



DIRTY LITTLE TRIP

C. R. MOSS

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Dirty Little Trip
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DIRTY LITTLE TRIP

BY

C.B. MOSS

DEDICATION

As always, to my love, CJM.

The Black Rose

The black rose symbolizes the old hag, the wise lady of death. It represents the death of ideas, thoughts and beliefs. It can also signify a major change or the renewal of physical or mental strength or energy in the future. The promise that you will soon know something you didn't know before. Some see it as a bad omen. The black rose can say *farewell*.

The White Rose

White roses represent purity and true love. They can be an excellent gift for a fiancé, a spouse on a wedding anniversary or the birth of a child. It's the rose of servitude. Can be otherworldly.

9 Roses

Together forever

"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

Revelation 16:15 (New International Version)

CHAPTER ONE

Journal Entry # 66

J I had another dream about him, my tall dark stranger, who comes to me in the night and takes away my pain and sadness. This time he found me outside of Randy's Pit Stop, the small gas station, convenience store and cafe on Route Nine in the middle of nowhere. My dream didn't indicate what I was doing out in the deep country in the late evening and there wasn't anything in my possession from the store though I was parked in one of the customer parking spots. A faint trace of chocolate coated my tongue, but that was nothing new. Lately, I eat chocolate bars like they're going out of style. It's a nasty habit I know I have to break. Perhaps I had been out on the road and stopped for one of my comforting, sweet treats.

Regardless, there I stood about ready to enter my car, my eyes transfixed on the man, panther sleek, black hair, eyes, clothes. A gust of wind blew through the trees surrounding the modest establishment. His black trench coat flapped in the breeze, but not one ebony hair on his head or in his goatee moved. A metal chain clinked against the lone gas pump. A streetlamp behind

Dirty Little Trip

him flickered. His approach seemed to skip and jump. One moment the crunch of gravel beneath his feet indicated he was a distance away. The next he had gained several feet, then he was near. Soon, all that separated us was the car door. Thank God for that.

It's like he reaches out and surrounds me in soft, thick angel wings to protect and comfort me. But his soothing presence has an underlying edge, a magnetic virility that terrifies me. I can sense his intentions and they are oh so bad, so deliciously wrong. He penetrates me with his dark-eyed gaze. I start breathing, heavy and fast like I've been running from something, to something. I'm not sure. His steady attention invades my soul and I can't hide, not from him. He seems to know my innermost thoughts and secrets. The strange ease I feel around him includes a deep sense of longing. He makes me feel wanted and beautiful again, makes me feel like a woman who is desired above all else, sensations long absent in my waking world. I want to touch him, feel his large hands stroking my skin. I crave the strength, the wanton passion he exudes. I think about him all the time, find myself wanting to sleep whenever I can just to catch a glimpse of him, learn his name, feel his caress. I lust after him when I'm awake, too. I feel like I'm going slowly but surely insane with the want of him.

In a way, I believe God has sent him to me to help me through my difficult time. But if this man is an agent of God, why does he visit me in such a dark, ominous form? Why does he appear to look like the devil

incarnate? Why would God send such a man to comfort me? Then again, why has God allowed what's occurred in my life recently as it is? All my life I've been a good person. I've gone to church, treated my neighbors with respect and supported my community. Land's sake, I was Miss Cornhusk beauty pageant queen back in my senior year of high school! The good will and community service that position entailed should have earned me some brownie points toward God's graces, right?

I've cried myself to sleep for too many nights. I'm weary of asking God why he felt it necessary to break my family apart and what plan he has for my life. I'm tired of feeling like a second-class citizen, a washed-up has been, except when I'm dreaming. If God wants me to feel love only in my dreams, then I will accept that gift. It's better than nothing.

In my dream last night when my gorgeous man held out his hand and said Come, my heart raced with joy. With an eagerness I hadn't felt in years, I reached out to take his hand, looking forward to a journey with him, wherever he wanted to take me.

But wouldn't you know it? I woke up a second before we touched.

CHAPTER TWO

Snow fell in light fluffy flakes outside the clinic window, covering the world in a thin layer of white. She hated to drive in inclement weather, especially lately with the way her luck was running. All she needed on top of her children's complaints and questions, her failed marriage and precarious job situation due to hard economics, was an accident. That would round out the past few months pretty nicely, she thought, and fiddled with the wrapping of a chocolate bar.

"Mary Jane? Have you heard a word I said?"

Mary Jane turned her attention from the window, bit into the candy and focused on her therapist. Once upon a time in an age that seemed so far removed from her current situation, Bailey June was her beauty pageant nemesis. She had beaten the woman in many contests, but when it came to the game of life, Bailey seemed to have won by a long shot. No wrinkles adorned the woman's wonderfully textured face. No grays sprang in wiry fashion from her therapist's

perfectly coifed hairdo, her blue blouse and black pants had been pressed to crisp clean lines and her nails had been recently manicured. Ms. June had a loving husband, a career and children excelling in music and academics.

Along with bad weather, she hated having to face Bailey like this, on a couch pouring out her troubles. But a month ago her doctor had ordered her to see someone and Bailey was the only therapist in town. With kids and work, she couldn't drive an hour each way into and out of the city to see someone else. So here she was, stuck with Miss Cornhusk runner-up, who didn't need to hear all her woes since the whole town knew everyone's business anyway. A piece of chocolate snapped between her teeth. "Sorry. The snow caught my eye." Mary Jane glanced at the half-eaten bar in her hand, trying to remember if she had another one in her purse or coat pocket.

"I was asking how your dreams and diet have been lately. Are you still journaling?"

She took another nip at the bar. The sweet smoothness melted on her tongue. An image of her mysterious dream man flashed in her mind. His lips turned up in a playful grin beneath his mustache. White hot desire flamed through her. She shifted in her seat, her panties creating a pleasurable rub against her flesh. She hadn't told Bailey about the man yet and she had no intention

to. "They've been fine. I haven't had a lost-in-the-forest dream in ages. My diet...well." She held up the candy bar. There are worse things I could be addicted to, she figured, like drugs or alcohol. At least the dark chocolate she consumed was said to be somewhat healthy with its anti-oxidant properties. "And, yes, I'm still writing my thoughts and feelings down."

Bailey tilted her head and stared. Her fake-lashed eyes narrowed. "I know this is only our third visit, but if you don't drop the attitude and open up, how do you expect me to help you?"

"Open up?" She wrapped the chocolate, put the candy on the couch beside her and clasped her hands in her lap. Her fingers squeezed together until a faint hint of pain shot through her tendons. "What do you want me to tell you that you don't already know? You and I have known each other for ages. We've lived in the same small town all our lives, attended the same church for years. Your family knows mine. Our kids play together. What don't you know about me?"

"That's for you to say."

"Oh, don't give me that psychiatric crap. You know full well what I've gone through. I heard the rumors and you were gossiping with the best of them. The stories running rampant that Bobby Joe and I were having trouble in the bedroom, that I had started the change and was taking out my

hormonal discomfort on him. Oh, poor Mary Jane, the dumb beauty queen, can't hold onto her husband. Total bull." She readjusted her hands. Her fingernails, rough and jagged from her teeth, bit into her palms. "I knew he had been cheating on me long before I kicked him out of the house. I may not have a college degree, but I wasn't the poor little fool everyone thought I was. There were too many clues that couldn't be overlooked. I hired a private detective to confirm my suspicions. I stayed with Bobby Joe to keep the happy façade of family life going because that's what a good Christian woman does. But I denied him sex because I didn't want another woman's germs invading my body. I denied him because I wanted to hurt him like he was hurting me!"

"Good." Bailey jotted some notes on her yellow legal pad. "Let the anger and hurt out."

Mary Jane glared at Bailey, intense dislike over the woman's condescending tone boiled within her. She snorted in disgust, imagining how Bailey probably thought herself to be perfect and without flaw. "Anger? Anger doesn't begin to describe how I feel. Picture, Miss Perfect, your world coming to a crashing end. Your husband no longer looks at you with love and affection or desire. Your children ask why *you* are driving *him* away. Your breasts sag, wrinkles and fat plague your face and body overnight and your lovely blonde

hair turns white."

Bailey's gaze widened in surprise. "Miss Perfect? Me?" She placed a graceful hand on her chest.

"Yes, you." She knew she shouldn't direct her frustration about her failed marriage and home life at the woman, but Bailey was the best target. God obviously didn't give two figs how upset she was. Her friends, though they pretended support, whispered about her behind her back so she couldn't turn to them anymore. The only one who remained was her dream man and all she wanted to do was get home to him. "You with your perfect family, the college degree, the career." She swept her arm out toward her. "The perfect boobs." She wagged a finger at the two mounds on the woman's chest. "Are they what you were getting done last year when you weren't around for a month?"

The therapist sprung to her feet, stormed to the door and threw it open. "I know you're upset, but I will not be spoken to that way. I no longer wish to see you in my office. I will inform your doctor of our terminated relationship." Bailey spun on her heel and left the room.

I didn't want to be here anyway. Mary Jane retrieved the candy from the couch and popped the last bit of it into her mouth. *I want to be with him.*

CHAPTER THREE

“Mom, come on, wake up.”

A hand grabbed Mary Jane’s shoulder and shook her body. She stirred from her nap, stretched and slowly opened her eyes. Her daughter, Jamie Sue, loomed over her, a frantic expression marred her face. “What is it?”

“The weekend survival camping trip. We were supposed to leave half an hour ago. If I don’t go, I won’t get the badges I’ve been working on for two months.”

“Calm down.” She slid her legs over the side of the bed, placed her elbows on her knees and ran her fingers through her hair. “I’ll get you to the campsite and explain to your leader that your tardiness was my fault.” She gazed up at her tall, lanky teen and raised a brow. “Why didn’t you wake me sooner?”

The young woman huffed and put her hands on her hips. “I tried. You were out cold and didn’t budge or twitch. I wish dad was here. He would

have made sure I was on time.” Jamie Sue huffed again and ran from the room.

Brat. Mary Jane rose from the bed. *So I was out cold and didn't move?* She glanced at the digital clock on her nightstand. *Three hours I slept and he didn't come to visit me.* Jamie Sue's lack of concern for her well-being and her dream guy's absence bothered her and filled her with a despondent emptiness.

She shuffled to the bathroom, splashed some water on her face in the sink and patted her skin dry. In the mirror, an older woman looked back at her. She looked haggard and worn. The lines around her mouth and eyes had grown deeper. The grays had multiplied and contrasted sharply against her dark brown hair. Her body ached and screamed soreness in places she didn't know she had. *The days of competing in beauty pageants are long gone now, aren't they?* She sighed and ran a brush through her long locks, pulling them back into a ponytail.

“Mom!”

Mary Jane closed her eyes and took a deep breath. If she told her children once, she told them a thousand times not to yell up the stairs. “Hush!” she called back breaking her own rule. “I'll be there in a sec.”

Downstairs, her daughter waited near the front door, her arms across her chest, her foot tapping a

quick rhythm.

"You better drop that attitude, young lady, or I won't take you anywhere." Mary Jane grabbed her coat off the rack near the door and put it on, wincing at her daughter's fake smile. She searched the pockets. They both came up empty. *Damn, that means I'll have to stop.* "Your brother is still at Nana's, right?"

"As far as I know. Not my job to keep track of him."

Mary Jane threw a heated glare at Jamie Sue and straightened her back to stare down her daughter.

"Sorry, Mom." Jamie Sue looked at the ground and scuffed the tip of her shoe on the hardwood. "I'm just anxious to get there. I don't want to miss anything fun."

She clenched her hands into fists. Bobby Joe was probably off having a grand ole time with some hussy and here she was, left to pick up the pieces and take up more responsibility than she could handle. Her daughter, who had her whole life to look forward to, was going off to play with her friends. Joe Junior was doing who knew what with his buddies over at her mother's house. But for her? What did she have to look forward to? Cleaning, chauffeuring, being another's emotional punching bag. Never a moment of rest or fun for her. And if anyone needed a break, a long

diversion in the form of a vacation, she did. "I'm going to have Nana pick you up from the campground on Sunday and you and your brother can stay there for a week or so."

"What? First dad leaves us and now you?" Sheer panic lit in the girl's eyes.

"No, honey, it's not like that." She pulled her daughter into her arms. "You know what the past few months have been like for me. I just need a bit of time to regroup and get back into balance again. I'm afraid if I keep going like I am, I won't be much of a mother." She pulled back and gazed into Jamie Sue's eyes. "You understand I'm not deserting you, right?" At her daughter's nod, a breath of relief swooshed from her. "Good. I'm sure the time away from each other will be wonderful for our spirits and bring us closer together. Now let's get you to your troop so you can get your badges."

CHAPTER FOUR

Mary Jane wanted a chocolate bar and wanted it bad. But with getting her daughter to where she needed to go to on time and talking to her mother via cell phone to convince her to take the kids, she had no chance to stop on the ride out. Fleeting thoughts of insulin resistance, diabetic coma, thick globs of flesh and fat hanging off her body ran through her mind, but the consequences of the sugar addiction meant nothing to her. She hurt to her core for something sweet and hurt greatly. It had taken all her power not to slam on the brakes and run screaming from the car.

Like an oasis in the middle of the desert, Randy's appeared in her headlights. She swerved into the parking lot, thankful the snow had ended during her nap. Otherwise she figured she would have slid right into the building. Mary Jane stepped out of her car and a bitter cold wind cut through the opening of her coat. She gripped the two panels together in a hand, bent her head into

the blast of frigid air and hurried into the establishment. The aroma of burgers and fries, the café's Friday night special, accosted her nose the second she entered the store. Surprisingly, she wasn't hungry even though all her diet consisted of lately was various forms of chocolate. She zeroed in on the candy aisle.

If Bailey had been worth her salt as a therapist, she would have said that the chocolate replaced the love she lacked. Even she, the brainless pageant queen twit, knew that experts found eating chocolate releases serotonin into the blood stream, a neat little neurotransmitter that eases tension and helps maintain feelings of love, satiation and happiness.

The wealth of choices on the racks overwhelmed her. Not wanting to decide between her favorites, she took two chocolate bars each of plain, almond, caramel and rice and brought her bounty to the register.

The tiny bell above the door dinged. Both she and the old, tired-looking cashier shivered from the trail of cold air that followed the customer in. Mary Jane looked out the window in the direction of her car. The vehicle was hidden from view since she had parked near the corner of the building, away from the front windows, but that didn't stop her from remembering her dream, remembering the man with the chiseled features and luscious

dark eyes. A longing for him settled in her loins. *Oh, if only he were real.* She blinked out of her daydream and snickered. "Don't be such a ninny."

"Excuse me?"

Mary Jane snapped her attention to the cashier. She laughed nervously, afraid her desire for her imaginary friend had shown on her face. "I'm sorry. Just talking to myself." A pile of individual plastic wrapped brownies caught her eye. "How much for one of those?"

"Dollar fifty."

"I'll take one."

The cashier shook her head as if to say just another crazy and rang up the huge brownie and candy. "That'll be fourteen twenty-five. You want a sack?"

"Yes, please." She handed the woman her money and took the plastic bag filled with the chocolate goodies from her. "You have a good evening."

"You, too."

She left the store and rummaged in the bag for a bar, her thoughts turning to the week ahead. A whole week without the children and no work since she planned to call her doctor first thing in the morning and get an excuse for a short leave of absence. A week all to herself to immerse herself in books, bubble baths, pampering, self-analysis and discovery. Mary Jane pulled out the brownie,

unwrapped a corner and bit into the spongy goodness. She opened the door to her car, tossed the bag onto the passenger seat, turned to maneuver into the car and stopped due to movement near a dim, flickering streetlamp on the side of the building.

A red ember flared in the shadows, illuminating the silhouette of a figure, then waned. A gritty, herbal scent wafted to her. The red dot expanded again, closer to her than before. The fragrance grew stronger.

Snippets of her dream clicked in her mind, the lamp, the man, the wind, her car door open and acting as a barrier. Her gaze shot to the store and back to the shape approaching her. The thought of running inside and seeking safety with the workers seemed like a good idea, but her feet were rooted to the ground. Her body trembled, not from the winter chill, but from an intense apprehension over her situation. On the one hand, she wanted to be smart and shout an alarm, but on the other hand, her curiosity to find out who came near overrode all caution.

The tip of the person's smoke blazed. He or she was right at the border of the shadows. Mary Jane couldn't make out any features. A tendril of smoke floated toward her. She tried to hold her breath, but the slender cloud seemed to hang in the air and surround her, waiting for her to

breathe. Many seconds passed.

Do not fear me.

It's him. The shock of his mental telepathy and her body reacting to the withholding of oxygen forced her to open her mouth and resume breathing. The cloud entered her, the smoke smooth as it went down her throat. She didn't cough or sputter as she thought she might. A happy contented sense of being filled her. Any trepidation she had moments before vanished.

Her dream man stepped into the light and she transfixed her gaze on him. He was exactly as she had imagined him—sleek and dark from his hair to his clothing to his boots. The cut of his clothes and trench coat indicated a seductive male form, radiating a great strength she believed he held in check, like a great black cat preparing to pounce on its prey. The idea she was his quarry shattered the hard shell she had built around her heart and a deep yearning for the man flooded her veins. It was all she could do not to run around her car door and jump into his arms right then and there.

A slow, crafty smile lit under his mustache. A gust of wind blew through the trees surrounding the rundown convenience store. His black trench coat flapped in the breeze, but not one ebony hair on his head or in his goatee moved. A metal chain clinked against the lone gas pump. The streetlamp behind him flickered.

Time seemed to slow and she could have sworn she was in the dream again, this time as an active participant. This time, with the man she craved in the flesh.

So you crave me, my pet?

She nodded and warmth encompassed her. Like in the dream, he reached out to her without moving and wrapped her in a soft, cushioning embrace. He continued to smile, his dark-eyed gaze penetrating her, his overwhelming virility zinging her. His steady attention peered into her soul, searched it, found the core of her wants and desires.

Do you fear me? He took another drag of his smoke and though he tried to be a gentleman and blow the smoke away from her, it went into her face anyway.

She shook her head, breathing in the heady fumes. Her muscles, stiff and hard from all the tension during the past several months, eased, became light and pliable.

Good. I sense your needs, your longing to feel beautiful, to be a woman desired. I feel your passion, how you want to touch me, feel my hands stroking your skin. I ache for your touch as well.

A feather light contact caressed her cheek. She closed her eyes and tilted her head into it, but encountered nothing. Mary Jane opened her eyes and studied the man on the other side of her car

door. His hands were at his sides.

*If I asked you to take a trip with me, would you?
Would you go wherever I wanted to take you?*

She nodded again, already feeling transported from reality. The world around her wasn't the same though it was. The flickering streetlamp and lights from Randy's had dimmed while the man's features brightened. The crisp lines of his clothes sharpened. The black of his artfully trimmed mustache and triangle goatee with thin strips of hair framing his chin on either side darkened. His gaze burned more powerful.

Lustful need drilled through her and her knees went weak. She clutched the top of the door to steady herself. The sexual hunger terrified her and thrilled her at the same time. She stared at the throbbing pulse at the base of his throat, gazed at his full carmine colored lips, looked into his deep, dark eyes. Never in her life had she been so erotically driven in her want for a man. But before she lost herself in the throes of a sexual wonderland, there was something she needed to know. She cleared her throat. "What is your name?" Her voice sounded far away and faint. For a moment, she wondered if she had asked it or only thought it.

"You may call me Ash," the man's deep, sensual voice rolled. He held out his hand.

Eagerness flooded all her senses and primal

attraction took control. She slammed her car door shut, strode up to him and took his hand. His strong fingers wrapped around hers. An electric bolt of sensation traveled up her arm. Multitudes of sensations washed over and through her, buffeting her with raw carnal energy, primitive arousal. The emotional center in her brain went into overdrive with the stimulating responses to his touch and sent her off balance. She swayed. He caught her and brought her into his embrace. Over excited from the effects of the smoke and her body's sexual coiling, she fainted.

CHAPTER FIVE

Mary Jane woke to a beam of sunlight hitting her square in her face. She tried to move, to stir her body after its slumber, but her arms and legs wouldn't budge. She turned her head against a feather pillow. Her arm was tied to a bedpost with a silver length of silky cloth. She looked in the other direction. That arm, too, was secured to a post. She tilted up her head and looked down the naked length of her body. Her legs were spread and tied to posts as well. She sank back into the soft, cushiony padding of the white-covered bed. Overhead, a ceiling fan quietly whirled, creating a breeze to fight off the humidity. The contrasting coolness of the air against her heated skin brought her nipples to hard peaks. She blinked and let her head loll to the right.

Sheer white curtains hanging from a wide opening billowed into the pale aquamarine-colored room. Outside, severely angled palm trees rustled in the warm wind and gentle waves

lapped at a white sand beach. On a table near the large picture window, a stream of smoke trailed upward from an incense holder.

She stiffened as a surge of panic swept through her. How did she get here? Where was she? A whiff of the herbal fragrance reminded her of Ash, put her mind in a haze. She fought against the restraints. The slick material rubbed sensuously against her skin. The satin of the bed sheets slid delightfully along her bare bottom, but her arms and legs ached and strained from their stretched out positioning. During the sensations of pain and pleasure racking her body, she forgot her panic, focused on the current moment. Her back arched. Feminine awareness awakened in every pore. She shuddered, releasing all the worry and control she had possessed since she was a teen. No longer did she have to concern herself with pretenses, putting on an act for people, living up to the expectations that had been thrown upon her over twenty years ago. She had finally found her escape by being captured and bound, something all the chocolate in the world couldn't achieve.

"Ah, my pet, you are awake." Ash strode over to the bed, shirtless, his lightly tanned muscles rippling with strength above his black dress pants. "Are you thirsty, love?" He picked an ice cube from a bucket beside the bed, showed it to her and, at her nod, traced the block along her lips.

Her tongue darted out and licked the ice. Water spread over her tongue. She welcomed the coolness and moisture.

Ash swept the ice over her chin and down her neck, circled her breasts and areolas, dragged it down her stomach to the patch of hair at her crotch. Her body quivered under the frigid movements. He slipped the last of the ice between the feminine folds. Frozen lightning bolts shot through her groin and lower abdomen. He put his face between her legs and lapped the wetness from her nether lips.

She gasped and pulled on the restraints each time his tongue slipped between her folds. He nipped and suckled at her clit. She drew in a long, thin stream of air. The aroma of the incense heightened. The fog in her mind grew until all but him faded from her perception. He reached a hand up to her breast and fingered the taut bud on top.

"Oh, Ash, yes." She yanked on the ties, wished she could grab his head to entwine her fingers in his thick dark hair.

He stopped the tongue action. "Do you want me? Do you want me inside you?"

His breath drifted over her pubes, sending thrilling tickles along her pelvic area. He slipped a finger into her and slowly rubbed it around. Her hips hitched, her breath quickened. "Yes, Ash. I want your cock inside me now."

With a small chuckle, he stood and removed his pants.

She gazed at him standing in his naked glory, his penis rock hard and jutting out quite a length from his body. She licked her lips.

He loosened the ties at each ankle, bent her knees and secured the restraints again. Ash moved onto the bed, kneeling between her legs. He lifted her hips and slid his cock into her moist folds. In and out he moved. Her breasts bounced and jiggled. She closed her eyes and enjoyed the lack of control. Waves of passion crested within her. Through slit eyes, she gazed upon the man using her body for pleasure and, for a brief moment, thought she saw black wings protrude from his body.

Don't fear. Let go of your stress. Forget who you are. Escape.

She heeded his mental command and gave into the ecstasy building in her body. A long, deep orgasm convulsed and rolled within her. She broke free from her cares and rode it until she fell into a comatose, satiated sleep.

Mary Jane had no idea how long she existed in the beachfront bungalow. Every day seemed to pass in the same manner. She roused. He pummeled her with his thick cock. There was a lack of foreplay for the breezes, restraints and

satin sheets tantalized her. He kept her nude and bound whether she was eating, sleeping, relieving herself or pleasuring him. Several times she saw the black wings laced with purple veins sprouting from his back while he had sex with her, but she chalked it up to the haze in her mind and affected imagination. Besides, she had once thought of him as her dark angel sent from God to help her through her difficult time so his having wings made sense.

One evening he brought her back to the bed and she protested the tying of the restraints. "Please, Ash, you should know by now I won't leave you. Where would I go? You are what I want." She smoothed her fingers along his cheek, traced the black hair along his jaw line. "All that I want. Why would I leave? Please, let *me* pleasure *you*."

Ash studied her, seemed to consider her plea, but shook his head. "My pet, you have given me great pleasure. You have given me more than you know." He caressed her ankle and tied it. "Perhaps another time I will allow you freedom. But for now the hour is late and we must sleep." He tied the rest of her limbs to the posts, placed a kiss on the top of each of her breasts and left the bungalow.

CHAPTER SIX

Mary Jane woke in stages as if coming out of anesthesia and, once aware, bolted upright in the bed. Her bed. Her room. Her house. Dressed in her own clothes. Her gaze darted around the room and the quick eye movements made her dizzy. She put a hand on her forehead to still the spinning. Her mouth felt like it was filled with cotton. If she didn't know better, she would have said she was hung-over. Suddenly thirsty, she stumbled from her bedroom. A twinge in her lower abdomen tickled her core. She stopped halfway down the steps, pressed her hands against the spot and shook her head.

No, it's not possible. She tried to deny the sensation, but deep down she knew what it meant. She had felt the flutter with Jamie Sue and Joe Junior weeks before any test would have produced a positive result. She was pregnant.

She rushed down the rest of the steps and into the kitchen to get her drink and call her mother.

On the table sat a blood red vase with nine long-stemmed roses, five black and four white, within it. One of the silk ties from the beach bungalow made a pretty silver bow around the middle of the vase. Her mind searched for the meaning of the roses, but came up blank. She ran her fingers through her messy hair and decided to check the Internet about them later.

Next to the flower arrangement sat a chocolate bar. The thought of eating the sweet treat made her stomach churn. She picked it up and tossed it into the garbage under the sink, realizing she had traded one addiction for another. She no longer wanted chocolate. She wanted domination, to give up control and find an escape from life through another's touch.

A white card lay in front of the flowers. She opened it.

My pet ~ You have something I want. I will return.

The card fell from her hand. Mary Jane clutched at her abdomen. She spun to the sink, turned on the water and splashed her face. She grabbed a nearby towel, patted her face dry, then glanced over her shoulder at the table.

The card and flowers were gone, but the flutter remained.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

C.R. Moss, resident of the hot, high desert in the southwest, knew she wanted to write at a young age, as early as she learned to read, cooking up stories to entertain herself in the rural, non-kid-laden area she had lived in. But she took a roundabout way to settle down as a fiction writer, having worked in the corporate and real estate realms writing newspaper articles, press releases, corporate newsletters, etc. Now that she's settled into the health care industry, she has returned to her first love: creative writing. When she isn't working at her practice or at her computer cooking up another tale, she can be found hanging out with her husband and cat or reading a book. Visit her at:

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