't get her attention...

He started with his sweater, then realized he'd pulled it off too damned quickly. He couldn't put it back on again. No time for start-overs! This was harder than he thought. He roped the sweater behind his butt like a towel and seesawed it back and forth. *I must look like an idiot.*

He knew Misty Mancusco Wilson very well. Their families had been close their entire lives. He'd even been friends with her deceased husband...actually more drinking buddies than friends most of the time. And John had killed

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himself with sleeping pills, too, not long after he'd married Misty. No way would she commit suicide like her husband.

Would she?

Pete tried for sexier, certain he looked like a complete and utter fool. Enough of the fucking sweater... He tossed it aside. Next, he reached for the zipper on his jeans, grateful he wasn't wearing socks and shoes. No way could he make that look sensual. He took his time unzipping and humped against his hand. When he moved the jeans down his hips, his legs tangled and he tumbled forward against the wrought-iron railing of the terrace. He dropped his jeans to the floor, stepped out of them, then did a moonwalk back before he killed himself in an eighteen-story fall.

All that kept him from total humiliation were his tightie-whities. He rubbed his flaccid package as he danced. He turned around to wiggle his ass and lowered his briefs.

And then he saw his redemption! The woman who owned the apartment had left her phone laying on a table only feet away, just inside the open sliding glass door. He dove for it. With the phone in hand, he needed the card again because he couldn't remember Misty's damned number. Where had he left the card before he'd decided to strip for her? Pete had to turn around and face her to get it.

Fuck! He didn't have a choice.

His damned dick swung against the top of his thighs as he danced across the patio. That ought to keep her attention! Yeah, right. He'd left the card on a table closer to the ledge. He picked it up and turned to shake his ass again. Heaven help

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him if anyone had a video camera in any of the windows his level or higher.

He dialed her number.

* * *

While most of New York City slept soundly, Misty stared at the empty prescription bottle. At first, the memory of John, indelibly etched on her psyche, made her dwell on the anniversary of his death. He'd taken sleeping pills to end his life on his thirtieth birthday. With the passing of time, shouldn't it be easier to understand why he'd killed himself?

Her wedding ring, barely visible through the amber plastic, taunted her. She couldn't remember why she'd put the simple gold band inside the empty pill bottle. And now, it seemed beyond stupid. She twisted the cap to no avail.

Upon reflection, with the assistance of a carafe of fine wine, the ring in a bottle seemed a fitting metaphor for her life. She was the ring and the posh penthouse apartment where she resided was the pill bottle. And Misty was about as worthless as a gold ring inside a plastic bottle. She did nothing that mattered. Every day—and a good deal of her nights—found her sitting all alone in her chair in front of the large window, watching the apartment building across the street. She'd been doing it for almost two years now. Most of the time, it kept the loneliness at bay. But at this time of night, every night, when there was almost no one awake to watch...

The continuous on and off blinking of a light straight across and down one floor caught her attention. She knew the

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young woman who lived there, or rather Misty's mother had befriended the woman who lived there. These strangers in the windows surrounding her, Misty had come to know them well. They'd become like family and they didn't even know. Or care. No one cared.

Not anymore. Her mother's fame had drawn people. Nobody wanted to know the reclusive daughter of deceased movie star.

The light on the terrace came on and stayed on. A man stood there holding something in his hand. Was he looking in her direction? Why?

The woman who lived there entertained lots of different men, almost nightly. But only one of her men interested Misty—

What day of the week was this? Papa Fusconi's oldest son, Pete, came every Thursday night. It was Thursday.

Pete Fusconi. Now there was a man worth watching. She flipped off her lamp and sat the pill bottle on the end table before she picked up the binoculars in time to see him throw something across the terrace. He wore faded jeans and a soft-looking, blue v-neck sweater. His dark hair contrasted against the light color.

In the next second, he started to dance. What was wrong with him? He seemed a little spastic.

When he removed his sweater and stared in her direction, he startled her. People knew she watched them, but they weren't usually this overt. With his shirt off, she concentrated her focus on his chest and adjusted the lens for a closer view.

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His chiseled pecs reminded her of the fireman calendar cover for May. The month with the most suicides, but where had she heard that? Had someone at John's funeral mentioned it?

Pete Fusconi had come to John's funeral. She remembered he'd worn a navy blue suit and had been a pallbearer. Her mother had arranged everything. It was funny how Pete always seemed to be on fringes of her life, but never quite in it. He'd also been in their wedding party. It seemed weird to ogle him like this, but she could swear he knew, and even wanted her to do it.

He really did have a wonderful chest and stomach. Not overly muscled, just solid lean curves. A smile tugged at Misty's lips.

When was the last time she'd smiled? He took his sweater and put it behind him like he was towel-drying his backside. If he ran it between his legs... Misty smiled wider.

He tossed aside the sweater and continued his bizarre movements like he'd danced at her wedding when he'd had too much to drink. Both Pete and John had taken their drinking seriously. She remembered it well. Someone had told him to strip for her then, too...and he'd just now got around to it?

A giggle bubbled from her lips and her binoculars slipped. She pushed them back in place in her rush not to miss anything.

Pete reached for the zipper to his jeans and her breath hitched. Her heart rate increased. Wow.

She had no idea it could be so exhilarating to watch Pete.

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He took his time unzipping his jeans. Each second made her more nervous and anxious. A sensual curl of attraction reached her sex and she clenched with pleasure. Was he really doing this for her? If he'd only stop jerking like he was having a seizure, she could enjoy it more. Then he peeled both sides of his jeans aside.

Misty saw white underneath. When he continued to push his jeans down, she saw tight white briefs with a very significant bulge in the front. His jeans dropped below the wall running along the patio and she couldn't see what he did with them.

In the next instant, he pitched forward and caught himself against the railing. He looked down like it worried him. Had he almost fallen to his death doing a striptease for her? Misty's heart pounded harder.

He looked up at her and shrugged. She breathed a sigh of relief until he moonwalked backward and almost collided with the wall behind him. He moonwalked? Did people still do that? Misty laughed out loud and bumped the binoculars into the side of her nose.

Ouch!

With the wall stopping him, Pete did a crotch-grab as he danced. Could he get any cuter or sillier? He turned his chiseled buns toward her and wiggled them. When he hooked his thumbs into the sides of his briefs, she sucked air. This was getting really good.

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He moved toward the wall again and the light went out. She groaned and lowered the binoculars to her lap. He was still on the terrace because she could see his shadow.

What happened? Had he finished? Her disappointment made her want to growl. How could he do this? She wasn't ready for it to be over.

The phone on the table right next to her rang and startled her. Who'd be calling this time of night? It had to be a wrong number. No one ever called.

"Hello?"

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“Why were you staring at the pill bottle?”

Misty jolted. It was Pete Fusconi. She recognized his deep, raspy voice and it sent a shiver along her spine. Why was he asking about the pill-bottle? “How did you get this number?”

“Answer my question first. Why were you staring at the pill bottle?”

How long had Misty been staring at it? Evidently long enough to worry Pete as he watched her. She reached over and laid the binoculars next to the lamp. Without a doubt he knew she’d watched his show.

“I think maybe you jumped to the wrong conclusion,” she said. “The bottle is kind of empty. Did you strip to distract me? If so, it worked. However, now I can die a slow death from starvation. You know I pick up food at Papa’s every day. How can I show my face after that?”

“You could always put on a show for me. Then we’d be even.” His normally low voice seemed to drop into a deep rumble.

The sound both thrilled and excited her. What he asked was impossible.

Was he crazy? Misty didn’t dare consider what he asked. Did she? Could she?

“Thanks for trying to save me, but I don’t need saving.” She returned the phone to the cradle and, in the next instant, wished she hadn’t. Really wished she hadn’t. Pete had a kind voice. And, if he’d truly danced naked to keep her from taking the pills, he was a real life hero.

It must be the night for crazy thoughts because she had

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another one. Why not give him a show? If he could show her his...she could do the same. The idea made her breath hitch. She tried to slow her erratic breathing before she reached over to the lamp to turn the switch. How many times had Pete seen her sitting in this chair, wearing this old robe, and she hadn't noticed him watching her? Perhaps he even wondered what she wore underneath?

Did she dare give him tit-for-tat? Her tits for his lovely ass. It didn't seem a fair trade at any cost. She unfastened the belt of her tattered chenille robe and leaned forward to shrug out of it. Underneath she wore a prim, sleeveless, cotton nightgown. Even on hot summer nights, she never walked around in her nightgown. For summer she had a short cotton robe, and in the winter and spring, she wore this heavier chenille.

The cool air chilled her shoulders and her nipples beaded, not only from the excitement of what she wished she had the courage to do, but because of the cold. The first week of May in New York City and the weather hadn't warmed much yet.

She'd show devastatingly handsome Pete Fusconi, with his almost black hair and brilliant blue eyes fringed with black lashes. She could do this. Right then and there, she had a choice to make. Retreat and maintain her miserable status quo or take a step forward. Even if her step was to engage in sexual interplay with Pete Fusconi.

She unbuttoned her gown very slowly. Her hands shook so fiercely she had to go slow on the tiny buttons.

When she got midway down her chest, she froze. "What the hell am I doing?"

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The phone rang and she jumped.

Did she dare answer it again?

What had she done? She wanted to change her life, not turn it upside down.

Her hand visibly trembled as she reached for it. "Hello?"

"Thank you for this. I wouldn't have slept for worrying about you."

Pete would worry about her? *Surely not.* Her breath came in pants. She wanted to speak to him. No doubt he could see her chest heaving as she tried to breathe, tried to get control.

"One other thing," his voice rasped in her ear. "I can see you're out of your comfort zone. But I'd really like you to drop one shoulder of your gown so I'd know for certain you're doing this for me."

Oh, God! Did she dare? She'd only intended to flash him. His sensual request made everything go haywire inside her body. The tingle inside her sex seemed to grow and swell until she could hardly sit still. She gulped. This seemed almost like panic, if not for the tickle between her legs.

"Please?" His voice, low and sexy, caused a rush of moisture to the juncture of her thighs. "I don't want to lay it on too thick, but I did make a fool of myself for you."

She used her left hand to pull at the left shoulder. Her gown fell, but her breast stopped it. He groaned in her ear and a second rush of moisture came instantaneously.

She tilted her head to stare at the cotton hung up on her hard nipple. Did she dare take it a step farther?

Did she? The internal battle began. Her mother, always the

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free spirit, would do it without a second thought. But Misty hadn't wanted to be like her mother in that respect. *Look where that's gotten me! Alone.*

She reached toward the edge of the gown and her warm palm touched her unbelievably sensitive nipple, sending a jolt of pleasure through her. *Oh, God!* She'd never imagined. Not even watching other people made her this excited. *Not even close.*

She rolled the flat of her open palm in small circles over the hard nub and threw her head back, almost without volition. The zing it produced amazed her. Trembling from head to toe, it grew harder to hold the phone, but when he rewarded her with another groan, she gripped the receiver tighter against her ear.

The sound of her own rasping breath in the receiver only escalated her response.

Misty hooked her thumb under the material and touched her nipple. Another punch of pleasure shot through her. She wanted to linger, but she didn't know how much longer her nerve would hold. In the next instant, she jerked the side of her gown down over the pale white skin. The sight of her breast exposed startled her, even though *she'd* flaunted it. Her pale coral nipple protruded like the end of her little finger. Longer and harder than she knew possible.

It exhilarated her, but at the same time made her nervous as hell. She dropped the phone and reached for the light.

Darkness.

She released a long, shuddering breath.

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She could feel, but not see, the phone wedged between her thigh and the chair. Every part of her body trembled out of control, but especially the parts she hadn't learned to use well. She'd gone straight from an all-girls boarding school, to Vassar, then married John.

She brought the phone back to her ear to her only her own harsh breathing. "Are you still there?"

"Thank you. I know that's not nearly enough...but thank you."

Click.

He'd hung up. Just like that...the most peculiar experience of her dull, boring life had ended.

* * *

Pete didn't know what to make of what had happened. When he'd watched his deceased friend's wife on the top floor considering the bottle of pills, he'd never experienced such a feeling of helplessness. What else would've made him do a striptease for her? Especially without a drink in his hand.

He held the card with her number on it. How often had he wanted to call to make certain she was okay? What had stopped him? Guilt he'd let his good friend and drinking buddy down. Guilt because he'd lusted after her even before she'd married John? Most definitely.

"Pete, come back to bed. My flight leaves at eleven."

He turned away from staring at Misty's window to see Tammy standing naked in the doorway to her ultra-modern living room. He left the terrace and closed the doors behind

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him before confronting Tammy. “You don’t need me in your bed.”

She blinked and wrapped her arms around her small, perky breasts. “I don’t need any man. I want you. I want to fuck. Are we going to fight tonight, right before I have to leave?”

“No fight. It’s all been said. I’m ready to settle down with one woman, and you want me for Thursday night only. Mr. Thursday-fuck-buddy. I don’t even rate a weekend. And you need me to stay here and feed your cat while you’re away.”

The image of Misty’s bodacious tata kept flashing in his brain, and he couldn’t bring himself to meet Tammy’s angry gaze. He was a rotten shit-heel.

“You lied. We’re going to fight.”

“No fight, I promise. I’ll stay and watch your cat while you’re gone, but I’m not going to be at your beck and call any longer. I want more out of a relationship. Go to bed without me. I’m going to sleep out here on the couch.”

“Is it Miss Lonely Heart? Every time you come here, you’re more interested in watching her than being with me.”

A no formed on his lips. But maybe he’d just realized something when he imagined Misty had been considering the bottle of pills. Life was too short to waste time. And he did want more. Tammy used him like comfort food. She’d do a weekly sex binge and diet the rest of the week. Plus, on more than one occasion, she’d taken other men into her bed. She didn’t admit it, but he suspected...

“I like looking at Misty. I like imagining what she’d be like if she had the nerve to come out of her ivory tower and

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start living again.”

“She’s not worth your time. Now her mother,” Tammy huffed, “she was another story. Her mother was a star! I loved talking to her. I loved looking at her. She was wonderful. The daughter is a pale imitation at best.”

Pete liked Misty’s more subdued beauty. How ironic. When he’d finally realized what his father had been trying to tell him for years, Misty had married John. Now...it might be too late. For too long, he’d been more attracted to trash-flash women. Like Tammy.

CHAPTER 2

Misty walked into Papa Fusconi's deli late in the afternoon, just like she did six days a week. Papa was her godfather and the only person alive who resembled family in her life. She didn't have a clue what to expect, or if she'd even see Pete. He wasn't always there.

Papa's son Pete had never seemed like family. *Not even close.* And now, the thought she might see him face-to-face, made her stomach turn and her sex twitch inside.

"Sweet girl," Papa Fusconi said. "Have a seat. We've got our hands full. Joey's all thumbs today."

"My thumbs are just fine," said Pete's younger brother. Joey Fusconi had been born the same year as she, and her

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mother and father had been Joey's godparents. Despite that, she didn't know him or the Fusconi girls very well at all. She didn't know Pete well either, but maybe a little better now that she'd seen him naked.

Missy had gone to private schools. She hadn't had any contact with him aside from seeing him in the deli until she met John. John hung out with both Pete and Joey.

"I named you," Papa chided Joey. "I'll call you what I want. Mrs. Glass is waiting on her chopped liver."

Misty went to sit at the table in the corner where she always sat when she had to wait. Today it was littered with the previous inhabitant's dirty dishes. The deli was more crowded than usual. She gave a sigh and settled into the wooden chair. It always gave her a sense of home to walk into the deli. Nothing changed here. Everything was mismatched and not what one would expect for the upper west side. The shabby-retro-chic mismatched wooden chairs surrounded the four red-and-white checkered tables. Booths lined one of the walls and the deli food-cases ran along the opposite side. The register was at the front of the long, narrow room.

"Sorry, Mrs. Glass." Joey looked up above the meat cooler to wink at Misty. "Good afternoon, Misty."

It startled her. Joey had never winked at her before. He'd never even said much to her. *Had Pete been talking?* Her face heated. "Good afternoon," she said barely above a whisper. "Don't worry about me. I'm in no hurry. Is there anything I can do to help?"

Suddenly, everyone went quiet. Why had she said such a

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thing? Maybe the image of her famous mother in an apron waiting on customers when Papa's was busy? Papa said he owed his business to her famous mother's patronage. In her later years, when her Parkinson's became so severe, she always said she missed her visits to Papa Fusconi's more than anything else in her life.

Why couldn't Misty help at the deli if her famous movie star mother had pitched in on occasion?

Papa held his hand suspended with Mrs. Glass's change as he frowned. The elderly woman's jaw dropped and almost hit her diamond necklace.

Joey came around the counter wiping his hands on his apron and picked up a plastic tub. "Lane is off sick today. That's why so many tables still have dirty dishes on them. We're trying to discourage anyone from sitting down." He grinned and laughed. Joey's face, already too handsome for his own good, became downright adorable.

He handed her the tub. "There's an apron on the door leading to the kitchen if you want one. The dirty dishes go to the kitchen."

"Joey!" Papa said. "What's wrong with you? Misty doesn't want to bus tables." But his blue eye twinkled as he watched her. Papa was older than her mother had been, yet he would still turn a woman's head. Both Joey and Pete looked like him with their almost black hair and brilliant blue eyes. And Papa's gray at the temples didn't take away from his good looks.

"Yes, I do want to bus tables." She didn't understand it,

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but she most assuredly did. “I don’t mind. Really.”

She stood and balanced the tub on the end of the table and filled it with the dishes. By the time she finished with that table, the dozen or so people lost interest in staring at her. The noise level returned and she moved to the next closest table.

The tub was only half filled, but its weight worried her. She decided to carry it back to the kitchen and empty it. It wouldn’t be the first time she’d been in the deli back kitchen, but it’d been a long time. Her mother and Papa had sometimes played cards in the kitchen when Misty was young and her mother could still get around without help.

A man stood at the sink washing dishes with his back to her. His wide shoulders veered down to a trim waist. He had the best looking rear she’s seen for a long time and it stopped her in her tracks. Even in his tight jeans, she’d recognized those perfect apple cheeks anywhere. What in the world was wrong with her? Since when did she take time to ogle a man’s ass? *Even one as nice as Pete’s.*

The sound of a throat clearing drew her eyes from his rear. When she realized the sound came from Pete, heat flamed over her face. She looked up into Pete Fusconi’s brilliant blue eyes and the black silky fringe of lashes surrounding them. They crinkled at the corners.

“To say I’m surprised to see you with your hands full of dirty dishes is an understatement. Surprised and grateful.” He swiped at a trickle of sweat on his temple with the side of his sleeve. His dark and curly hair shagged down to the edge of his collar and made Misty’s fingers itch to touch. “This is the

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first day Lane has taken off in five years. I don't know what we're going to do without her."

"Joey said she was sick today. What do you mean?"

Pete shook his head, sending a dark curl down across his forehead. "I didn't tell Pa. Lane's pregnant and having problems. She needs to stay off her feet. I just found out."

"I can do it. I can do Lane's job." Had she just said that? The idea of getting up and out of the house everyday made her ecstatic. She'd never really had a job. When she'd married John right out of college, he didn't want her to work. And then, when he died, she went back to live with her mother in the same apartment she'd lived in her entire life.

Pete raised a brow like he didn't believe her.

"No, really. I can."

"You can explain this to Papa," Pete said. "He'll think I've lost my head. You know how he feels about you."

"If he cared, he'd get me out of that apartment."

Pete jerked like she'd smacked him. His eyes narrowed and his smile dropped. "The job is yours. I'll fight with Pa." He wiped his wet hands on a towel at his waist and walked toward her. He took the tub and sauntered back to the sink. "Bring the dishes here and scrape them off. If no one is washing, try to rinse them a little before you stick them into the washer like this."

Misty couldn't believe she'd had the nerve to ask Pete for a job. If she hadn't seen him naked, she probably wouldn't have done it. Somehow that had changed everything. She took the tub after he emptied it and headed back out front. By the

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time she'd filled the tub again, Pete had followed to wipe down the tables. "I hired Misty to take Lane's place while she's under the doctor's orders for bed rest."

For the second time, the deli went quiet. Then Papa Fusconi gave her a hard stare with eyes similar to both his boys. "Is this what you want?"

She wanted it badly. "Please?"

Papa Fusconi gave a single solemn nod. And Misty blew out a breath she hadn't known she was holding. She had a job! It may not last for long, but she had one. She had a reason to get up early in the morning and get out of bed. Evidently, looking at Pete's naked ass had brought her back to life!

The next time she walked into the kitchen with her arms full of dishes, she tried not to stare at Pete. He was several years older than her, the same age as John. If she was twenty-five, that made Pete thirty-four. And she'd always been attracted to him, even though he'd never given her a second look. Until John. And then, once she'd agreed to marry John, she could've sworn Pete wanted her, too.

Maybe that's why she tried her best to avoid Pete. Misty didn't like to be reminded of John. They'd only been married three months when John committed suicide. She didn't really understand why he'd asked to marry her, since he'd seemed unhappy. She hadn't been happy in their short marriage either, not really, and his death had haunted her ever since.

* * *

Pete hadn't been able to believe his eyes when he turned

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from the sink to see Misty Mancusco-Wilson staring at his ass. Her face turned as red as her sweater when she realized she'd been caught. Her dark hair pulled slick against her head and into a ponytail made her look more like a teenager than a twenty-five year old woman, the same age as his brother. Her big, brown eyes and overly full lips dominated her face. Her dark lashes contrasted against her pale, almost flawless skin. He didn't have to be told she wore no make-up. Everything about her was fresh and perfect.

Not the kind of woman he normally dealt with, Pete needed to take it slow with Misty. "I feel like I've let you down," he told her when she returned with the last of the dishes. He didn't know if he should talk about John so soon, but maybe he should get it out in the open.

Her soft brown eyes got a little wider. Her plump lips pursed. "Why?"

"John came to me shortly before...well, you know. He told me if anything happened to him, I should look after you. He made me promise."

"You knew? He told you he didn't want to live?"

"No! God, no! I never dreamed he even considered ending his life. He always had his black moods, ever since he was young. But I never dreamed he'd kill himself. You didn't have a clue either?"

She shook her head and slanted her gaze to the floor. Pete could tell talking about John made her uncomfortable. But he didn't want it standing between them. "I know this is hard. That's why I didn't do as John asked. He's been gone four

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years now, and I didn't so much as call you."

She lifted her head and met his eyes. Something stirred inside him, an emotional response to their conversation. Relief? More than likely.

"I understand," she said in almost a whisper. "I don't like to be reminded of what happened either. I keep thinking I should've known...been able to do something."

He resisted the sudden urge to reach out and comfort her with a touch. "John didn't give us any options. I'm glad I can finally honor his request. I'm glad you've decided to help us out."

"I need this more than you need me."

"Don't be so sure."

Pete had to make certain she'd be okay. He'd already failed his friend once and maybe now he could make it up to John.

If she didn't drive him to drink. This girl-woman would make a saint consider reneging on his vows. And Pete wasn't a saint. Not even close.

CHAPTER 3

Night fell before Misty realized she hadn't picked up her binoculars once all day. Before she'd gone to the deli, she'd been preoccupied with her behavior the previous night with Pete Fusconi. It was hard not to dwell on it. Was he on the patio across from her, looking at her that very minute? Did he love the woman who lived there?

Misty picked up the glasses and considered her options. On the fourth floor, in the corner apartment, a young couple lived and loved for the benefit of their neighbor's amusement. Their light spilled from the window, but without the glasses, she could only see shadows inside. The couple often stayed awake late into the night making love on a bed right by the

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window. And more often than not they didn't pull the blinds.

Every now and then, after they made love, she'd see them wave to other windows in her apartment building, so they knew people watched and evidently didn't care. And then one night, after a particularly steamy encounter, they walked hand-in-hand, out onto their small balcony and bowed. That's when Misty knew for certain they didn't pull their curtains because they liked to be watched.

She'd heard that some people got off with others watching. What would it feel like to have someone watch you...do something so intimate? She'd had a preview when she exposed a single tit to Pete. Misty didn't know if she could go as far as to make love knowing someone watched. The pressure! She'd had a hard enough time making love with John without an audience.

The phone rang on the table next to her. *Pete?*

Her hand shook so badly she nearly dropped it. "Hello."

"Just so you know, I'm glad for the chance to get to know you better. Are you watching your world?"

His gravely voice traced a path along her nerve endings. But his words did even more. He knew she watched the people in the apartments? "I was trying not to. I want to..."

She'd taken a big step today toward getting a life, a real life. Not her famous mother's and not John's, but a life of her own. The world inside the binoculars seemed to be counterproductive to her initial baby steps.

"You want to what?" he asked when she took too long to finish her thought. "Maybe, to continue where we left off?"

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Did she? She needed to know exactly what he wanted from her. This couldn't be about a peek of her tit could it? "What is this? What exactly are we doing here?"

"Something different. Maybe it's a little out of character for both of us. Trust me. I think we'll both enjoy it."

She didn't know if she completely believed him. She wanted to. "Lately, my life has been watching people out this window. Watching them on the street below, but mostly that apartment building. Don't you think I'm strange? I need to get a life."

"Is that what you tried to do when you decided to work at the deli with us?"

Very perceptive of him. Why not admit it? "Yes."

"Me, too," he said. "I'm changing the direction of my life, getting my priorities straight. I think it's long past time. Last night was the turning point for me, and I have you to thank."

Her heart beat faster. *No!* She didn't dare read too much into this. Then again...she hadn't experienced such exhilaration before as she had when she touched herself for him. The heart-pounding, palm-sweating sensations returned with a bang. She reached over to the lamp and turned the switch. A powerful sense of vulnerability rushed to join the other equally potent sensations making her almost giddy.

He chuckled. The raspy sound ping-ponged off her heart and settled in her nether regions, where it grew at a rapid rate.

She shrugged out of her familiar chenille and heard his breath hitch. Hers mimicked his.

"Is that new?" His voice seemed to lower an octave.

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Misty touched the spaghetti strap of the thin silk negligee she'd never worn before. It was one of many others she'd gotten as shower gifts before her wedding. She had to admit, when she'd put it on, she'd had this in mind. This was the way it was supposed to be with a man. She should have strong sexual urges while wearing this beautiful gown.

"You look sensational. Is that for me?"

"I hoped you'd call."

"Lower a strap for me."

Her hands shook. Unlike the day before, the strap fell easily. The movements of the silk over her sensitive nipple made her groan out loud. Once again, the size of her breasts stopped the material from dropping lower than her puckered nipple. From her vantage point, she could see the pink bud tenting the material.

"Can you put the phone on speaker?" He sounded hoarse. She reached over, pushed the speaker button and laid the receiver down.

Traffic noises from the street below filtered through the receiver and she could see a shadow of his figure on the dark balcony where he stood watching her. "Can you hear me?" she asked.

"You're communicating just fine," he said. "Now about that strap. Take it off your arm so the material will fall."

Misty ran the tips of her fingers over her chest toward the strap hung up at her elbow. She slipped her arm through and lowered the material. Her nipple pouted still more as the cool air gave her another jolt of pleasure.

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She laid her head back against the soft cushion of the overstuffed chair and it automatically lolled to the side. She touched her nipple with her right middle finger and traced tiny circles over the hard tip. It was easier the second time, but no less erotic knowing he watched her touch herself.

Maybe the couple on the fourth floor had the right idea after all.

“Lick the tip of your finger and touch your nipple again.”

Misty paused to consider his direction and then lifted her head from the chair to do as he asked.

“Take your hand away and blow.”

Her sex clenched hard as the cold air contracted her nipple even more. Wetness on her thighs told her how excited she’d become. She wanted more.

“Don’t turn the light off this time. I want to watch you pleasure yourself. All the way.”

All the way! The idea both intrigued and excited her. But she wasn’t ready to go that far. Not yet. “Wait. I went last. It’s your turn again.”

In the next instant, she remembered where he was...whose apartment he was in. “No wait. Where’s your—friend?”

“Tammy? I don’t know if we’ve ever really been friends. Fuck-buddies is a better description. As unattractive as that sounds, that’s the name for it. Tammy’s out of town, and I’m here taking care of her cat. It rips everything to shreds when Tammy leaves it alone.”

She didn’t know how to respond. Was she a fuck-buddy now? Did she want to be? He didn’t make it sound appealing.

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“So...do you want me to dance for you again?”

Misty laughed out loud. She couldn't help herself.

“You're offending me here.”

She covered her mouth, reached over to turn off the light and picked up her binoculars. “Turn your light on. I want to see you.”

When he did, she could see he wore another warm looking sweater, navy blue. He stood by the patio door with binoculars in his hand.

He said something, but she couldn't hear the words.

“You're too far away from the phone. I want you to sit in that red chair in front of you and touch yourself while I watch. You have to go all the way before I do.”

Had she just said that?

He picked up his phone and moved to the chair. “Who are you?” He chuckled.

The rich sound traveled along her nerve endings and settled in her sex.

Misty didn't really know who she was, but she was certain she'd never felt so alive in a very long time. “Fair's fair. It's your turn to make me hot.”

“I didn't dance naked to make you hot. I was trying to distract you.”

“You were very good at it. Imagine what you can do when you aren't suffering from performance pressure.”

He huffed. “Let me set this down. I'm going to need both hands.”

“It takes two?”

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He shook a finger in her direction. "Funny girl...keep that up and I'll come over there and do this in person."

There was a pregnant pause. Did she dare say yes, tell him to come over? If she did, there would be no doubt what they'd be doing. *Oh, my.* It had been so long since she'd even been held by a man, never mind anything else.

She grew feverish at the thought.

Pete sat in the chair and laid the phone next to him. "Damn, this is harder than I imagined." He shifted his weight in the chair as if he couldn't get comfortable. Was he nervous?

"You're hard already?" she teased.

"I was hard every second you were at the deli this afternoon. Papa even noticed. Talk about embarrassing."

Why hadn't she noticed that? Maybe because she'd spent her time trying for ass-shots? "You have an incredible body. Perfect, in fact."

"This is for you." He stood and unzipped his jeans. This time she saw skin rather than briefs, and in the next instant, his penis sprang out of his pants as he lowered them and then sat back down.

"Oh, my." It looked so different than the night before. "Would you say your penis is an average size or bigger?"

"Please don't use that word. Use cock or dick or dong...but the word penis reminds me of sex education class. I flunked. And I haven't seen too many other cocks once they're hard. Guys tend to be funny that way."

His hand slid the length of him and clenched into a fist at the base of his rod. He moved his hand up and down, and her

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vagina clenched. “What do you call a woman’s sex?” she asked, just to hear what he’d say.

“Pussy. Cunt. Snatch.”

She practiced the words in her head. It would take some getting used to.

“Tell me what’s happening inside your body while you watch me do this.”

Could she do that? “My vag—”

“Ah, ah, ah.”

“My pussy is hot and clenching, aching to be filled.”

“Oh, Lord.” His hand jerked faster up and down the length of his cock.

“My breasts ache, too. But I can’t touch them and hold these binoculars steady at the same time. And I don’t want to miss a thing. What are you feeling?”

“I don’t think I can last long. I want to slow down and make it better for you, I really do...but I want to come. I really wanted to take this slow, but I need to come.”

His words made her vaginal wall clench harder than she could imagine. The sensations that followed were unbelievable. The tingling grew and radiated in every direction. Was this an orgasm? It certainly felt like one. No wonder women wanted this.

“You aren’t t-talking.”

“I’ve never...this is so wonderful...every part of me is trembling and floating, kind of itching...I think I had an orgasm.”

“Fuck.”

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She watched as he increased his strokes at her words and a stream of cum spurted into the air. She clenched the walls of her sex again. Moisture spread on her thighs confirming her belief she'd finally had her first orgasm. Not that she hadn't tried and often. John hadn't come close and when she took matters into her own hands, she'd only become frustrated.

“Tell your doorman to let me in.”

CHAPTER 4

Misty wrung her hands as she waited for the doorman to buzz a signal Pete was on his way up. Why hadn't she argued with him? What did he intend to do? Did she really want to take the next step? She didn't think so. She wanted to take it slow.

Didn't she?

The doorman buzzed and she went to the door. Every second made her squirm a little more. When a soft knock told her he'd arrived, her nerves made her jump. She unlocked the door and opened it.

He seemed hesitant and didn't step forward. He shifted his weight back and forth, and she expected him to turn and leave

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at any moment. Thank God. If he'd seemed confident or cocky, she didn't know what she would've done.

"Maybe I shouldn't have come. It was a spur of the moment decision."

She stepped back to give him room to enter. He smelled of fresh soap, like he'd just stepped from a shower. His dark hair curled in damp ringlets to the side of his neck. She so wanted to touch them—him. Taste him. "Why did you?"

"At the very least, I intended to kiss you. Beyond that, I didn't think."

She blew out her nervous breath, ending with a shaky and audible puff. "Oh."

"Do you have any idea what those delectable lips do to me? You have the kind of mouth that makes a man hard and keeps him hard. Incredible."

She took another step back and he followed, closing the door behind him. John had always said she had fat lips. Pete's welcome words pushed aside any feelings of unease. Only excitement filled her now.

Her breath came in raspy pants. All of this...in anticipation of a kiss? She'd never once been like this with John, even when they did much more than kiss.

She gulped for a bigger breath. Something to take away the feeling of lightheadedness. It expelled in a shudder. She trembled from head to toe. "This is insane. I'm going bonkers for a kiss?"

He stepped into her space, captured the back of her neck with his strong hand and pulled her nearer. She rested her

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hands on his chest. The intimate contact startled her. It had been so long since she'd touched another human being, intimately or otherwise. Anyone. It affected her so deeply she cried out loud, a strangled sound, half-sad, half-joyous.

His other hand closed over top hers resting on his chest. He had the most comforting hands. His warmth both thrilled her and gave her a sense of being safe and secure. He pulled her arm down and wrapped it behind him, still holding her hand in his. This forced her tightly against him.

His body seemed like steel, where hers yielded.

His breath on her face gave her a rush of sexual need so hot and fierce, she groaned. In addition to the soap she'd noticed right off, he smelled of a pleasantly spicy cologne, minty toothpaste and a very male potency that made her take a deeper breath to draw his scent inside her.

When Pete slanted his head another jolt of pleasure hit her. The sight of lips so close...she closed her eyes. His easy, and oh so very soft touch, sent a shiver racing down her back. His lips, soft and warm, moved easily over hers. This had to be the best kiss she'd ever had, not that she'd had many. It made her think of making love to him, yet much more. This was a kiss she wanted to remember her entire life. She relaxed in his arms, and he held her tighter.

A sigh welled inside her and she released it. When her lips parted, he deepened the kiss. While his tongue didn't enter her mouth, she could feel the flat of it on her lips. She wanted more. She wanted to taste him. She touched his tongue with hers and the kiss ignited.

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He moved more swiftly over her mouth and his taste invaded her. A rush of moisture wetted the juncture of her thighs and everything suddenly became about sexual gratification. She wanted it. He could give it to her. She knew she only had to ask.

He kept kissing her until she thought she might faint. Her breath heaved in and out. Never quite enough air got into and stayed in her lungs. She clawed at his sweater. She wanted to feel skin. Needed.

Needed.

She'd never needed this badly in her life.

He pulled his lips away. She opened her eyes and fought to focus. His glorious blue eyes seemed to be searching for something. Did he want her to say it out loud? She would. "Yes."

"Yes!"

He smiled, but his eyes crinkling at the corners seemed hesitant. "You should've asked what I had in mind first."

He swept her up into his arms and walked toward the fireplace. The fire had died down, but it still glowed in the dimly lit room. He laid her on the faux-fur throw her mother had insisted on buying. It had embarrassed her at the time. Now she blessed her mother's ingenious foresight.

"Lay down," Pete said, when he lowered her to her feet on the soft throw.

Her toes curled in the fur. When he released her, she seemed to float as she sank to the floor at his feet. She reclined and smiled up at him. The fur against her skin seemed both

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decadent and glorious. She flung her arms wide and ran her hands in it, making a fur-angel.

His eyes darkened as he gazed down at her. She expected him to remove his clothes, but he didn't. Instead he moved down to stand near her feet. "Spread your legs."

She inched up the negligee above her knees and did as he asked. The warmth of the fireplace and the heat of his eyes made her burn inside. He dropped onto his knees between her legs. His denim jeans grazed her inner thighs. She expected to feel his weight on her at any second...welcomed it. Craved it.

Instead, he pushed her gown higher and stared at her pussy. If she'd thought she couldn't get hotter, she'd been so wrong. The same sensations she had when she'd watched him come came back with a vengeance. She panted through the pulse beat of clenches inside her sex. "I'm coming." She closed her eyes and floated in the glorious sensations.

He inserted a finger inside her and she opened her eyes. "Nope. No orgasm here. But there will be."

His finger inside her, both startled her and made her wet. When he moved the digit in and out of her, she squeezed it, making the pulse beat stronger. He lowered so fast it didn't occur to her what he intended until his mouth found her. He kissed her there. The heat from his mouth seared her. A moment later, he used both hands to manipulate her nether lips apart and his mouth and tongue assaulted her. He used the flat of his tongue to lap along her channel. His tongue dipped inside her and her back bowed, lifting them both from the floor.

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He pushed her back down and nibbled and licked her clit. Pleasure roiled and built even greater than she'd experienced earlier. It continued until she wanted to scream from the building pressure. When he again slipped a finger inside her as he sucked her clit, he made her back bow again. This time she exploded.

She saw stars.

She panted.

She screamed.

She began to cry and thrash her head from side to side as the spasms continued toward an unbelievable hypersensitivity.

He pulled away from her and looked up, grinning from ear to ear. "Now that is an orgasm."

* * *

Pete wanted to bury his cock deep inside her in the worst way. He instinctively understood, even though her body might be raring to go, she wasn't mentally there yet. This thing between them, barreling ahead like an out of control freight train, needed to be controlled. Deep down he knew he was right. He needed to take it slow.

Now if he could just convince his body to obey him. Or hers to stop silently calling to him like a siren.

Misty's big brown eyes were wide. She blinked slowly, like even eye her lids were affected by her orgasm. "Wow."

It pleased him beyond reason to be able to do this to her—for her. "Yeah, don't worry, it'll get better. Not tonight, though. I think you've had enough excitement for one night.

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And you have a job to go to in the morning.”

“But...”

“No buts. I’m trying to be strong here.”

She pushed up onto her elbows. Her nipples pointed at him from under the silky material. Why hadn’t he touched them? He didn’t trust himself now. Knowing John, Pete had half expected to find her still a virgin. John swore he was bisexual, but Pete hadn’t believed him. “I’m going to go now so you can get some rest. Don’t go near that chair or I’ll take it as an invitation to return.”

“If I could stand, I’d go to the chair right now. Maybe I can still crawl.”

CHAPTER 5

Pete watched Misty bus tables and admired her shapely ass as she bent over one in the corner of the deli. His cock rose to salute her, and once again, he gave thanks for the apron he'd always hated to wear when he was younger.

It embarrassed him that one time he'd been ashamed of his roots...Papa...the deli...living above the deli with his big, noisy, Italian family. He was the oldest of six kids. At thirty-four, he had a whole different outlook on life. His mom had died giving birth to his last sister, almost twenty years ago. He'd missed having a woman's guidance in his life. He could see that clearly now.

Joey goosed him from behind. He hadn't heard him

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approach.

“Papa always said she was the woman for you.”

“I suspect Papa is a wise man. Too bad I didn’t listen to him when I was younger.”

“There’s still time,” said Joey.

“Time is my enemy.”

Joey huffed. “A pessimist as always.”

“This isn’t about pessimism. This thing has already started and we’re going too fast. I want everything to be perfect for her. I need to find a way to slow it down.”

Joey started twirling his towel, and Pete stepped back.

“Yeah, right. Same old Pete.”

Pete didn’t get it. He wasn’t doing anything the same. No more getting sucked into toxic relationships with women who were easy and didn’t want a commitment. No more Tammys in his life. “I’m a changed man,”

Joey snapped him with the towel, then clapped him on the back. “Keep telling yourself that.”

“What’s wrong with you? Since when don’t you believe me when I tell you something?”

Joey didn’t answer. He walked over to Misty and said something Pete couldn’t hear. She glanced back over her shoulder to Pete and blinked her big brown eyes. What the fuck had Joey said? To make matters worse she leaned closer to Joey and continued the conversation.

And then she laughed. Long and hard.

Damn.

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* * *

Misty liked Joey's infectious smile, even if his jokes were corny. They stood side by side, filling the condiment trays before the lunch crowd besieged the popular deli. When Pete moved to stand behind them, Joey laughed, and Pete stomped off.

Misty glanced back over her shoulder to see Pete disappear into the kitchen. She turned back to Joey. "What do you know that I don't?"

"Pete thinks he needs to take it slow with you. I disagreed with him and told him so. I think if you two have finally found each other, you should go for it, no holds barred."

Misty wanted more of Pete. How could she get what she wanted? "Why does he think we need to take it slow?"

"He's got this warped bad girl/good girl thing in his head. He fucks bad girls and puts good girls on a pedestal, then can't manage to live up to them. Or thinks he can't. He's had you up there since before you married John. I told him to speak up, but he wouldn't do it. He let John marry you, and we all know how that turned out."

Misty could feel the blood draining from her face. "Are you saying John killed himself because he married me?"

Joey choked. "You don't know? No one told you about John?"

Misty didn't know if she wanted to hear it. "Evidently not."

"John shouldn't have married *any* woman. He was gay."

Misty's stomach turned. "No!"

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“Trust me. I know for a fact. John always said he was bi, but...”

What did Joey mean by that? How could he know it for a fact?

“I can see you need convincing. John was my first lover. That’s why he always hung out here at the deli. Do you hate me now?”

Joey was the same age as she. She’d seen John at Papa’s deli since she was seventeen. Had their affair been going on when Joey was that young? No, she didn’t hate him. Not at all. She reached out to him, and he flew into her arms.

“I was worried about telling you. You never know how people are going to react to this kind of news. I really thought you knew about John, even if you didn’t know about me. He promised he’d told you.”

Joey stepped back from their embrace.

“No, he didn’t tell me,” she said. “Maybe he wouldn’t have thought it necessary to kill himself if he had. What a waste.”

“John loved you. He probably didn’t want to disappoint you.”

One of the customers came too close, making Misty pull Joey in the opposite direction. “That’s good to know. You can’t imagine the reasons I’ve conjured for his death. This explains a lot.”

“Glad I could help. But you’re on your own where my brother’s concerned. Although I think you need to show him you don’t want to be the good girl in his head.”

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Bad girl or good girl? Misty didn't want to be put on a pedestal. "I should be bad."

"You should be very, very bad."

Could she do that? "I'm not sure I know how."

"This is a disaster...you're asking a gay guy for advice about having sex with his brother?"

Had she? If he had answers...why not? "I did and I am."

"How about a blow job in the kitchen? That should get his motor going."

A blow job? She'd never done that. Going to an all-girls prep school and then to a woman's college had seriously hampered her sexual development. She hung with the nerds, not the wild and popular crowd. "A blow job in the kitchen? You really think?"

Joey gave a nod. "I'll make sure no one goes back there. We're slow right now...go for it."

Misty walked to the kitchen, not having a clue how to go about this. She didn't want to be the good girl...of that she was certain. However, being the bad girl wasn't her strong suit.

What if Joey's wrong?

She needed to take a chance. Why not go for it? What was the worst thing that could happen? Pete would get a blow job, and she'd have experience and a memory she'd never forget. She'd lived her whole life not taking chances. She wanted to love...and really live.

"Are you and my brother done making fun of me?" Pete said as soon as he caught sight of her.

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Misty gave a quick look around the small kitchen. The door leading to the back alley was always locked, so she didn't need to worry anyone could interrupt from that direction. However, the door at her back worried her. "I don't know what you're talking about. For the most part, your name didn't come up."

He gave a dark glare and then shrugged.

Now how to do this? He stood next to the freezer with a ham in his hand. She couldn't very well give him a blow job while he held a ham could she? This was complicated. "Are you taking that out of the freezer or putting it in?"

"Neither."

That didn't help. "What are you doing with it?"

"Why the sudden interest in my ham?"

"It's not your ham that interests me. I want you put it down and go stand with your back to the kitchen door."

"You want me to what?"

"Don't argue. Just do it."

She could tell he wanted to say more, but he didn't. After all, Pete wouldn't argue with a good girl. Misty's heart raced. This had to one of the scariest and most exciting things she'd ever done in her life. Her palms started to sweat and, for a second, she got dizzy.

"What's wrong with you?" Pete asked once he was standing by the door.

"Nothing's wrong. I'm just a little nervous is all." She followed him. "Take your apron off."

He did and held it out to her. She took it and let it drop to

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the floor. He shook his head ever so slightly. “What are you doing?”

She put a finger to her lips to shush him, but then she had a better idea. She rose on her toes and planted a kiss on his surprised mouth. She didn’t do it nearly as well as he did, but it still made her head spin. She gave him feathering kisses all around his mouth, then moved over to his earlobe, while she reached for his zipper.

He stiffened, but didn’t push her hands away.

She cupped the hard length of him with her hand before she unzipped him. He couldn’t hide the evidence he wanted her. She needed to work fast, before he thought of a reason to stop her. Getting him unzipped was easy. Getting his cock out of his briefs? Not so easy. She needed to go to eye level and see what the hang up was.

She went to her knees in front of him and looked up at his face. He jerked his head back and banged it on the door. He opened his mouth to speak, and she put her finger in front of her lips a second time.

Once she was down there, she peeled his briefs down and his cock came out easily. It was a thing to behold. Only she didn’t have time to admire it. She needed to get busy. She licked her lips, and he moaned.

Misty focused on the large, bulbous cap and the drop of moisture that had formed there. Its creamy appearance made her curious so she reached her tongue out to capture it. Pete’s back bowed like she’d burned him and she heard the sound of his head banging against the door a second time.

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She didn't let him deter her.

She took him into her mouth and both licked and sucked at the same time. The whimpering sounds he made almost made her stop. Was she hurting him? She didn't have time to worry. Someone might try to enter the kitchen at any moment. She encircled him with her hand and moved it up and down like she'd seen him do to himself. He rewarded her efforts by gently doing a pumping motion with his hips and wrapped his hands around her head. He touched her sensitive earlobes with his fingers. His movements made her sex clench and her panties moist.

His sounds became louder and he stiffened. In the next instant, he came, and she continued to suck. Good girls don't swallow, but she wasn't a good girl. Not only did she swallow, she continued to lick him until he eventually softened in her hand.

She stood and touched both corners of her mouth. "Thanks for lunch. I need to get back to work."

He staggered away from the door as she pushed it open.

She walked through, making certain no one could see him. Joey was standing right outside the door as she came out of the kitchen. The goofy look on his face, half-embarrassed and half-proud, made her giggle.

"What next?" she asked him.

CHAPTER 6

Pete didn't know what to think. He wanted to slow down before they screwed up any chance they might have.

He had to find a way.

After all, they came from two different worlds. It wouldn't be easy under the best of circumstances. He was middle-class and she was wealthy. He'd graduated from community college and worked at the family deli. She'd graduated from Vassar.

They were as different as night and day.

"I'm getting hungry again," Misty said to no one in particular as she wiped the counter right behind him. He dropped Mrs. Jankowski's sub sandwich into the sauerkraut.

"I don't want sauerkraut, young man!" Pete looked up

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from the ruined sub into his customer's angry eyes.

Papa came from the meat counter and pushed him aside. "I don't know what's wrong with these sons of mine. I have four beautiful daughters and none of them want anything to do with the deli. I have two sons and both are all thumbs, but they love the deli."

Misty giggled. "Maybe a big, fat kielbasa would hit the spot."

Joey laughed. "I'm sure Pete'll warm one up for you. You have a big, fat kielbasa handy, Pete?"

"And no sauerkraut," she said.

Pete pointed at her and shook his finger...a warning. She smiled at him...no, beamed at him really. Her beautiful, plump lips enticed him as they curved over her white teeth. The sight of those lips around his cock was something he'd never forget. Never in a million years did he dream she'd do such a thing.

"Joey, come back here and get ready to lock up," Papa said. "Don't go hiding in the back when we have work to do."

Joey stuck his head back around the door. "I have a date. Misty and Pete can handle it."

Papa threw his hands into the air. "Young ones these days. This is my gin rummy night. Poor Misty. She gets saddled with Pete."

Mrs. Jankowski nodded. Pete wanted to hide.

"Saddled with Pete," Joey said. "Now there's an interesting concept."

What would she do next? It both excited and worried him.

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He wanted to see her mouth on him again...and fuck if she hadn't swallowed. His balls ached and his cock hardened just thinking about it.

The ripple effect of changes since the night he danced for her reverberated in his life like a tidal wave. He was in shaky and unstable territory. It had become clear he didn't know a damn thing about women.

Pete no longer wanted to understand women...only a single woman. Misty didn't just interest him....she dominated his thoughts. Infatuation? Not like any he'd experienced in his thirty-four years.

Every second, a new emotion joined the band wagon. Sensations, he understood. Emotions? He didn't have a clue. After his father and brother left and he locked up, he didn't know what to expect.

"How long until the cleaning crew arrives?" Misty asked.

What did she have in mind? He glanced over his shoulder at the clock on the wall. "Twenty minutes. Just time enough to get everything put away."

She snapped her fingers and shook her head in an exaggerated gesture of disappointment. "Oh, well, I'll just have to torment you later tonight."

When the cleaning crew came, she sneaked out and he worried even more about what she might have in mind. As much as he liked watching her, suddenly he wanted that part of their foreplay to end. He didn't want to take a chance anyone else might see her. He finished the accounts and headed to Tammy's apartment.

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After a quick shower and a few pats for Tammy's cat, Pete decided to set Misty straight. She needed to realize this was serious stuff. They both needed to concentrate on taking it slow before any chance they had degenerated into every other relationship he'd ever had.

"Go right on up, Mr. Fusconi," Misty's doorman said when he showed up at her apartment building.

She'd known he'd come? He'd lost control before he ever really had it.

* * *

Misty stood by the door wearing only a smile, her sexy red Jimmy Choos and a red boa looped low on her hips before it dangled over the dark froth of her mound. With her pale skin and dark hair, she thought she looked good in red. And for no more than she wore, it had taken her long enough to pick her accessories. She hoped Pete would approve.

At the sound of the elevator, she cracked open the door, then ran for the rug in front of the fireplace, where she settled on her side and arranged her boa to drape off her hip and still conceal the juncture of her thighs. She propped her head up with her elbow on the floor and draped her long, straight black hair over her chest.

She could see the door from where she lay.

"Misty?"

"In front of the fireplace."

She heard him moan.

A chill ran along her spine having nothing to do with the

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temperature. The fireplace behind her made the room glow. Would he be able to resist her? She didn't think so. But if he somehow managed, she just have to come up with a better plan.

"You look... How am I supposed to... Nice outfit."

She had to fight off a giggle. She didn't want to spoil the effect her nice outfit evidently had on him. The protrusion at the crotch of his tight jeans made a silent promise of good things to come.

"I've never seen your hair down. Not even at your wedding. Damn, maybe I shouldn't have mentioned your wedding. Not right now, I mean." He held up a white paper bag. "I brought us dinner."

"Will it keep? Because I'm not sure I will."

He let the bag drop to the floor. "Kielbasa."

"Now I clearly remember you saying cock, dick or dong...no mention of kielbasa."

"You said you wanted—"

"I do want," she interrupted. "You. Inside me. Right now." It was thrilling to admit. Powerful.

He kicked out of his loafers, shrugged out of his sweater and had his jean unzipped before she could say... "Give me a bite of your big, fat kielbasa." Like once before, he'd gone commando. He could say whatever he wanted, but evidently his subconscious wanted to have sex with her.

He dropped down to his knees on the floor next to her and immediately linked his hand behind her neck and pulled her face close to his. He paused for an instant before kissing her.

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His lips nudged hers apart and his tongue searched her mouth. He tasted wonderful. His kiss became urgent in the next instant and she relaxed.

He wouldn't deny her.

He moved away from her mouth and traveled kisses down her neck. His mouth burned along her skin and communicated loudly with her sex to make her wet and ready. When his lips and teeth latched onto her nipple, she lost her poise. She threaded both hands in his thick, curly hair and slowly reclined back onto the thick pillow behind her.

Delicious spasms of pleasure traveled from his mouth on her nipple straight to her sex. Pressure built rapidly. When he nudged her legs apart while he continued to suck, she complied in haste. This already had her in a hypersensitive rush to get him inside her. She wanted to know that part of him.

He ran a finger along her slit, then tucked it inside her and mimicked the action she wanted. It satisfied her immensely for about two seconds. When he gave her two of her fingers, her back bowed with a spasm of delightful pleasure. But again it didn't last...wasn't enough.

"I need you inside me."

He pulled away from her breast and gazed at her through narrowed eyes. He blew out a breath. "It's too soon."

She hadn't expected him to resist her. Nor did she realize it would hurt her to think he didn't want her as much as she did him. "No, it's not." Had that sounded like a whine?

He pulled his fingers from inside her and traced circles

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around her too-sensitive clit. For a second, she thought he'd sent her over the edge. She panted in an effort to get control. She wanted him inside her for this, and if he didn't fucking hurry, she'd come without him.

"You're right. It's not too soon." He took his magic fingers away and she calmed. This was only about sex, wasn't it? Why did feel like so much more?

The sound of foil told her what he was doing before he leaned down. When he eased his weight onto her, she loved the all-over sensation of skin touching skin. Of being anchored to the floor under him.

He raised onto his elbows. "Look at me. I want to see your eyes."

She opened her eyes. His brilliant blues, heated with desire, seemed to see inside her. Her sex reacted by tightening. A thrum, almost audible, pulsed through her veins. Would he watch her this closely while she came? *How erotic.*

He pumped the length of his cock against her slit, probing for her channel. Pete found her on the second thrust and entered only slightly. His arms trembled, and she imagined it had nothing to do with not being to sustain his own weight and everything to do with what sticking his cock inside her did for him.

He pulled up and reached a hand down between them. He found her clit and massaged the nub. She didn't want that as much as she wanted him inside her. She wanted to protest. The pressure took her fast. She didn't want fast, did she?

When he eased his hand from between their bodies, the

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tight, keening thrum lessened. She floated on an invisible ledge of pressure and lifted her hips to push him further inside. He entered her so unhurriedly, she wanted to scream. The full sensation made the pressure worse and even once he was fully seated she could feel him against her sensitive bud.

Without withdrawing, he moved against her clit again. A spasm of pleasure rocketed through her. He waited a moment and did it again.

Another longer, stronger spasm. And still he remained tight against her. He lifted somehow, taking her with him, and another sensitive part inside sent her a perfect zing of pleasure.

“I think you’re close and don’t even think about taking me with you. Just relax and let me give this to you.”

Give it to me, big boy, ran through her head. She nodded and watched his eyes.

He moved in and out in deliberate, controlled thrusts. Each time when fully seated, he gave an extra jolt that connected with her clit. On each retreat, he found another spot he nudged. The different zings of pleasure fed on each other and carried her higher, a little tighter and more into an altered state, where she couldn’t seem to focus on his beautiful blue eyes.

“Don’t let your eyes roll back like that. Focus.”

Was he insane? He moved a little faster and the two pressure points he never seemed to miss, merged into one. One very unique and very sensitive pinnacle of pleasure almost too perfect to endure for any length of time. And somehow he managed to keep her suspended there. She was

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afraid to breathe for fear she'd plunge over the other side and lose it. He seemed to lose some of his control and pumped harder.

His eyes burned into hers.

Could he see her suspended in this perfect place? Was he there with her? She barely moved, letting him have control.

There was no plateau. Each thrust took her higher, when she didn't know higher existed. She seemed to swell inside, making everything tighter and more urgent.

He continued to thrust and she grabbed his ass.

Misty didn't know if she'd survive the climb.

Still faster.

He pulled back and pumped gently against her, almost tapping against her opening. Her tightness softened.

Her breath came in rasping pants.

She focused on his eyes and then she exploded with pleasure. Pleasure so much greater than what she'd previously experienced. The other, which had been outstanding, now paled in comparison. He thrust the length of his cock into her...buried himself inside her while the walls of her sex clutched and released over and over with her orgasm.

She wanted to thrash her head, but his eyes mesmerized her, kept her focused on the pleasure. Then he moved again. His breathing changed and he moved faster and harder. His face twisted into almost a grimace, but he didn't look away.

His pelvis shuddered against her and he grunted loudly. His shaft pulsed, and a short while later, he collapsed on top of her. Every other second, he trembled and pushed his cock into

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her farther. His erratic breathing slowed, but she could feel the heavy, rapid thump of heart against her own chest.

He pushed his pelvis against her again and just like that...she erupted into a second orgasm. Not nearly so strong...but just as perfect. She contracted around his cock still buried inside her. She lifted her legs still more to encircle his waist as the spasms continued.

She relaxed her spine back against the floor. With her eyes closed, she let the sweet pleasure take her. Not long after the final clench eased and she luxuriated in the glorious, peaceful bliss, she felt him harden inside her.

CHAPTER 7

Pete had just spent the most perfect day he ever had with anyone, let alone a woman. Even going back to work on Monday hadn't clouded the glow. He found every possible excuse not to leave Misty's side while they worked.

Every time she spoke, he didn't want to miss it. He couldn't get close enough in the deli to smell her unique fragrance as well as he would've liked, so he had to use his imagination. He never dreamed another human being could so influence his every thought and action. Would it get worse?

Lord, he hoped not. Everyone at the deli who'd noticed had already teased the shit out of him. Misty took it all in stride as his family went to great lengths to embarrass him. All

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four of his sisters came into the deli. Renee even took a long train ride home from school, which she'd skipped, to come and taunt him. They treated the ordinary Monday like a holiday.

"I have an errand to run after work, but I'll be done by about seven," he told Misty when she was about to leave work...probably to escape all his sisters' questions.

"Take your time," she told him. "I could use a long, hot bath."

Pete breathed a sigh of relief. He hadn't wanted to share this part of his life yet. He didn't want to disappoint her so soon.

* * *

Misty curled up in her chair overlooking the apartment building where only five days earlier, Pete had done a strip tease for her. The lights were on in the apartment. He must have finished his errand and was taking care of the cat. Since it was more than an half an hour before he told her he'd come over, she wasn't worried.

Resisting the urge to pick up the binoculars, she leaned back. She didn't need to watch Pete through binoculars when she'd soon have him up close and very personal. A movement in the window next to the patio caught her eye.

She couldn't help it. She picked up the binoculars and trained them on the window. The naked ass of a woman riding up and down on a man's long cock came into view. Misty panicked and almost dropped the binoculars.

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When she put them back against her eyes they were out of focus. She overcorrected in her panic to see who the woman was fucking and got nothing but fuzzy shadows.

It couldn't be Pete!

It just couldn't.

When Misty finally got the lenses into focus, she still couldn't see much beyond the woman's ass, as she stroked up and down on the man underneath her. Misty couldn't see much of the man at all. His legs were under a sheet, so she couldn't see even his feet.

She didn't know what to do. It wasn't Pete.

It wasn't.

She could call him. She clutched the binoculars with one hand and reached for the phone. The last number she'd dialed on the house phone had been Pete's cell, so she hit redial, then the speaker and put the glasses back in front of her eyes while she listened to the phone ring.

It rang once. The woman seemed to fuck harder.

Another ring. Misty searched for anything to tell her it wasn't Pete.

After the third ring the woman leaned to the side. Misty caught a brief glimpse of the man. He had dark hair like Pete. But she didn't get a close enough look.

"Hello?" a woman's breathless voice came through the phone. Loud music played in the background. The same song Pete had stripped to.

Misty moved the glasses up. The woman had a phone to her ear.

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“Can I talk to Pete?” Misty didn’t know how she got the words out. Or what she’d say when he came on the phone.

“I’m in the middle of something right now.”

Silence.

Misty saw her toss the phone aside and pump up and down harder. Misty jerked the glasses down. She’d seen more than enough.

She threw the glasses at the wall and they broke with a crash.

Why couldn’t he just tell her? Why had he led her to believe they’d just experienced something unique. They’d made love all day on Sunday, and he’d sworn he’d never been more satisfied.

Dog.

Fucking dog.

She unfurled from the chair, suddenly feeling like she’d aged a hundred years. She went to the intercom and buzzed the lobby. When the doorman answered, she told him not to allow Pete Fusconi up to her apartment under any circumstances.

* * *

Pete walked into Tammy’s apartment to feed the cat. He couldn’t wait to get across the street to see Misty. When he opened Tammy’s door, he saw her suitcase.

“Tammy?”

No answer. He walked to her bedroom and found her fucking her brains out. If the music hadn’t been so loud, he

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would've heard them and stopped himself from the indelible memory. What a fool he'd been. She didn't even make a good fuck buddy.

Tammy followed him to the door after he gathered his belongings. "I'm sorry, Pete. I didn't expect you so soon. I know you have AA on Monday nights."

"It doesn't matter. I think I may be in love anyway."

Tammy smiled, but it didn't reach her eyes. "No harm, no foul. We can part as friends then. Thanks for looking after Ritz. I can always count on you."

Pete didn't want to dwell. This was over. He'd already moved on. He threw his duffle bag over his shoulder and headed for Misty's apartment.

"Sorry, Mr. Fusconi. I have strict orders not to allow you up."

Pete was taken aback by the doorman's words. What had happened since he'd left Misty only a couple of hours earlier? He reached for his phone.

Gone.

He tried to remember the last time he'd used it. Then it came to him. He'd left it on Tammy's bedside table when he took a shower after work. He'd gone to Tammy's before his AA meeting to check on the cat.

The last thing he wanted was to see Tammy again, but he needed his phone. He walked back across the street where the doorman opened the door with a nod and smile. He took the elevator up, trying to come up with a good reason for why Misty wouldn't want to see him.

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Tammy answered the door right away.

"I forgot my phone."

She looked confused for a second and then a light bulb went on. "Yeah, right. It's on the floor in my bedroom."

"I'm fairly certain I didn't leave it on the floor."

"I answered it, and some woman asked for you. I couldn't talk at the time and told her I was in the middle of something."

Pete had his answer. Misty must think because a woman answered his phone, he was up to no good. In the next instant, it perturbed him. He didn't care for the fact she didn't trust him. He waited while Tammy retrieved his phone, then called Misty once while in the elevator.

No answer.

He tried again when he got outside the apartment building.

Still no answer. After the third try, he decided to leave a message with Misty's doorman.

He wrote a note and reread it. *Tammy told me she answered my phone. Sorry, I didn't realize she'd come home. Nor did I know I'd left my phone in her apartment. Sorry if you jumped to a wrong conclusion.*

He deliberated over how to sign it. "Love" seemed to pop first into his mind. Her lack of trust made him hold back. When nothing else seemed to fit, he just signed his name. Once he gave it to her doorman and left, he immediately worried. Maybe he'd been too harsh. What if she took it wrong?

He tried calling again. And then again. By the time he made it to the apartment over the deli, he'd worked himself

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into a wreck.

Joey was watching television. "I thought you were still cat-watching."

"Tammy came back early."

"I'm surprised you aren't with Misty."

Did he want to talk about it? Would it do any good? "She's pissed with me."

"What did you do now?"

"I didn't do anything. I left my cell at Tammy's and I think Misty called. Tammy answered."

Joey reached the remote toward the television and clicked it off. "You'll make it right."

Pete wasn't so sure.

By mid-morning the next day, Pete didn't share any of his brother's confidence. Misty hadn't come to work and had left a message on the deli answering machine saying she wouldn't return. When she walked into the deli at noon and put her apron on, Pete's relief could probably be measured on a Richter scale.

"Don't talk to me until I calm down," she said once they were alone in the kitchen. "If you wanted other women, the least you could do was be honest with me. I'm here because of Papa and Joey. I don't want them to suffer because you couldn't keep it in your pants."

"Why would you assume, because Tammy answered my phone, that I slept with her?"

"I thought I saw you fucking her. I was positive, but a little while ago I began to wonder if I'd been mistaken."

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"I don't know who Tammy was with, but it sure as hell wasn't me. I came back to the apartment after my meeting and found her in bed with a man."

"But I called here and spoke with your sister. She said if you wanted me to know where you'd gone, you'd have to tell me yourself."

"I didn't go to fuck Tammy. I have no desire to fuck her or anyone else for that matter. Except for you. My sister didn't want to tell you where I'd gone because she's embarrassed for me. She wanted me to tell you myself. I'm an alcoholic. I go to meetings every Monday night. I have for about four years now. I joined shortly after John killed himself."

"John drank a lot, too."

Pete didn't want to talk about his drinking problem so soon in their relationship, but right then it was questionable if they even had one. "Yeah, we had that in common, too."

"I guess this explains the sign."

"What sign?"

"Your fiend, Tammy hung a sign from a sheet on her balcony. It said: It wasn't Pete."

"So you believe me?"

"I'm sorry I jumped to a wrong conclusion and didn't give you a chance to explain. All I could see was her, on top of a male body, and when I saw her answer your phone—"

"Let me get this straight in my head. Tammy was doing the nasty, on top of an unidentified male victim and you called my cell? At which time she answered it...while she was still on top of him—no wonder you wouldn't talk to me."

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“I think I need to get rid of the binoculars.”

“You could always trade them in for a live-in boyfriend. One who wants the chance to show you he’s indispensable.”

“So you decided not to take it slow?”

He drew her into his strong arms and delivered a kiss full of promise. “Slow. Fast. Anything in between. I’ll take you any way I can. For as long as you’ll let me.”

“Just as long as you don’t take it too slow.”

BRIT BLAISE

As her first year of writing draws to a close, Brit Blaise has seen many changes in her life. Her time is now split between her mountain home in Arizona and a small farm in Ohio, with a rambling, rundown Victorian she purchased in a small Ohio town to restore on the side. No more season tickets to watch arena football, now she's mangling fingers as she attempts to build, refurbish and restore. Her bungling attempts are chronicled at www.my_old_house.com. In between injuries, she's working hard on new stories for Amber Quill Press she hopes will keep her readers entertained in the future. Keep in touch with her latest project at www.Britblaise.com and happy reading!

* * *

***Don't miss Two Weeks In Paradise, by Brit Blaise,
available at AmberHeat.com!***

Kim Stowe experiences rapture at thirty-thousand feet, and she has nowhere to go but higher when a handsome author agrees to give her two weeks of sexual paradise, no strings attached. Her dull academic life just took a drastic turn for the better. So much so, she doesn't know if she'll be able to return to her old boring existence...until disaster strikes!

Best-selling author, Jake Forman, is falling head over heels for his new neighbor, until he learns she's a pawn in the hands of his nemesis. He's ready to give up on her, but his heart isn't. Will he be man enough to forgive old wrongs for a woman he just met?

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